



NATURAL-BORN ARTIST

BROOKLYN'S YOLANDE MILAN BATTEAU PAINTS HER OWN PATH WITH A NONPAREIL WAVE OF WALLCOVERINGS AND SURFACES.

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The Callidus Guild experience begins before even entering the studio in Brooklyn's Clinton Hill, where you find yourself immersed in front of an ivy-clad brick façade straight from a Frances Hodgson Burnett prose. The magic continues inside the impressive triplex, where the studio's founder and visionary, Yolande Milan Batteau, set up shop more than a decade ago and has been hand-painting exquisite surfaces ever since. A trained fine artist who was raised in Los Angeles, Batteau brings nearly three decades of experience and mastery to Callidus Guild, a home-like atelier where she fabricates large-scale installations, panels and wallcoverings for public and private application. "I've been interested in fine art as long as I can remember," she says.

Much like her extraordinary surfaces, Batteau's career has followed an organic course. Fascinated by natural materials from an early age, she decided to pursue painting as her primary form of expression while studying at the San Francisco Art Institute, where she developed pigments and textures of her own. Some years and 50-something countries later, she found herself on architect Peter Marino's roster of artisans, which brought her to painting and installing surfaces in fashion houses such as Chanel and Louis Vuitton. Certainly, Batteau's illustrious clientele has expanded (Gucci, Tiffany and Jean Louis Deniot, to name a few), but she coolly keeps them catalogued by uniform paint buckets in one of the studio spaces, aware but seemingly unfazed by the recognition her artistry has garnered her over the years.

Batteau abides by the adage of trusting the process. "Much of my best work comes out of happy accidents," she says. "Sometimes you learn more about beauty by working with materials in unlikely ways. Free experimenting delivers wondrous results." Her trusted tools—



In artist Yolande Milan Batteau's studio (left), two ceramic lamps by Peter Lane flank one of her water-gilded paintings, which is untitled; she also applies the technique to fabricate selenite mirrors (below). For creative influence, Batteau collects azurite, antique sand dollars from the Sahara Desert, custom malachite and other trinkets (bottom). Wet sample pots of custom colors and tints Batteau has created over the years sit upon her studio shelves (opposite).





Batteau (left) organized a Callidus Guild studio inspiration wall (far left), which is stocked with items like 22-karat selenite and calcite crystals (below).

German blades, agate burnishers and pencils—are constantly exploring new materials to add, manipulate or work into her surfaces and objects. Last year, she debuted a line of water-gilded gold mirrors at design gallery The Future Perfect; as of late, rammed earth, volcanic-ash cement and charred wood are stirring fresh ideas for future projects. “I approach my work like a lover,” Batteau says. “I like to surrender to the process, take my time and let each new experience develop naturally.”

The artist accredits much of her creative influences to Meiji-period Japanese crafts, African and Latin American literature, the ancient world and modernism. She is also conscious of the current landscape of design and the special creative nexus she finds herself part of. “All artists should accept themselves exactly as they are,” she says, revealing her secret to success has been collaborating with talented people, including her team of 12 who works with her in the compound. “Each person is a miracle.”

As for what’s ahead, the Callidus Guild team is executing an 18-by-100-foot landscape encaustic with a hyper foreground of golden leaves on linen for a project in Australia. And rumor has it



there are new collections in the works. It’s clear Batteau’s creative powers have no limits, except she remains true to herself and her evolving artistry. When asked what every dinner-party host would like to receive, Batteau’s response is: “Laughter.” It is this kind of spirit, as authentic as her artwork, that is welcome at any party. ■