

Painting Preceding Painting: The Playful and Profound work of Dana Donaty

The work innovative artist Dana Donaty, has greatly impressed me since first being introduced to it roughly three years ago. Her highly charged, playfully provocative paintings, sculpture and installations are unlike any other artists' oeuvre I am familiar with, and are skillfully and imaginatively done.

She creates her myriad pieces starting with the unusual foundation of a psychological phenomenon called Pareidolia, which involves a stimulus (that can originate with an image or a sound) wherein the mind perceives a familiar pattern of something where none actually exists. The process she employs begins with the paint splatters she intentionally "collects" while creating a different work. These multicolored and biomorphic drippings are saved onto a new substrate (that has been placed underneath the painting being made) for future use. From this unorthodox starting point she allows her approach in creating a new painting to conjure creatures, critters, cartoon characters, and more; a proverbial mash up of the subconscious that entices the viewer to enter her candy colored, dazzling wonderland.

Through this manner of using random markings she delves into realms that engage us to conjure up our own associations to the world which envelopes us collectively and individually with a profound sense of vitality. Interesting as well is the significance of utilizing a preexisting painting to birth a new piece, paralleling the flow of the subconscious mind.

Dana is a painter's painter. She has a solid foundation in the practice of painting, gained through her formal training at Moore College of Art and Design, the prestigious, only exclusively all women's arts college in the United States. She has since devoted her time to investigating the work of painters throughout Western art history, right up to being well informed of the art of her contemporaries. Painting is her unbridled passion, and she actively invents and engages new ways to extend painting's possibilities by literally pushing its boundaries from being merely 2-D, outwardly extending them into three-dimensional territory.

The resulting pieces at first glance evoke, a buoyant jubilation. However when taking the necessary time to get "inside" the paintings, one discovers references to all manner of subject matter from the playful to the profound. Like other artists who have successfully juxtaposed a range of seemingly random imagery to meaningful result, such as Jean-Michel Basquiat, George Condo, Kenny Scharf and Dana Schutz, Donaty takes a no holds barred approach as she fully immerses herself into her practice "letting it rip", so to speak, into her subconscious self. While much of the art in favor this past decade is defined by rarefied conceptualism, her powerfully enticing work invites viewers to delve into a world where anything goes, in order to emerge with new insights.

Jane Hart is a curator with over 30 years of institutional and independent work in the international contemporary art field. Hart collaborations with nationally and internationally recognized artists, as well as emerging talent. Additionally Hart has served in arts administration and fine art editions publishing, she has also been a gallerist (owner of lemon sky: projects + editions in Los Angeles and Miami,) and professional artist (under the alias TJ Ahearn).