

State of the art

A contemporary artist brings originality to home interiors

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At first glance, Delfina Falcao's home doesn't look much different from those of her neighbours on the placid, suburban street. The garden is well-tended and a mid-size car sits in the driveway. A patio stone path winds its way through a lush lawn leading to the front stoop. However, it's here that you immediately know an artist calls this place home once you glimpse the gleaming bits of brightly coloured glass embedded into the concrete slab.

Upon entering Delfina's home, a vibrant yet soothing interior unfurls. This is her vision, one that is becoming increasingly popular amongst Ottawa homeowners.

Delfina, who regularly works with the city's top interior designers, creates a seemingly endless supply of contemporary and unique, yet accessible, art pieces. The award-winning artist has also been commissioned by notable Ottawa personalities, including food guru Margaret Dickenson.

For Delfina, the variety and freedom of being an artist, as well as the reaction when someone sees a piece for the first time, is what drives her.

"Each project is different, and I love that feeling that people like what they see," she says. "It's a reward."

The Brazilian-born artist came to Ottawa 14 years ago with her husband and three children. She was educated as a scientist, and over the years has earned an undergrad degree in industrial design, a master's degree in production engineering, a PhD in the software development field and she did a post-PhD fellowship on the creation of surgical equipment.

This logic-driven training belies her artistic bent, especially when one learns that her studies included an extensive thesis on the mechanics of feet and how to reduce the waste of leather when making shoes.

Although she has no formal training in her craft, Delfina finds inspiration from other artists, but more importantly, from everyday life. "Anything inspires me," Delfina says, adding that Gustav Klimt, Frank Lloyd Wright and Piet Mondrian are influences.

And while Delfina's work is unique, the influences of these artists are evident in the crisp, clean and simple lines and the incorporation of rich hues.

"My head is always extremely busy; sometimes I can't sleep." Indeed, the petite, dark-haired woman refers to herself as a night owl, and says she likes to work when it's quiet.

Delfina's career as an artist began upon arriving in Ottawa, when she started to decorate her own home. Friends took notice of the bold style and asked her to design for them. Despite some initial trepidation that Ottawa was simply too conservative for her style, Delfina continues to find a receptive audience, including one showing at the National Gallery. Her work is also on display at Bruce House, an AIDS hospice in Ottawa.

Delfina makes pieces to fulfill just about every home decor need, from sculptures, murals and dishes to greeting cards, paintings, lights, and carpets. Her studio is populated with carefully organized materials, which include everything from fabric, glass, felt pens and ribbon. Perhaps the most prized tool is the glass kiln, which is used to heat glass until it is malleable.

When designing for a client, Delfina will typically visit the home to get a sense of the owner's style. From there, she envisions the creation, provides a sort of "mock-up," and takes about two weeks to complete a piece.

Delfina's most popular works are those that play with glass. She recently created a backsplash that is teeming with geometric shapes and



Artist Delfina Falcao has developed a loyal following of her contemporary designs. For more information, go to www.definafalcao.com or call 613-599-9540.

colours fused into the glass for a homeowner. Delfina also likes to paint walls with designs or simple pops of colour to complement a room, such as one project in which she painted a dreamy mural for a baby's room. She says her inspiration often comes from a component of the room a homeowner wants to build upon, like a particular pattern on a curtain.

"Delfina is really a true artist," says interior designer Penny Southam, president of Southam Design Inc., who used an elaborate glass piece by Delfina in one of her award-winning room renovations. "She is really unique and passionate and she puts a lot of heart and soul into each piece."

Written by Kate Chappell