

# The Arts Paper

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## Art



## Mural renewal

With helping hand from Delray, artist retools 2007 work

By Jan Engoren  
Contributing Writer

Boynton Beach-based artist Dana Donaty created her mural, *Observations*, in 2007 for a Delray Beach camera shop.

That mural, originally located at 186 NE Second Ave., is being restored and refurbished by the artist at the Arts Warehouse in Delray Beach, thanks to funding from the city, the Pineapple Grove Main Street Board, the Delray Beach CRA and the Arts Warehouse.

Fourteen years ago, *Observations* was the inaugural mural of the Pineapple Grove Arts District Artscape Program. For the restoration project, the city donated the working studio space to Donaty as part of a four-month extended residency exchange

program at the Arts Warehouse.

As part of the residency, Donaty will offer community workshops, host open studio hours and take part in the First Friday Art Walk events.

"I'm very grateful that the city of Delray Beach recognizes this work as part of the city's cultural identity," says Donaty, a Colombian-American raised in New Jersey. "I hope that it continues to resonate with people and to be part of the conversation about the city's character."

She notes that the camera shop building was sold in 2020 and the mural, mounted on removable dibond panels, was put into storage.

"The mural was in such a state of

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Scenes from Dana Donaty's 14-year-old mural *Observations*, which was originally mounted on a building in downtown Delray. It is currently being refurbished and will be relocated. Photos provided

## Music

### Flagler to host six concerts by UM musicians

By Bill Meredith  
ArtsPaper Music Writer

The Frost School of Music at the University of Miami is the linchpin of all South Florida musical institutions. Renamed for arts patrons Phillip and Patricia Frost in 2003, its program goes back 95 years.

Notable students emerging from Frost include saxophonists Paul Chafin (1930-2008) and Bobby Watson, vocalist/keyboardist Bruce Hornsby, singers Carmen Lundy and Jon Secada, guitarists Pat Metheny, Randy Bernsen and Jonathan Kreisberg, bassists Jaco Pastorius (1951-1987) and Javier Carrion, and drummers Danny Gottlieb and Vince Verderame.

"Those who can, do; those who can't, teach" is a saying rendered even more



Berg

preposterous at Frost, where dean Shelly Berg (also an acclaimed touring pianist) continues a tradition of faculty being working

musicians — not to mention students being working musicians, who gain an invaluable education onstage.

The school's faculty jazz sextet of saxophonist Marcus Strickland (whose credits include Roy Haynes and Christian McBride); trumpeters Brian Lynch (Art Blakey, Eddie Palmieri) and Etienne Charles (Marcus Miller, Roberta Flack); pianist Martin Bejerano (Haynes, Kreisberg);

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## MURAL

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disrepair, I'm glad I got the opportunity to give it a second life," she said. Once refurbished, the panels will be installed on the new camera shop location at 217 NE Fourth Ave.

"Having Dana as an artist resident at the Arts Warehouse is a pleasure," said Renée Jadusingh, executive director of the CRA. "Dana taught several art classes at the Arts Warehouse and we were able to watch the mural restoration first-hand. We can't wait to see the final installation."

Created in acrylic on two 10-foot-by-36-foot removable panels in conjunction with a site-specific painting connecting the two panels, the mural looks like one continuous landscape.

The mural won two awards for excellence in public art, one in 2008 and the second in 2010.

"I'm inspired by our natural environment and our need for it," Donaty said.

The native flora and fauna found at the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge was the artist's muse.

The focal point of the mural is the Arthur R. Marshall Observation Deck, where a visitor with a camera is kneeling to shoot a close-up



An updated scene in *Observations*. Photo provided

of a golden blue macaw, as a roseate spoonbill perches on the deck above him and another hovers over him in mid-air.

More than 47 animals are depicted, including a purple gallinule, a newly added great horned owl, black-bellied whistling ducks, tri-color herons, possums, raccoons and — as Donaty sadly noted — an ivory-billed woodpecker, which

in September was declared extinct, after spending years on the endangered species list.

Donaty is taking the opportunity to reinvent her vision, adding new touches to the mural, such as transforming the cumulus clouds from white to sunset-tinged, with pink and purple tones.

New wildlife such as the North American squirrel has

been added along with a sign on the Observation Deck that has the mural's name (*Observations*), her name, an Instagram icon and her website address.

A number of the creatures Donaty painted in 2007, she now thinks, "were just standing there." To give them more life, she provided "snacks": an American white ibis chomps on a newly imagined fish and a nearby blue heron captures a dead frog in its mouth.

Additionally, Donaty says she wanted to add more interaction and relationships between the creatures and to use more saturated, enriched colors — what she calls a "loaded palette."

In an ever-changing landscape of urban development and progress, where a new hotel is being constructed across from the new mural site, Donaty has not lost sight of the irony of what she's painting. Her idealized portrayal of the Everglades introduces the viewer to what she calls "an alternate version of progress."

"It's a bit of a snarky comment," she says, "having our natural world displayed in a parking lot."

Donaty kept the original photos she used 14 years ago to create the mural and was able to refer to them to ensure accuracy of colors, shadows and anatomy.

Other murals by Donaty on display locally include the *Seas the Day* mural at the Sandbar on A1A in Delray and *Big Red*, which graces Boynton Beach Fire Station No. 5.

"It's been interesting to watch the evolution of the mural in real time and to be part of the process," said Grace Gdaniec, Arts Warehouse manager, adding that her favorite part is the newly envisioned sunset-themed clouds.

And for Donaty, what was it like to revisit a piece of work she created 14 years ago?

"It is a challenge," Donaty said, noting that her style has significantly evolved since then, "but I wanted to be the one to do it and not have it happen some other way."

