

The struggle to play set free

In 1987 I was working as a teacher of Painting and serving as Department Chairman of Fine Arts at Moore college of Art and Design in Philadelphia. During this time I first became acquainted with Dana Donaty. Dana was memorable, as a student a bit of a bomb thrower. She worked well in class but was one to much a project to its limits. She had an internal sense of how far one could go to get a good product but always gave an extra push to explore new territory. She had the respect of other students and clearly was a leader, one to whom others looked for direction.

She was a prodigious worker and took pride in challenging faculty. I remember clearly being asked by faculty to speak with her about being more focused on the class and its mean than on her own personal agenda. This was precisely what I liked about her, her sense of direction. Even then presented a vision of an artist determined to break any barrier that rose in her path. It was not the finish of her work that impressed me so much as the force of her work.

After graduation I lost track of her until ten years ago when I was exhibiting at Art Palm Beach. Dana, now living in Florida was creating commissioned works and finishes in high-end Palm Beach homes, but looking to expand her studio practice. I was glad to see that she was using her talents and had found a way to make a living to boot. About three years ago she came to me seeking advice. We talked a while and then I gave her my insight, doubting she would heed my advice as people frequently say they want to make a go for something but rarely are willing to do the hard work that” going for it ‘requires. Six months passed and Dana asked me to see what she was doing. First I was impressed and delighted to see that she had taken my advice to make deeper commitment to her art and had also been juried into an artist-in-residence at bakehouse Art Complex in Miami.

I realized immediately she was cultivating a fresh approach to her work, incorporating her highly developed painting skills with a random chance element. A bold energy sizzled thru these new works. Accidents gave birth to carefully realized imaginary apparitions. The work revealed a clue into how playful and dazzling her mind is and each new piece seemed to gain from the last as she crossed artistic territory and broke down new doors entering uncharted zones. She leapt into the third dimension because the work insisted , she then returned to the painted space creating direct connections with Baroque and Rococo masters, not even previously knowing them.

Dana is a well-trained skillful craftsman with a risk takers soul. She is fearless of failure and searches not for success but rather completion of self. Her palette sings with the full-throated sound of the tropics, her images dance and jump as leprechauns working feverishly on some devilish plan of mayhem. Her thirst for

new injections of techniques and products puts her right in step with today's finest young mixed media masters.

The arc of Dana Donaty is vibrant, like a freshly released lighted arrow sent skyward by an archer of old into a dark summer sky, it lights every thing it passes with its ember and beacons others to follow as it clearly lights our way.

Now for me it is a pleasure to get together with Dana we share enthusiastically ideas about new materials. We are no longer the teacher and student, but rather are two artists searchers straining to see a bit further. It is a pleasure to see how time spent over the years was well spent with Dana who I stand beside and admire for her tenacity, perseverance, and elegant determination to seek her own voice and join a majestic chorus while others imitate and posture. Dana's voice strains to find that perfect note , reserved only for originals to attain.

Frank Hyder is an artist, former Painting Professor and Department Chair at Moore College of Art and Design in Philadelphia