By Becca Burke

Boise State alumna Delia Dante (MA, art education, ’04) has built the foundation of her life upon her passion for enameling and welding, and she wants to share it with everyone who comes through the doors of Fire Fusion Studio in Boise.

“For me that’s what art is really about. It’s about helping people and inspiring people. My No. 1 priority is to inspire people. I want to further my craft and educate people about enameling and see my passion grow in other people,” Dante said. “I’m really happy to say that it was during my master’s degree at Boise State that I found my passion, and it changed my life.”

After receiving a bachelor’s degree in art with a minor in theatre from Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon, Dante spent some time working in Seattle before returning home to Boise.

“I was really lost. That undergrad degree is the starting point, it’s where you are finding out who you are and dabbling into the real world to find your direction and passion. But going back for the graduate degree really helps you solidify who you are and where you want to go,” Dante said.

Dante chose to pursue a master’s degree in art education and administration, and it was through this program that Dante met her future mentor and encountered the medium that forever changed the course of her life. During her second year, Dante had a class with professor John Killmaster, where she saw enameling for the first time.
“One day he wheeled in this little kiln and started pulling out some glowing pieces that were absolutely gorgeous, and I didn’t know what it was. I was in the middle of painting this big canvas but the moment I saw him start I was absolutely mesmerized and I couldn’t help but go back and ask him what it was. I asked if he would teach me, and allow me an enameling project in place of one of my paintings,” Dante explained.

After graduation, Dante worked as an art teacher in the Boise School District for 12 years while she continued her art on her own time. Then a second life-altering moment came along. Dante had long been a fan of the Boise restaurant Barbacoa so she approached owner Robert Castoro about completing a piece for the restaurant. With a two-month deadline, Dante created “Me Deuce,” the 14-foot sculpture made from flat sheet copper that is now a major centerpiece of the restaurant.

“I wouldn’t be sitting here right now if I hadn’t gone back to school. I wouldn’t have found my passion in life had I not met those professors at Boise State, and it inspired me. I always told my students you can’t find it sitting on your couch or on your computer, you have to get out and meet people,” she said.

“I always want to encourage people to go further and inspire people to keep going to school because where else are you going to learn these things, how else are you going to grow? Apprenticeships are important, internships are good but nothing compares to meeting a great professor and spending two or three years with them, and Boise State has some of the best professors.”

Dante also is excited about the prospects Boise State’s planned fine arts building holds for future generations of artists.

“The new fine arts building brings a new statement to students here in Boise who are interested and want to pursue art, and hopefully inspires them to see that there are people like me who don’t buy into the idea that there isn’t a future in art,” she said. “I want to inspire young people to their full potential and greatness, to do what they want to do because that’s what it’s all about.”

Learn more about how you can make Boise State’s plans for a new fine arts building a reality at giving.boisestate.edu.

Visit focus.boisestate.edu to watch a video about the new world museum that is planned for the fine arts building.