

Whimsy on Steroids

Donaty is a 'Tour de Force' of an artist. She is every bit as dynamic as the art she creates. Her canvases pulsate with color and all sorts of lively and quirky little creatures that appear to be spelling out a curious narrative. However, as hard as the viewer tries to discern some sort of meaning from the scene before them, it always remains a fun-filled enigma that leaves the viewer with more questions than answers.

And that's the way the artist likes it, for 'Enigmagnetism' is Donaty's middle name. She enjoys leaving a lot for the imagination and that is what makes her and her work so intriguing. Even while having a discussion with her, a person is always left wondering what is she really thinking? Is she agreeing with me? Is she mocking me? One always denotes a touch of larceny in her voice and an almost imperceptible twinkle in her eyes. This enigmatic yin-yang quality permeates her persona as well as her artwork.

The group of paintings that I was most drawn to, has larger-than-life figurative elements taking up a large portion of the canvases. They help anchor the work and give them a sense of scale. Often these figurative elements take the form of a pair of legs from the thigh down either clad in dancing shoes, ballet slippers, or sneakers. One of my favorites depicts a large lovable dog resting peacefully in the bottom right-hand corner of the canvas while tons of little creatures dance around him.

The artist employs a clever and provocative process to create her beguiling creatures. While painting a canvas, Dana places a canvas under her work area. Paint flows, drips and globs down onto the canvas below creating a haphazard amalgam of shapes that could be compared to artistic cloud formations. When finished with her current canvas, she then turns to this artistic left-over fallout. She employs a technique known as Pareidolia.

Pareidolia is a psychological phenomenon involving a vague and random stimulus (often an image or sound) being perceived as significant, form of apophenia. Common examples include seeing images of animals or faces in clouds, the man in the moon or the Moon Rabbit, and hearing hidden messages on records when played in reverse. In his notebooks, Leonardo da Vinci wrote of pareidolia as a device for painters, writing "if you look at any walls spotted with various stains or with a mixture of different kinds of stones, if you are about to invent some scene you will be able to see in it a resemblance to various different landscapes adorned with mountains, rivers, rocks, trees, plains, wide valleys, and various groups of hills. You will also be able to see divers combats and figures in quick movement, and strange expressions of faces, and outlandish costumes, and an infinite number of things which you can then reduce into separate and well conceived forms."

JoAnne Berkow gallery owner, artist, writer and philanthropist