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Enhancing Pineapple Grove

Local artists paint murals at shops, clock tower

January 06, 2008 | 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 ArtScape Program, said Sue Keleher, 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.

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