

December 2007

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DELRAY  
UNDER  
\$50

BUILDING THE  
FAMOUS 150'  
DELRAY BEACH  
CHRISTMAS  
TREE

CRUISES  
ON THE AVE  
IN THE GROVE  
PILATES  
NIGHTLIFE  
DINING GUIDE

## Ana Carolina in CESAR SOLORZANO

*Holiday  
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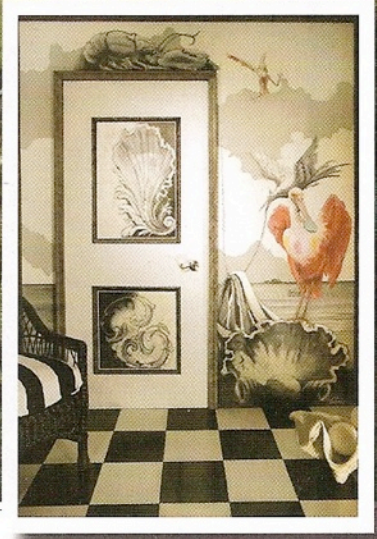
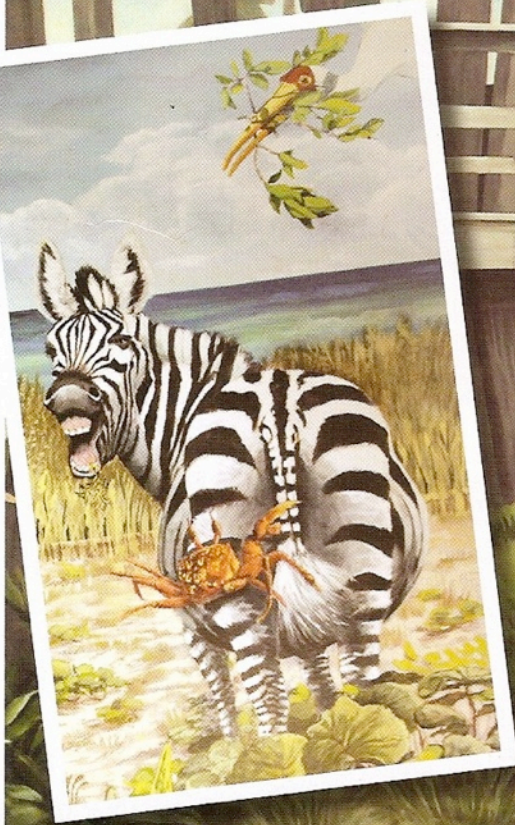
HAVE SEE HEAR KNOW

