



FAR LEFT: Metal figures stand guard in the yard of Lori Daniels and Stephen White. **LEFT:** Not only is the Victorian farmhouse near Mapleton crammed with art, it is also home to a posse of dogs. This artwork by Daniels hangs in a themed room.

‘I LIVE IT & BREATHE IT’

Creating art isn't a job for Mapleton's Lori Daniels. It's her vocation



Some artists create their work in studios. Lori Daniels has a compound.

The Mapleton artist — known nationally for works made out of salvaged tin ceilings from the late 1800s — lives in the country with Stephen White, her partner in business and life. Their Victorian farmhouse is filled with art supplies, antiques from their decades spent as dealers, and a posse of dogs who scramble to sniff newcomers.

Some visitors may be overwhelmed by the clutter and the chaos. But to Daniels, a prolific artist, it serves as inspiration. Daniels says she creates art every day. She can't wait to get up in the morning and get at it.

"It's not a job, it's a vocation — like taking the vow of a nun or a priest," she says. "I live it and breathe it every day."

Distracted by nature

Daniels, now in her 50s, was artistic from an early age. Growing up in Wisconsin, she used to get reprimanded for staring out classroom windows, admiring trees and leaves.

"I used to walk home and be fascinated by leaves on the ground and the moldy print they'd make on the sidewalk," said Daniels, who once got in trouble for eating crayons because she wanted to find out what color tasted like.

ABOVE: Artist Lori Daniels lives outside of Mapleton on sprawling farmhouse with partner Stephen White. Several buildings, including this old barn, are jammed full of salvaged tin that will be used in future artwork.

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DANIELS

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She first attended the University of Wisconsin, studying art (and later studied sculpture at Bradley University). At age 32, she found herself married to a business executive and living in a gated community northwest of Rockford.

"I loved him deeply, but there was something in me that said there was so much more (to life)," she said. She left to pursue a career in antiques. She eventually met White, a folk art dealer, who was inhabiting the 1870 Victorian home after a divorce.

"I was living the low life before she came along," said White, a Princeton native who is happy to show visitors the barns and corn cribs on the seven-acre property, where tin gets recycled into treasure.

'Every piece speaks to me'

Daniels says an artist, no matter the medium, should work

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VIDEO REPORT:

To see a video of Lori Daniels and Stephen White at their home in Mapleton, visit www.pjstar.com.

every day. She paints every morning — either outdoors in the backyard when the weather

is mild, or in her kitchen during the winter months, when a massive island becomes crowded with paint cans, dishes of beads, pieces of glass. Sometimes art supplies get mixed up with kitchen supplies; she once inadvertently poured turpentine on a stack of pancakes.

No two pieces of her art are alike. The tin is salvaged from old buildings around the country — sometimes by White but often by a crew, since it is a dirty and dangerous job. When White power washes coal residue from the tin, he cuts the pieces. They assemble them, and Daniels primes and scrapes the tin, then coats it many times with a patented glaze that gives the tin a look similar to pottery. The appearance depends on the tin pattern, but paint colors she decides to mix that day, what temperature it is when the glaze is applied.

"Every piece speaks to me and tells me what to do with it," she said.

While the pair has tin stockpiled in buildings, the material is running out. There was only so much of it created in the late 19th century, before the Industrial Revolution brought other materials into fashion.



ADAM GERIK/JOURNAL STAR

ABOVE: Stephen White stands in a garage full of antique license plates, which are often cut and painted as they're transformed into art by Lori Daniels. **BELOW:** Daniels applies clear enamel to a square of tin art to protect the underlying paint and glazes.



Daniels has started transitioning into other styles. She creates automobile-themed collages, incorporating old license plates, keys, gas can caps, blinker lights, reflectors and springs. She also creates abstract collages out of hand-painted wooden

blocks and incorporates beads, antique pens, aluminum coffee cans and glass. She makes heart-themed works around Valentine's Day, her favorite holiday.

'This is my paradise'

Daniels surrounds herself with the work of other artists she admires: local ceramicist Jacob Grant; Iowa painter Louis Picek; metal sculptor Lincoln Smithy. The pieces have a home next to beloved antiques — an undated totem pole, antique bottles, beautifully worn furniture.

All these possessions inspire Daniels. But as time goes by, she takes more and more inspiration from nature: a leaf that skitters by in the wind, birds flapping to get their seeds at the feeder, richly textured bark salvaged from an old tree.

"I used to want everything in the world," she

ON THE WEB

To find where to purchase Daniels' art locally, visit <http://antiquetoneexpressions.net>.

nature and God. Being at the farm is where I relate most to those. This is my paradise."

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