

# Camera Shop mural restoration clicks in Delray Beach

The 'Observations' mural, depicting a man in the Everglades with binoculars and a camera seeking out birds, critters, flora, and fauna became something of a landmark through the years, brightening up an otherwise drab stucco business. It is being restored to be installed on the Camera Shop's new location.

By **Sandra Schulman** 07/29/2021



View of the 'Observations' mural by Dana Donaty (Photos Pedro Penalver)

Way back in 2007, before murals were a “thing”, the city of Delray had some money to spend on public art.

Artist Dana Donaty had recently moved to the area and ran into arts advocate Gene Fisher, who connected her with the Pineapple Grove Board. On the board was the owner of the Camera Shop who had a lot of wall space on a one-story building he wanted filled with art.

Dana drew up a proposal for a large wraparound scene she called 'Observations' depicting a man in the Everglades with binoculars and a camera seeking out birds, critters, flora, and fauna. Painted on 10' x 4' Dibond panels with acrylic, 'Observations' was inspired by a visit Donaty made to Author R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge and was one long panoramic connected scene with lush colors and clever detail. Possums hung from branches, herons stalked the sawgrass, bright pink flamingos burst into the humid air.

She got the job and painted the mural in a warehouse, installing it within months.

The mural became something of a landmark through the years, brightening up an otherwise drab stucco business. It was front-page news in 2007 in the Palm Beach Post, and the Delray Forum newspaper touted that it was the first installation in the Pineapple Grove Artscape Program. She was given an award for Excellence in Artistic Building Design by the Delray Appearance Board in 2008.



Parts of Donaty's mural at the old Camera Shop building in Delray Beach (Photo Pedro Penalver)

Flash forward to 2020 and the Camera Shop was sold. The murals were removed and seemed to disappear for a while. As calls and emails went around, it was finally determined the murals had been put into storage and were in reasonably good shape considering they had been in the merciless 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.”

This is a 4-month project, as all the panels need to be deep cleaned and repainted. Using soft soap and sponges and brushes, Donaty sits up on a scaffold zooming in on each detail, pointing out areas that need more work than others. Her rescue dog Cash scampers around the studio.



Dana Donaty at The Arts Warehouse with Cash (Photo Pedro Penalver)

“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.”

Part of the deal is that the studio space she has been given to work out of is 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.

Below, some details of Donaty's 'Observations' mural (click on the photos to enlarge them):



Her working hours vary but she is there at least 3 or 4 days a week; the studio is number 14 on the second floor. Once the mural is restored it will be rehomed at the Camera Shop's new location Delray Camera at 217 NE 4th Ave, Delray Beach. A grand unveiling ceremony is planned for the fall when the residency is finished.

Donaty has been documenting the painting and restoration process online through her social media, with fast-forward videos and lots of photos.

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The restoration and relocation project was made possible by generous support and funding from Pineapple Grove Main Street Inc, Delray Beach CRA, the Arts Warehouse, The Delray Downtown Development Authority, Chris Reich, and the Pineapple Grove Main Street Board Members.

She has other projects ongoing as well, including a collaboration with toy giant FAO Schwartz, who are creating plush animals from some of her imaginary creature creations.

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