

# A Cast of Thousands

By Terence P. Ward

ACCORD – September 11 doesn't go unacknowledged at Donato Designs. Owner Marco Tintori was no stranger to the World Trade Center — he installed a maze planter in offices in the 17th floor and, after the 1993 bombings, created the barrier planters which were placed around the entrances.

Tintori is an Army veteran who saw the fall of Manuel Noriega and also served in Operation Desert Storm, but the maze and barrier planters were the only ones of his creations that were casualties themselves. Most of his castings (in plaster, cement, and fiberglass) are expected to stand for decades to come, enduring monuments to the skills that have been passed down father to son for generations.

Tintori's father, Donato, learned the arts of casting and mold-making in the small town of Bagni di Lucca, Italy, where he grew up. He immigrated to the Bronx in 1963, where he began creating statuary and monuments in the family tradition, and teaching his son Marco what he knew.

After returning from his tour of service, the younger Tintori decided to dust off the family business, which had closed down when his father retired in 1989. "I was in the shop all the time as a kid, and I knew that this was what I wanted to do," he recalled. Marco did want a change of scenery, however, so he and his father relocated to High Falls, and Donato Designs was opened for business in Accord. Donato was severely disabled by a stroke last April, but still lives with his son in High Falls.

Massive works like the WTC's maze planter — which was designed to be submerged and filled with plantings to create the maze walls — are par for the course at Donato Designs. Working long into the night, Tintori and his crew are presently casting huge fiberglass planters that will form a rooftop garden for the New York Public Library, overlooking Central Park. After dyeing, the planters are visually indistinguishable from stone.

This year, Marco split off creating those massive works under a separate brand, Tintori & Company, which will serve the needs of landscape architects and historic restoration. Both fiberglass and cement can be dyed ("Paint won't last," Tintori warns) to look like a



The creations of Donato Design.

Courtesy photos



variety of stone and metal surfaces. The magic, however, comes from the custom rubber molds that the company makes to cast the pieces. The molds — which only last about a year under the fluorescent lights of the workshop on Lucas Avenue — turn out statuary and building details every bit as stately as those made in Bagni di Lucca centuries ago.

Donato Designs will continue alongside the new label, with a focus on yard accents such as bird baths, benches, and fountains, all made of eco-friendly cement. This isn't a new idea, it's simply embracing the time-honored methods of curing cement through time, not chemicals.

"A lot of companies add toxic chemicals to their cement to get it to cure faster, and they can leach out over time," Tintori explained. "We use the old methods, like time, and adding stone dust to the mix, which is much safer."

The Donato Designs product line, including columns, statues, planters, and vases, can be viewed at the company's web site, [donatodesign.net](http://donatodesign.net), or by visiting weekday mornings.

"I think it's great that I've been able to bring cement work back to the area where cement was discovered," Tintori said with pride.