

# Artists have made it big with larger-than-life murals

Paintings appear in public places, from a laundry to a supermarket

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BUSINESS WRITER

Images of music legends B.B. King, Marvin Gaye and Duke Ellington leap off the outside wall of the former Off Broadway jazz and blues club in Long Branch in bright hues of blue, orange, yellow and purple.

In Neptune at Busy B's Launderette, people do their laundry under a painting of a blue sky and birds with a beach scene on the walls.

It's the work of The Muralists Painting Studio, a Bradley Beach business started by artists Dawn von Suskil, 41, and Danielle C. Acerra-Ball, 28. The company, founded in May 2003, specializes in big art: murals and large paintings for businesses and homes.

"I think we are in a day and age where everything is so serious and everything is so mundane," said von Suskil, who lives in Bradley Beach. "Doing your laundry is not the most fun. Why not make it an enjoyable experience?"

The two friends met in 2002 when von Suskil and

her partner, Clark Mitchell, opened Be Green Organic Juice Bar & Cafe in Belmar. (The business has since moved to Asbury Park.) At the time, Acerra-Ball helped to paint the mural there. "We really got along well and we thought we could make a huge contribution to the public," von Suskil said.

Both women have a love for art. Von Suskil graduated from the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City with an associate's degree in interior design.

Acerra-Ball has a bachelor of fine arts degree from the University of The Arts in Philadelphia.

Von Suskil took up painting when her sons, who are now ages 7 and 9, were babies.

"When I had my kids I painted their rooms because I didn't like any of the themes that were out there for them," she said. "I started painting outdoor scenes on all four walls."

Acerra-Ball designed wall coverings for three years at an Edison com-

pany before joining von Suskil. A painter since she was a child, the mural at Be Green was her first.

"I was just like, 'Wow, this is amazing — creating environments for people to dine in, to walk in to, to experience,'" said Acerra-Ball, who lives in Ocean Grove.

After doing a few projects, the pair formed the company in 2003. An early customer was Busy B's Launderette. The owner of the business had seen a mural painted

by von Suskil and Michelle Katz, another artist.

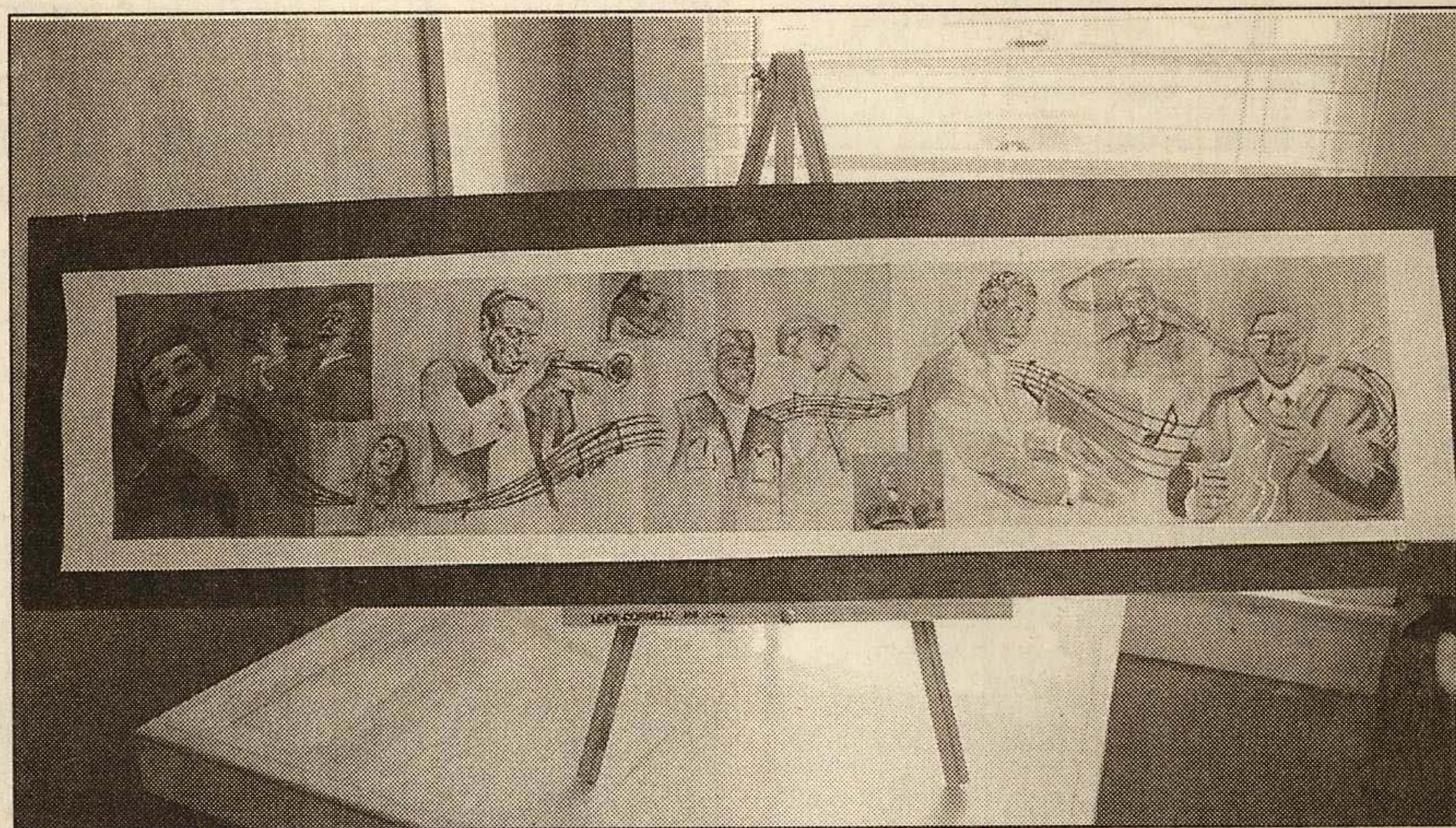
It took six to eight weeks to paint the beach scene at the 4,000-square-foot business. "It was to the point where people were coming in and not doing their laundry," von Suskil said. "It was a very positive response."

When they started, von Suskil said, she knew the business would be successful. "I never had any doubt about it," she said.

After the company's Busy B's project, they started to get business from people who had seen their work.

For instance, they painted a mural outside Giamanos Ristorante in Bradley Beach and another on a library wall at the Ronald McDonald House in Long Branch. The piece was an international theme representing children from around the world who stay at the house, according to a description on the company's Web site [www.themuralists.com](http://www.themuralists.com)

The murals attracted the attention of Joe Azzolina Jr., a vice president



**Before a mural is painted, a scaled-down version is created to show clients what the finished product will look like.** (STAFF PHOTO: STEVE SCHOLFIELD)

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