



Beauty Knows No Bounds DANA DONATY DESIGNS

BY DIANE FEEN

PHOTOS BY MELISSA KORMAN

Great artwork astonishes the onlooker. It evokes emotion, thought and delight.

That's what you get when you see the artwork, murals and interior spaces created by Dana Donaty. She not only pushes the creative envelope to infinity, but she stamps it with distinguished characteristics that make you think Dali, Jackson Pollock or Annie Leibovitz.

But to ascribe anyone else to her inimitable style would do her injustice. That's because Donaty's artistic brilliance is on display the moment you meet her. It's on her clothing (that is covered in paint), her studio (where decorative wall art and fine art intersect) and her home. One of the first things you see when you enter her home is a wall that says "YES" made of cement, silver leaf and iron patina.

A few feet away you will see colorful

artwork with creatures and surrealistic features that mirror life and its inherent largeness. But that suits this Delray artist just fine. "Everyone sees something different in my paintings. It's as if abstraction and figuration had a love child. I breathe in the culture and out comes a painting," said the Moore College of Art and Design graduate who lived in London before coming to South Florida.

Donaty is also well-known (and respected) for her expressive and expansive murals that adorn public spaces, homes and businesses. There's a life-size mural of the Loxahatchee wildlife on the exterior wall of the Delray Camera Shop, a colorful cityscape in Bleu Café and a 20-foot mural that marries art with architecture



at Sandbar Boston's on the Beach. Donaty was also chosen over hundreds of other artists to do a complicated yet whimsical mural for a Head Start School in Palm Beach County.

But like all constellations of creation Donaty has evolved. She is still creating large murals - that illustrate the moods and manners of our times in electric hues - but she has added a lot to her repertoire of genius. That's why designers and homeowners come to her to create unique yet sophisticated ceilings, walls and artwork that define and defy convention. There are Mica stone panels with silver leaf on canvas that glitter with a rare naturalness, plaster ombre wall murals and unconventional faux finishes in the most unlikely places.

That's what defines this artist - it's her indefinable artistic brilliance. She sees things most people don't see and creates interiors, public art, murals and fine art that come from a place of rotating fantasy and innate reality. She defines spaces and canvas with a texture, gloss or color that will make you feel as if you are inhabiting the earth at a higher altitude than usual.

But she does it with clients as a collaborative effort. They explain their vision and Donaty runs with it (or sprints) to the artistic finish line. The results are always stellar. "Dana the mural turned out great! Thank you for all your hard work and eye for detail," said Tom McMurray, Vice President Development, Ocean Properties, Ltd.

Donaty has also perfected the art of family portraits, but not in the conventional sense. She imbibes the culture of the family, learns about their personalities and then creates a colorful panorama of the entire clan. Think Disney meets Dali. If there is an antidote to the boring portraits of yesteryear, Donaty has hit upon its golden core. She also does pet portraits, landscapes and exotic murals that create a mood and manner for homes, condos or commercial spaces.

Most of the Murals and family portraits are done in the studio and installed like wallpaper (or attached in panels). "It doesn't take time away from the client and they're removable. If you move you can take the artwork with you. Clients have us relocate and reinstall their murals from one location to the next," said Barry Bernstein, of Dana Donaty Design.

These collaborative efforts are what Donaty calls her commission work. For

one client she added texture and gloss in their foyer with Italian Lime Venetian Plaster. For a home in Palm Beach Gardens she added faux wood grain ceiling beams with matching baseboards and doors frames. "People are personalizing their spaces and adding character and warmth. I use decorative cement finishes, liquid iron, Venetian plaster, mica, gold and silver leaf," said Donaty.

When you see Donaty's work in its raw form it's as if Michelangelo has been sprinkling fairy dust overhead. But this local artist doesn't need any help from the masters, she has become one herself. "I have been doing this for 20 years and offer super personal service for each client. I draw my projects on the computer so clients can see what they are getting."

The New Jersey native inherited some of her talent genetically; the rest came in like a hail storm. Her mother's family, from South America, were artists and her father was a doctor. Donaty does cling to some convention (like the signs she has from her father's medical office) and the wall to wall display of fancy footwear similar to that of Imelda Marcos.

But that's what's so unique and mystifying about Donaty. Her creative ability has an endless megabyte capacity and the paint that falls to her feet have recently become surrealistic paintings sold to collectors. Her work has also been purchased by celebrities, sports figures and government agencies and she has won awards for her



public art projects and installations.

Dana Donaty Designs also opened a studio in Miami. It is there (and in Delray Beach) that Donaty take her client's dreams and converts them into reality. Her newest work she said "will blow your head off."

She's right. Her art will blow your head off - but in a great way.

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