

PLUS: 93 WATERVIEW RESTAURANTS

CAPE COD LIFE

MARTHA'S VINEYARD & NANTUCKET

the cape & islands

DINING GUIDE

AUGUST 2013 \$4.99

Display Until September 16, 2013

\$4.99US

08>



0 45565 65881 5

capecodlife.com

CAPE COD LIFE
PUBLICATIONS

— Since 1979 —



PROVINCETOWN

MUSE

Sculptor Danielle Mailer's visual vocabulary is inspired by cherished Cape Cod memories.

by Debbie Forman

THE INSPIRATION FOR DANIELLE Mailer's colorful artwork—often depicting the female form along with dogs, cats, horses, and fish—comes from her longtime relationship with Provincetown's unique landscape and culture. As a favorite destination for summer trips as a child and in later years, Provincetown holds a special place in Mailer's heart.

Provincetown has continuously been a source of inspiration for the artist. "It is my spiritual home," Mailer says. "I need it for my equanimity. The smells, the light, the colors have found their way into my psyche, my cells, my spirit, and in this way have become a part of my visual vocabulary, if not literally then certainly symbolically. And even after all these years, I still have a child-like sense of excitement and wonder at that moment when I first see the strip of land that brings the [Pilgrim] Monument into view. It is pure happiness."

Although she has now put down roots in Goshen, Connecticut, almost every summer of Mailer's life was spent at least partly in Provincetown visiting her father, well-known writer Norman Mailer. "He insisted on all of us being together every summer... we were his muses. He was the barometer and set the tone. He always had a madcap plan that we were a part of."

When Mailer talks about her childhood, she labels it "unorthodox." How could it be anything else when her mother, Adele Morales Mailer—Norman Mailer's second wife—was an artist, and



OPPOSITE: *Queen of Dreams*, 2011, acrylic on canvas, 8 x 10 inches, Courtesy of Berta Walker Gallery, Provincetown.

ABOVE: *Cat Tales, #2*, 2011, acrylic on aluminum, 17 ½ x 14 ½ x 5 inches, Courtesy of Berta Walker Gallery, Provincetown.



LEFT: *Room with a Muse*, 2007, mixed media collage, 24 x 30 inches, Courtesy of the Berta Walker Gallery, Provincetown.

RIGHT: *Black and White Cat*, 2011, acrylic on aluminum, 16 x 12 inches, Courtesy of the Berta Walker Gallery, Provincetown

her father was a Pulitzer Prize-winning author and playwright? “It was part of the fabric of [having] a famous father,” Mailer says, recalling life as one of nine children growing up in their father’s limelight.

The brilliant colors found in Mailer’s work are drawn from the influence of her mother’s Latin heritage. Both parents, she says, powerfully impacted her life. After they divorced when she was five, her father spent time with her and her sister on weekends and took them to the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

As a child, Danielle took classes at the Art Students League, and her interest in the subject carried her through to Bowdoin College in Maine where she majored in art and English. After college, she worked as a waitress in New York. “My father was not big on nepotism,” she says. “He was uncomfortable using his influence.”

Continuing her interest in art, Mailer studied at the New York Studio School, and later took up graphic design at the School of Visual Arts, both located in New York City. With her strong background, she worked for *ARTnews*—one of the most widely read art magazines—in the graphic design department.

After Mailer married and had a child, she found her way back into the world of fine art, beginning with collage in the late 1990s. From there, she moved on to mixed media works and then acrylic on canvas, rendering figures against a rich, patterned background. “Then I had the idea of pulling them out

of the rectangle. I like the way a silhouette is punched out,” she says. She worked on life-size Masonite pieces, designed for a wall, which then turned into freestanding silhouettes that are painted on both sides and, she says, “have two different realities.”

Her exuberant female figures in her collages and paintings have evolved into silhouetted aluminum works, which dance in exhilarated movements, arms flying and legs kicking. She says they relate to her first husband and father of her daughter Isabella, Michael Moschen, who was a juggler with a love of dance.

These silhouettes are carefully patterned with symbols that relate to aspects of Mailer’s life: Peppers and artichokes are connected to her mother, who was a wonderful cook; the trombone is the instrument of Peter McEachern, Mailer’s husband and a jazz musician; and the leopard is an homage to her grandmother, who loved leopard patterns.

Since her father’s passing in 2007, Mailer and her eight siblings continue to go to Provincetown in the summer for a reunion. “I check in every year to put my toes in the bay. It’s my annual baptism, my annual toe-dipping,” she says with a laugh. On these yearly summertime vacations Mailer often exhibits at the Berta Walker Gallery on Bradford Street. Her work at the gallery includes paintings of female figures, and large aluminum silhouettes of dogs and cats.



Dreaming in Color, 2012, acrylic on canvas, 10 x 36 inches. Courtesy of the Berta Walker Gallery, Provincetown.

In the past few years, Mailer has done a number of works on commission, two of which are installed in Torrington, Connecticut: a 12-foot cat mounted on a second-story building façade, and a 12-by-16-foot horse she painted on a scaffold installed at ground level. Most recently, she completed a 14-foot lioness for the Scoville Memorial Library in Salisbury, Connecticut.

Talking about her love of animals, both in her personal life and in her art, Mailer says, “I grew up with lots of pets, including five cats and a dog in our New York City apartment. My mother was a passionate animal lover and she passed it on to me.” As she continues on to talk about her use of animals within her work, she says, “I love the universality of the animal. The cat is intriguing because of the nine-lives metaphor and as an expression of endurance and grace.” Just as with her human figures, all the animals portrayed are females, and self-portraits in one way or another.

Mailer sees her female figures as an extension of herself; they often have long dark hair and elongated faces, like hers (and, she adds, like Modigliani’s paintings of women). Although she says her figures don’t necessarily start out to be in her likeness, “invariably some of the work comes out looking like me.” “I don’t use the male form,” Mailer says, explaining why she chooses to exclusively use the female figure. “As an artist you have to have the integrity to do what feels honest.”

“Some pieces are directly autobiographical,” she notes. “Others are fantastical or iconic.” Her work is also about “getting at the spiritual underpinnings” of the figure. “There’s a story going on.” And she is interested in touching on the surreal, on magical realism. Although introspective and “highly personal,” her works are also universal in many ways. Her imagination spawns female figures and animals that take off in wondrous ways into lustrous patterns, reflective of Matisse.

Not unlike the lively and festive Provincetown environment, Mailer’s art is exhilarating; boldly conceived with serpentine lines that venture into lyrical turns and arabesques, colors that shout, and patterns that ignite your imagination.

Debbie Forman is a freelance writer specializing in stories on art and the author of the recently published book, *Cape Cod Artists: Images of Land and Sea*.