



Scott Kuykendall

Scott Kuykendall has a studio at the Harwood Art Center and a de facto gallery at the busy intersection of Cornell and Central across from the University of New Mexico.

Kuykendall has painted no less than seven murals at the student crossroads. His work enlivens Saggio's Restaurant, all four exterior walls of the Frontier Restaurant, and the window of Mark's Guitar Center.

But none of the murals would be there if not for the one that started it all: the "Central Avenue Mural" at the Harwood Art Center on 7th Street north of Downtown.

Kuykendall, a soft-spoken Midwesterner, arrived in Albuquerque in the mid-1980s to begin a graduate program in art at UNM. After graduating in 1987, he opened a studio at the Harwood while supporting himself painting billboards. He was fascinated with the varied streetscapes of Central Avenue and started doing sketches of them. Eventually, he painted a mural from his sketches and photographs on eight large panels.

"It was easier to do it that way for storage and transportation," he says. "And that's the format for billboards, so I was comfortable working in that way."

The mural depicts three sections of Central: west Central, Downtown, and the University/Central intersection. Kuykendall had to remove a fourth section to get the mural to fit in the space.

The mural went up in 1994 and caught the eye of a number of art lovers, including the owner of Saggio's Pizza. He asked Kuykendall to

paint the inside of the restaurant.

"I started with the ceiling and I've been adding to it ever since," says Kuykendall.

The Saggio's murals contain so much detail you can discover something new every time you visit. On one wall is a mural titled "Hollywood Scene" that shows stars from the past like Marilyn Monroe cavorting amid famous movie locations like the Emerald City from the Wizard of Oz.

The outside of the building is adorned with flowers and painted architectural features that create the appearance of a villa in Italy. Kuykendall used the painting technique of trompe l'oeil, from the French for "trick the eye," to create optical illusions of 3-D features like windows, doorways, and pillars on a flat surface.

The owner of the Frontier saw Kuykendall's work at Saggio's and brought him across the street to decorate their restaurant. Eventually, Kuykendall's murals covered all four sides of the restaurant, along with several other walls on adjoining properties. Kuykendall painted the 100-foot-long mural of a winter landscape in the alley behind the Frontier over a period of a couple of months. To research the painting, he spent time in La Cienega, just south of Santa Fe, and took a series of panoramic photographs looking south.

In addition to his public murals, Kuykendall's work has been shown at the Albuquerque Museum and numerous galleries around the Southwest. His mural "Walking the Dog" is currently on loan to the city's new Wheels Museum at the Rail Yards Downtown.