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ARTIST DANA DONATY'S ICONIC CAMERA SHOP MURAL IN DELRAY BEACH BEING RESTORED FOR NEW LOCATION

South Florida contemporary artist Dana Donaty's *Observations* mural shows a man in the Everglades with binoculars and a camera surrounded by native birds, flora and fauna. It has become a landmark in Delray Beach since 2007. The magnificent panoramic scene along the outside of the Delray Camera Shop is currently being restored by the artist, and will soon be installed on the Camera Shop's new location.



'Observations' mural (2007) by Artist Dana Donaty at Delray Camera & Studio on Atlantic Avenue in Delray Beach

When the artist was commissioned to create the mural 14 years ago, she was inspired by a visit to the Author R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge in the Everglades. Dana designed a long, panoramic scene with vibrant colors and brilliant detail on 10' x 4' Dibond panels with acrylic paint. The *Observations* mural includes possums hanging from tree branches, long-legged herons walking in the sawgrass, bright pink flamingos bursting into the air. It was front-page news in 2007 in the Palm Beach Post, and it was the inaugural mural of the *Pineapple Grove Artscape Program*. Donaty was given an award for Excellence in Artistic Building Design by the Delray Appearance Board in 2008.

COMMUNITY NEWS Delray Beach



CHANGE OF SEASON: Columnist Marci Shatzman writes about a snowbird's campaign for a seat on his homeowners association board. Page 2

SECTION EDITOR SUSAN BRYANT, 561-243-6698, sbryant@sun-sentinel.com

Enhancing Pineapple Grove



LARGER THAN LIFE: Lead artist Dana Donaty paints a mural titled *Observations* on the north wall of the Delray Camera Shop in Delray Beach. Motion sensors, activated by passers-by, will be installed to make the mural interactive. Staff photos/Carline Jean

Local artists paint murals at shops, clock tower

BY MARY THURMAN YUHAS
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

For two months this summer, lead artist Dana Donaty and artist Lorraine Nigg labored daily outside in 90-degree heat at the Delray Camera Shop.

"It was brutal," Donaty said. Shop owner Chris Reich recalls how difficult it was for them to work in the intense weather. But everyone says the mural they produced was worth it.

"We have a real work of art on our wall," he said.

The 75-by-12-foot, trompe l'oeil, or realistic illusion, *Observations* is on the north side of the building at 186 NE Second Ave. in Delray Beach. It is Donaty's portrayal of the Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge in the Everglades.

Other artists submitted proposals, but Reich liked Donaty's theme the best. "When I first saw it, it blew me away," he said.

The artwork was made possible by a \$75,000 reimbursement grant from Palm Beach County Commissioner Mary McCarty for the Art-Scape Program, said Sue Keleher,



WALL ART: *Observations* features native flora and fauna found in the Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge in the Everglades.

program manager for Pineapple Grove Main Street.

The money paid for four murals, the installation of sculptured bicycle racks, scooter spaces and sidewalk art in the four-square-block area of Pineapple Grove.

There was a lot of art in Pineapple Grove, but it was removed because of construction, Keleher said.

"Now we are at the point where we can re-install art and sidewalk art and murals," she said.

Donaty completed another mural in Pineapple Grove in November.

Theater of Life is on the building housing Rose Advertising Specialties at 165 NE Second Ave. It shows a large strand of DNA in an old movie house with large curtains, and it morphs from there.

"It's so different; people won't know the two murals were painted by the same artist," Donaty said.

Murals also will be painted on the four-sided clock tower on top of the Esplanade Plaza on Northeast Second Avenue and the east wall of the Love Shack at East Atlantic and Northeast Second avenues. The

sites for murals were selected for their visibility and proximity to retail stores in the district, Keleher said. Artists have not been selected.

Most of the art on the camera shop murals was painted on aluminum panels and attached to the walls. If the buildings are torn down, then she can salvage and reuse the art, Donaty said.

Camilucci Signs in Delray Beach donated use of their warehouse for painting, she said.

