

Glass Work

by Jacqueline M. Duda

Chevy Chase resident Kathie Perry Lynch fashions astonishing glass work. It's tricky working in a medium that transforms substance from solid to liquid and back again. And it's dangerous too, dealing with glass heated to more than 1,000 degrees. Lynch makes it sound easy.

InSight: Is it unusual to see women working with glass? How did you get started?

Lynch: Working with extremely high temperatures can be dangerous. Glass blowers and fusers were mostly men; they became very adept at handling red-hot glass. But more women have begun entering the profession in recent years.

My interest in glass didn't come right away. I received my BA in psychology. After my son was born, I earned my MED in teaching. Then, I decided I didn't really want to teach. So, I registered for weaving classes at Glen Echo. But I couldn't get into the weaving class, so I signed up for glass instead. I think my unrequited desire to weave emerged in the patterns I developed in glass. I advanced my skills and studied under renowned glass artists at both the Corning



Artist Kathie Perry Lynch

Glass Studio and Urban Glass in New York City. I began selling pieces to friends, then at church bazaars before hitting places along the East Coast. I've been fusing glass for nearly 15 years now.

InSight: How is it possible to bend linear pieces of glass into spherical shapes and folds?

Lynch: Fusing is cutting and layering sheets of glass and then heating it in a kiln. At 1,250 to 1,260 degrees, the glass is flexible enough to bend, and can be manipulated into different shapes. The vase on display on the Rockville Arts Place website (<http://www.rockvilleartsplace.org/artistspages/lynch.html>) was made through a process called "slumping." I fused thousands of strands with different colors of glass, each strand as thin as angel-hair pasta. The fused glass went into a mold and the glass slumped in during the second firing. The cooling process can be very tenuous. Glass can break if not cooled properly.

InSight: How is it possible to plan or design pieces beforehand with such an unpredictable medium?

Lynch: My instructors used to emphasize: "Plan, plan,

Artists Among Us



Lynch's "Genie Bottle" was created through fused and blown glass—the Australian roll-up technique.



"Ode to Monet" fused Frit glass—which was cut and assembled and fused again.

plan." Sometimes I might, but for the most part, the object takes life as I go along. Things happen with glass—you never really control it completely. You might have a great plan in mind, and then something happens, an air bubble forms, and you just have to deal with it.

With experience, however, it is possible to predict how glass will melt. You get to know your kiln and keep records of how glass melts at different temperatures. It's a trial-and-error process. And the glass has to be compatible (so it expands and contracts at the same rate of speed and temperature). Most people don't get this part. I can't take a piece of stained glass and fuse it to a different piece of glass. It's like mixing oil and vinegar.

InSight: Do you intend to move in any new directions in the future?

Lynch: I liked transparencies and luminescent glass. Now, I prefer matte finishes to shiny and plan to start doing architectural pieces. At first, you get to know the basics—cutting, firing and slumping—and then you want to move on. With glass, you're always learning. I took a terrific class at Corning two months ago that opened up a whole new world. It's called the Australian Roll Up, a technique perfected by renowned glass artist, Klaus Moje, for blowing glass without the furnace of molten glass. It mixes different styles of glass artistry, and combines the talents of fusers and glass blowers working together as a team.

Kathie Perry Lynch's work has been exhibited in juried national craft shows like the Sugarloaf Crafts Festival. Lynch has been teaching art locally for the past 10 years. She can be reached by calling the Rockville Arts Place at 301-869-8623 or by email at klynch6424@aol.com