MAD FOR MURALS

Sydney Compeau spices up restaurant decor all around Atlanta.

By Sarah Barker

In true artist fashion, Sydney Compeau was drawn to pursue art professionally by none other than the creator’s vice: coffee. A self-taught artist, Compeau has made a seemingly effortless transition from drawing on restaurant chalkboards in exchange for free coffee to owning her own stenciling company, Blue Heron Studio (blueheron.studio). “It wasn’t until Golden Eagle that I thought, ‘Hey, this could be a future something,’” she says, referencing the custom stenciled wallpaper mural she crafted for the Reynoldstown restaurant under the tutelage of award-winning designer Elizabeth Ingram. The Atlanta-based artist takes a personal approach to her work—her favorite project being a mural at East Atlanta Village’s newly opened Banshee. The Atlantan has an eye for subtlety and a dedication to “trial and error,” so it comes as no surprise that she has multiple projects (a stencil installation on the Westside and an outdoor mural in EAV being currently in the works).

You’ve lived all over the map—Hong Kong, L.A., New York and, now, Atlanta. What brings you here? I grew up in Dallas and Hong Kong, and I was born in Australia—in Sydney. I’m sort of a person without a home, I guess. We moved here from New Jersey in January for my husband’s job after coming down to visit a couple of times and discovering we really liked Atlanta. The weather is a lot better [laughs], and it has a little of each of the cities I’ve lived in.

Where does Nest Studio fit in the Atlanta design world? The design scene in Atlanta is way more robust than in New Jersey. In the New York/New Jersey area everything is either super-, super-, super-high-end, or you don’t hire a designer at all. I like that, in Atlanta, design seems more accessible and that people are willing to spend a little bit more money on their homes because that’s where they tend to entertain. They view their homes as more of a showpiece.

What sparks the idea for a Nest Studio hardware collection? I can be inspired by all sorts of different things—from jewelry to the way things are joined together on a car or the subway to the architecture around me.

Do you have a personal favorite? Right now my favorite is our Deco series, which is just launching. We were nominated for an NYCxDESIGN Award during ICFF for that series. I’m going to be using it in my home renovation, so I’m excited about that one.

New releases we need to look out for? We’re working on a collaboration with [Brooklyn artist] Stephen Antonson [that will release in the fall] on some hardware that’s inspired by his plaster sculpture. It’s very organic and kind of free-form.

Any exciting interior design projects in the works? I’m working on my own house here in Buckhead. We’ve done an extensive renovation of the inside: We opened up the whole kitchen to the dining room, so the kitchen has been gutted and is so much more modern and usable. [We] replaced a lot of the flooring, changed the layout, renovated one of the bathrooms. Obviously, your own projects tend to be the most fun!

How do color and pattern play into your designs? I love using color and pattern, and doing things that are unexpected. I like using color on my hardware too, such as my Geo Colorful collection. I feel like that is something that’s starting to happen more right now. People are doing colored sinks and colored plumbing. That’s kind of exciting—using color in places normally you might not.

Spot this custom 22-foot-by-6-foot stenciled faux wallpaper mural by Sydney Compeau inside Banshee.