

Donna Falcone – From Azure to Zaffre

Welcome to ABAC's Georgia Museum of Agriculture 44th exhibit since its opening in 2010.

Few people know the work involved in curating an exhibition like one you are seeing today. A lot of skill and effort goes into finding artists, scheduling the events, and coordinating the logistics. I think Polly Huff, GMA's curator, does an amazing job bringing incredible works of art for the community's enjoyment.

An Overview of the Exhibition

- This exhibition is a celebration of the children's book, "A is for Azure: The Alphabet in Colors." Written by L.L. Barkat and illustrated by our own local artist, Donna Falcone.
- The creative work of Donna is displayed on the walls of the gallery. You will find brilliant artwork celebrating each letter of the alphabet in color.
- Use the walking sheet or the exhibit copy of Donna's book to find all the letters, which are not in alphabetical order on purpose.
- There are a few original tiles available for purchase, also you can get your signed copy of the book today
- We will find out more about her artistic process shortly from her lecture and her demonstration. Donna and Polly Huff, our GMA Curator, will be available to give tours and answer your questions immediately after and during the demonstration
- As a side note, while you are here, visit the neighboring exhibit in the small gallery, just to our left here - Colin's Creatures-A World of Sheep

I want to take a point of personal privilege and provide background explaining how I became involved in this project.

For those of you familiar with Jane Austin's Pride and Prejudice, you will remember a scene when Ms. Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy are visiting Lady

Catherine at her country estate, Rosings. They are all being introduced to Ms. Bennet's musical talents.

At some point Lady Catherine, in her humble manner says, "There are few people in England, I suppose, who have more true enjoyment of music than myself, or a better natural taste. If I had ever learnt, I should have been a great proficient."

Now obviously, we are not gathered at a country estate in England, but today we are being introduced to true artistic talent.

I became aware of Donna's abilities when she, Joe, her husband, Rhonda, my wife, and I were dining at one of Tifton's most prestigious eating establishments, Northside Café. During one of our Saturday morning gossip sessions, Donna casually mentioned that she had done the illustrations for a book titled "A is for Azure: The Alphabet in Colors." by L.L Barkat.

As soon as I arrived home that morning, I reviewed the book on my computer. My immediate response was, "Wow, this is incredible!" I promptly sent a message to Polly saying, "you have to see this." Polly responded almost immediately, "Wow, this is incredible!"

Well, yeah! That is what I said!

Long story short – Polly took the ball, ran with it and here we are.

Subsequently, I have learned a lot more about Donna's talents through our connections at ABAC, additional morning breakfasts, and attendance at St. Anne's Episcopal Church.

In addition to being an amazing artist, Donna is also a composer, musician, poet, and performer. The Tifton community is fortunate to have her and Joe as part of the local community. Joe is chair of ABAC's Science and Mathematics Department and Professor of Chemistry.

Like many of us here today, Donna is not native to Tifton.

Donna was born and raised in the small canal town of Spencerport, New York. Donna, Joe, and their two sons have lived in Buffalo N.Y., Winston-Salem N.C., Johnson City, Tenn., Clarks Summit, Pa., and now Tifton, Ga.

In 2009, a debilitating case of Lyme Disease ended Donna's long career in Early Childhood Education where for years, she helped children, college students, and teachers find their creative voices. In 2015, Donna discovered her own voice through a venture into alcohol inks.

In "A is for Azure: The Alphabet in Colors," Donna's illustrations have attracted quite a bit of national attention. We are thrilled to be able to present her work right here in Tifton at ABAC's Georgia Museum of Agriculture.

And I am pleased to have played a small part in today's event.

So, in conclusion, I will say, "There are few people in Tifton, Ga, I suppose, who have more true enjoyment of art than myself, or a better natural taste."

However, I truly understand that the talent on display here today is truly a gift that cannot really ever be Taught or "Learnt," but can only be shared and admired. And we owe Donna Falcone a huge thanks for "sharing" her amazing gift with us in her first, but definitely not her last public exhibition.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my honor and privilege to introduce to you, Donna Falcone.