Reich said the mural added so much to his camera shop that "we're going to spruce up the front now." He said it will be painted and continue the wetland theme by adding crickets and birds.

Rufus, a Labrador retriever, is the only animal in the mural that is not native to South Florida. The dog belongs to Jim Ward, manager of the camera shop and a commercial photographer, who brings him to work. "Rufus is so popular with camera customers that sometimes they stop by just to see him," Ward said.

Motion sensors will be installed to make *Observations* interactive, Donaty said. People walking by will activate the sensors.

"They will hear general swamp sounds, such as crickets and owls," she said.

For information, go to www.pineapplegrove.org or call 561-279-9952.

Schools promote family nights

BY CLAUDINE MCCARTHY
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

School events that involve parents in their children's academic lives equal success for the students at Pine Grove Elementary School in Delray Beach, Principal Anthony Anderson said.

"Parental involvement is key in the educational process with the students," Anderson said.

The school holds several family nights, each one addressing ways parents can help students improve in areas such as math, science and literacy.

"Community and parental involvement is a big part of the district mission," Anderson said.

Family nights have been very successful in achieving that goal, he said.

Despite a large percentage of parents who do not speak English proficiently, Pine Grove has maintained an A rating for the past two years and a B grade for three years prior, he said.

Scheduling the events at night serves a special purpose.

"A lot of the times parents are working, so this gives them the opportunity to get involved at a later time in the day and gives parents and teachers the opportunity to communicate with each other," Anderson said.

■ FAMILY NIGHTS CONTINUED ON 12

Arts center to be jewel of university

BY LUIS F. PEREZ
STAFF WRITER

Plans call for the new home of Lynn University's theater arts program to become the centerpiece of the Boca Raton campus.

University officials hope to open the 750-seat Keith C. and Elaine Johnson Wold Performing Arts Center by April 2009. It will be a major activity center at the intersection where students meet visitors and the community, the architect for the project said.

The Boca Raton City Council recently approved an exception to city rules, allowing the building to rise to 70 feet, instead of 50 feet, at 3601 N. Military Trail.

Herbert S. Newman, a prominent New Haven, Conn., architect, and his group drew the plans for the theater and concert hall with state-of-the-art acoustics; a modern lighting system; a large, light-filled lobby and flexible space for theater productions, concerts and other cultural events.

"It's going to allow us to do the kind of work we want to do, musicals and

■ CENTER CONTINUES ON 2

Fast forward to 2020 and the Camera Shop was sold. The murals were removed and placed into storage, they were in good shape considering they had been in the Florida sun for 14 years. “The DDA and the CRA got involved and proposed that I restore the murals so they could be installed on the Camera Shop’s new location,” Donaty says in the Arts Warehouse studio she has been working out of. “I’m glad that the county has recognized this as something worth saving and preserving, it’s a piece of art history here.”



Artist Dana Donaty working at her Arts Warehouse studio

As part of a four month Extended Residency Exchange Program at the Arts Warehouse in Delray Beach, Donaty is restoring the *Observations* mural panels on the second floor, studio #14. The process involves deep cleaning the panels with soft soap and sponges, and repainting the panels. Donaty sits up on a scaffold focusing on all the details of the mural, while her Havanese rescue dog *Cash* trots around the studio floor. “I am adding in some new details here also,” she points out. “A few birds, a fish in the Egret’s mouth, just enough to make it a bit fresher. This is harder than I thought it might be, going back into a style I did so many years ago. It’s a lot of color saturation too as it has faded from the sun.”



Dana Donaty in her Arts Warehouse studio with Cash. Photo by Pedro Penalver

Dana has been given studio space to work from, and it's open to the public to view at The Arts Warehouse along with community programming, "In-Studio Interactions" Drop-in Kids Sketching, open studio hours, First Friday Art Walk events and "Workshops" Exploring the Artist Process in August. Arts Warehouse is located at 313 NE 3rd Street in Delray Beach, Florida 33444.



Artist Dana Donaty's 'Observations' mural restoration project at Arts Warehouse in Delray Beach, Florida