Magic Maker  
Dana Donaty

REVEALING  
THE NEW DELRAY

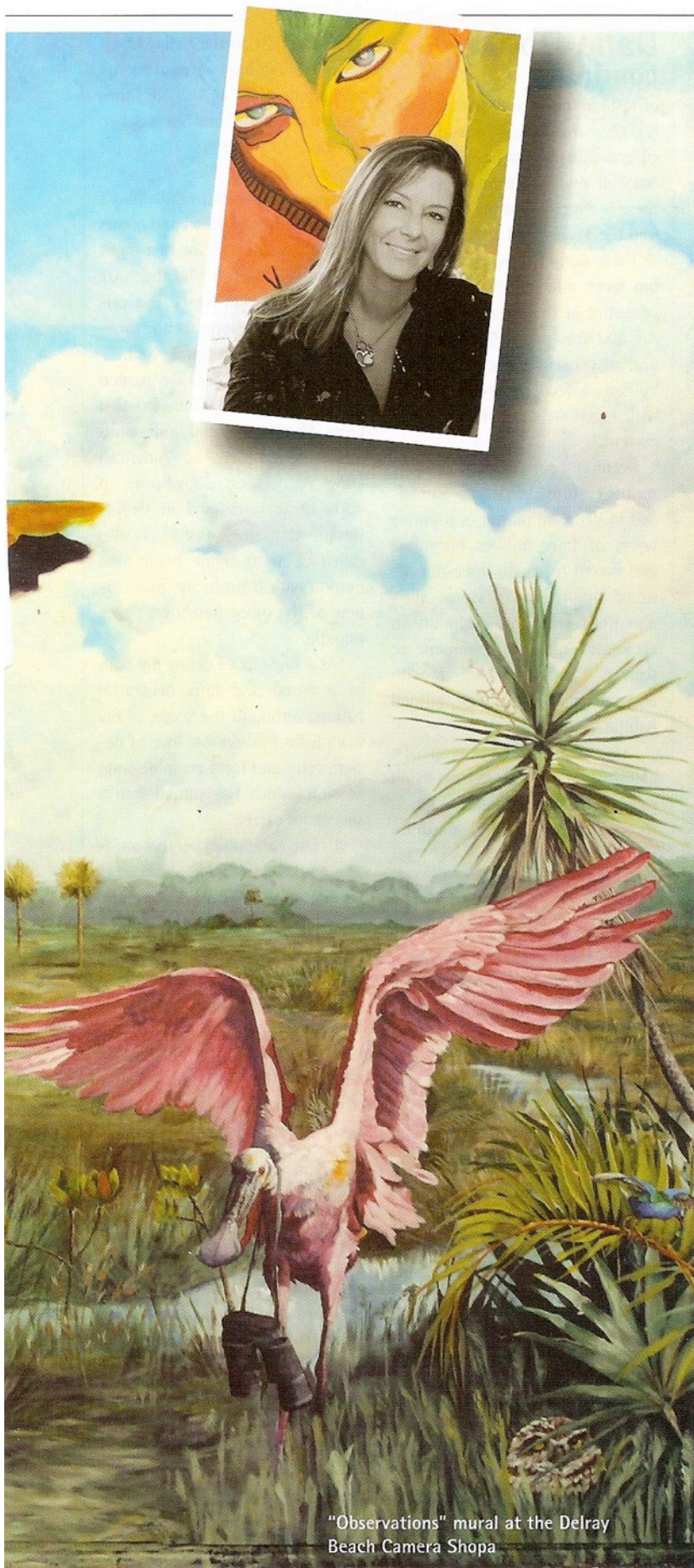
ARTIST DANA DONATY

# Magic Maker



"Look who's on the Beach" mural at the Palm Beach American Lung Association Showcase

"Seashells" mural at the Palm Beach American Lung Association Showcase



"Observations" mural at the Delray Beach Camera Shop

By Sue Morgan

**D**ana Donaty is a study in contrast. She can climb up a ladder and install a picturesque mural on the ceiling (Michelangelo style) yet she has a room full of shoes, some with five-inch platform soles.

Perhaps that's the reason this woman of talent is such an iconoclastic art form – she needs a platform to illumine her creative possibilities and a similar plateau to honor her fierce independent streak.

That's what makes and motivates this Delray Beach artist to soar to great heights. She calls it like she sees it (no BS here) and can recreate scenes from Mother Nature's gardens with the same authenticity. "I do a lot of research for all of my images, especially the wild life murals or canvas paintings," said the New Jersey native.

And it is easy to see the fruit of her labors – especially on NE 2nd Street in Pineapple Grove. It is there that a 12-by-75-foot mural of the Loxahatchee wildlife has been recreated in all its glory. There's a camera yielding tourist, burrowing owls, Roseate Spoonbills and towering indigenous trees that shower a faux sense of reprieve from the heat. Donaty titled this eight-week project "Observations" but to the naked eye it looks more like a miracle.

She worked day and night (at times the heat index hit 115 degrees in the shade) and in between to gather the insight, foresight and inspiration. "I went to the wild life preserve to observe it and at night I would think about the mural while I was sleeping. At some point you have to stop listening to the building and let it evolve," said Donaty, who immerses herself in a project the way an Olympic swimmer does his or her practice sessions.

