

Hampton House Bed & Breakfast

An Unexpected Artistic Encounter

Story By Eileen Robinson Smith
Photography by Michelle Hazel

Diane Forde incorporates numerous artistic disciplines into the operation of her acquisition, Hampton House Bed & Breakfast, (500 Hampton St.) which she and her husband, Henry, bought in 2005. What was always considered Walterboro's mansion, the Howell-Fishburne House (c. 1912), now has three deluxe guest accommodations and is a venue for weddings and special events.



Co-owner, Diane Forde, Artist, Designer, Antique & Toy Collector Par Excellence

The manse is decorated with a fascinating array of antiques and art juxtaposed with thrift shop finds. Visitors are dazzled by the interior décor, particularly that of the dining and living rooms, where an Edwardian couch and Victorian settee, reupholstered in leopard skin, reign. Wherever the eye travels, it finds a treasure, like the Delft-style porcelain riding boot, unearthed in an antique shop. From an estate sale in East Hampton, N.Y., the stainless-steel, boar's head, with a corn cob in its mouth, is used as a centerpiece for the formal dining table.

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Diane's art education began at the School of Visual Arts in Manhattan, the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence and spanned the ocean to San Marino, Italy and to Lucerne, Switzerland, where she studied fashion design and visual merchandising.



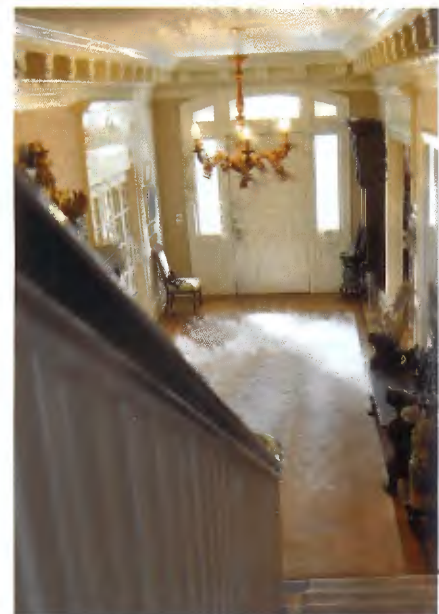
Her professional career includes being a visual merchandiser (a designer of window displays) at Macy's, Herald Square, NYC, Filene's in Boston, and the Harvard Co-op in Cambridge.

Since buying Hampton House, she has designed two outdoor areas: a large free-standing pergola, which her husband Henry built, that is used as a backdrop for parties and weddings, and from a carport, she created a garden room from latticework and used plantation shutters found at a Habitat for Humanity Store. A large, lion's-head fountain is the focal point, the antique wicker was her mother's, and the Asian-patterned, cushion fabric had belonged to the mother of Dargan Fishburne Moore. It is complemented by three colorful umbrellas from Bali.

who come from all parts of the globe, Diane orchestrates tea parties and luncheons in the elegant dining room or when weather permits, by the pool on the terrace. She creates children's theme parties as well. A recent tea party had an "Alice in Wonderland" theme.

"A takeoff on Alice's mad tea party," Diane explained, "I made props to decorate the table, with place cards of Alice, holding playing cards. Copies of original illustrations from "Alice in Wonderland," were cut out, glued onto chopsticks and added to a camellia arrangement. I framed actual photos of British author Lewis Carol and the real life English girl, Alice, for the mantle. Dargan gave an etiquette class during the tea party, when heart shaped cakes, scones and cookies were served. There was a choice of pomegranate or key lime tea."

Afterwards the children delighted in a tour of the doll house collection, the house and gardens and Diane's art studio. The former parlor houses her extensive collection of antique toys and doll houses with showings by appointment. The children so enjoyed the entire event that one of the mothers asked if Diane would do a maypole party in the garden.



As an artist who works in many mediums, Diane's studio is filled to brimming with colorful paintings, constructions, and The Hampton House Collection, which is a line of evening bags, jewelry and scarves named The Cocktail Cuff. (Recycled materials are used in her creations, from salvaged fabric, metals, wood, and paper

The evening bags are made from both vintage and new brocades, velvets, silks, antique lace and chiffon. Accented with colorful trims, vintage pins and flowers, the inside of each bag is felt, recycled from plastic bottles.

Diane decorates straw hats with found items from nature – hawk, turkey and owl feathers as well as lotus pods, for examples. Scarves are made of recycled cotton knits, silks and fine wools. Some are made of fabric swatches patched together to create interesting designs. Scarves might have pins made from camellia pods that have been painted gold.



The jewelry is a combination of semi-precious beads of agate, bone, fresh water pearls, coral, turquoise, cosines and so on, in combination with handmade beads of clay and recycled paper. The cigar-box hand bags are covered with decoupage created from hand blocked papers and prints of Diane's paintings.

Constructions and sculptures utilize a wide variety of materials, again, recycled.

A guitar found in a dumpster was the catalyst for a recent creation. The artist took a broken and bent wooden coat rack and fashioned the legs and



arms. A mask serves as the face, a place mat for a hat. The sculpture has a handkerchief in its hand and teardrops painted on her cheeks. She is named: "While my guitar gently weeps." Meanwhile, in the garden there is a women fashioned from salvaged metals; a horse stirrup cleverly looks like a pair of glasses and two wire baskets form the breasts for this "Lady Bountiful."

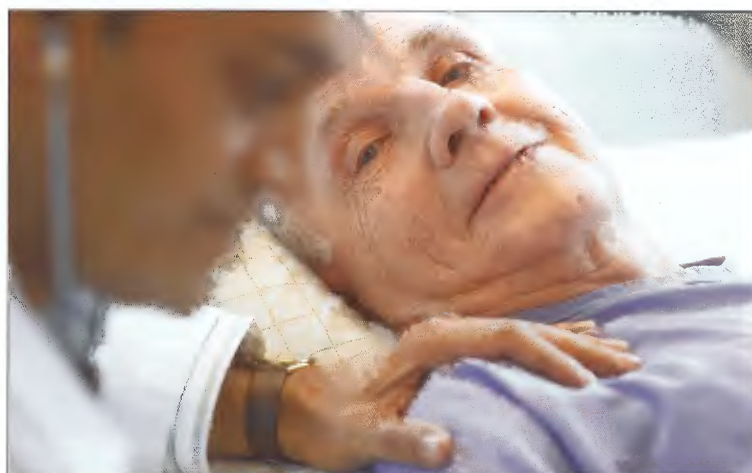
Diane's paintings – acrylics on canvas, watercolors and pastels – are portraits of animals, fish, exotic birds and people. Her assemblages or constructions are made of wooden boxes with small paintings recessed into the box with many other elements added to tell a story. One such is a miniature of an ole-timey circus side show encased in a brightly painted wooden box, decorated with circus banners and posters and filled with figures of giants, midgets and bizarre circus performers.

Guests enjoy the varied displays and art exhibits that add to one's experience at this most unusual bed and breakfast inn.

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