

LORI DANIELS

TIN ARTIST \ Mapleton, Ill.

Medium: glazes



HITTING THE tin ceiling

From March through November, artist Lori Daniels, owner of Antique Tin Expressions, sets up her studio outside her home in central Illinois near Mapleton. The owner of a big, beautiful 1870s farmhouse, Daniels works in her gardens under a canopy in front of her carriage house. "I start at 4 a.m.," she says. "I have lots of tables and I hand-mix paints—my colors are unusual."

Those paints eventually make their way to Daniels' "canvases," which are actually antique ceiling tins. None are ever the same, because, she says, "I can't redo my own recipe." The sounds and sights that surround her worksite inspire her "color recipes." "I have lots of antiques, pottery, ceramics, dogs, kitties, and I like to listen to the leaves rustling and the birds."

The idea to paint the ceiling tiles came to her after she had been an antiques dealer for some 25 years. "I had collected piles of ceiling tin," she recalls, "barns full of tin." The creative muse dabbled with various tin-painting techniques

and around 2002, she invented a glaze that caused a spectacular chemical reaction on the tins, making them look as if they were fired tile. "I was inspired by the antique tiles and pottery that I collect [multi-hued Majolica is a favorite]. That was my 'aha' moment." The glazed tins, which resemble modern relief sculpture, have themes that range from vineyard to angelic to women's faces to botanical and more.

Daniels reclaims, cleans and glazes the pieces in a variety of rich hues and contrasts and then assembles them in various layouts. "These tins give a whole new generation of people a chance to look at something that's usually 20 feet up in the air, to look at chemical changes, what happens to things," Daniels says. "A lot of these historical ceilings are torn down and destroyed—I try to save and restore these pieces of history." Her works are in private collections, commercial buildings, and galleries in Colorado, California, New York, New Mexico, Florida, Massachusetts and beyond.

"I think about art in my sleep; I can't wait to get up and get outside," she says. "Nothing interests me as much as being in the garden, in nature, painting. I consider it a blessing."

SEE HER WORK: At her home and studio, Antique Tin Expressions (Mapleton, Ill., 309.565.4876, antiquetinexpressions.net). Daniels' work can also be found at Thistle Gallery in Holland, Mich., and the Vale Craft Gallery and Lotton Gallery in Chicago. Also view her work at lustregallery.com.