And this is not just banter. If you happen to be invited to this young woman's home – in a gated community in Delray Beach – you will see that art does imitate life, it is her life. The breakfast room is made up of stainless steel racks that lack domesticity, yet track the tools of her trade. "I keep every custom tint (and color recipe) for my clients in case they need repair work. Would you believe I went to someone's house and she did not know what color or finish they used," said Donaty holding up a baggie filled with two pieces of Venetian chip.

That's the way it is in the Donaty household. Baggies are not used to store leftover food, but preserve color chips or other contractor lore. And you can see it doesn't make this talented woman squeamish a bit. "See my couch, I tell my friends they can draw or paint on it," And some do.

You know you are in unfamiliar territory when you realize the couch is white and that the coffee table is home to a copy-fax machine, not a pretty ashtray. The marble floor – that is clearly too provincial for this renegade – has markings

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## Dana Donaty continued

of leftover paint and stencil print. It is there that large panels of stencil board or canvas have left their indelible mark in Technicolor. "But there is a method to my madness," said the 41 year-old artist.

There definitely is a method. It has taken a lot of study - a four-year stint at the Moore College of Art and Design in Philadelphia - and art classes and seminars given by Faux Effects to update her artistic repertoire so she can "to keep current."

Keeping current to Donaty means custom cut stencils embedded in Venetian plaster or multiple layers of faux finishes burnished and waxed to create three-dimensional simulations of stone. She's also been known to whip up an elaborate European chinoiserie or scale a wall to embellish it with lions or giraffes in their natural habitat.

"My murals convey a specific identity for a business or living space. You can change an environment with paint and transform the structure with faux art," Donaty said. And she's not kidding - change is Donaty's mantra visa a vis paint and a vision. The Delray Camera Shop - that is a testament to the early days of Delray - now has the breath and depth of a nature preserve.

The folks at the Pineapple Grove Arts District knew this all along. That's why they anointed her the chief image maker for its face lift. It was Donaty that made the North wall of the Delray Camera Shop a veritable nature preserve and it is Donaty that has been entrusted with painting and planning a second mural for Pineapple Grove's upcoming ArtScape project on Pineapple Grove Way. And rest assured it was a lot more than luck that got Donaty this expressive artistic outlet.

"Dana is an extremely talented muralist with great vision! She can come up with an idea for a mural and how it should fit the particular area in just a few seconds! She did

a fabulous job on the Delray Camera Shop. We look forward to her next masterpiece at 165 NE Pineapple Grove Way," said Sue Keleher, Program Manager for Pineapple Grove Main Street, Inc.

There are other signs of Donaty's art form in Delray Beach and points beyond. She created the first night poster - and button - for the 2007 Delray Beach New Years' Eve celebration and the logo for the Pineapple Grove Take It Easel event.

She painted a Zen-like garden mural for the 2007 Broward Red Cross Showhouse and a luscious jungle mural for the American Lung Association Showhouse in 2006 (it was featured in Florida Design Magazine). Donaty is also called upon to create magic and motion with paint in the four corners of the globe (lately on Fisher Island).

"As a fine artist I define my skills as a mural and faux decorative painter, although the scope of my work is far broader. My love of design, color and form are a life-long passion, which has turned into a successful career."

It's also catapulted her to wander around the world a bit. She lived in London for 12 years - absorbing the culture and vibrance of Europe - while painting and honoring her craft. But soon her talent - and her longing for home - brought her back to Delray Beach. "In London I worked to transform ordinary interiors and exteriors into extraordinary aesthetic spaces. Two years ago I relocated back to the United States with Florida as my base to continue painting murals.

That's good news for the locals - and for those who covet her colorful conquest of design. But as someone with wanderlust for the unknown, Donaty will travel to make magical art forms for clients' in any part of the globe.

And that suits her just fine. "I don't mind traveling for work, its fun - and besides there's always a chance I will find a hot new pair of shoes."

To view more of Dana's art go to [www.danadonaty.com](http://www.danadonaty.com). ■

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