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Glass Art for the Home

By Sophie Braccini



Functional glass art by Vivien Hart Photos Sophie Braccini

When thinking of glass art, the first images that come to mind are often vases, stained glass or glass sculpture. What Orinda resident Vivien Hart does is a bit different: she makes home accents, or functional glass art, created in her garage-workshop.

In her home, the mirror frames, the accent tiles in her kitchen and baths, the bathroom sinks, the backsplash, the cabinets and drawer knobs, even the range hood, are made of artistically created glass. Hart recently joined the Association of Clay and Glass Artists of California, and was accepted to the Palo Alto Clay and Glass Festival where she will be presenting her work to interior decorators and homeowners in July.

Hart was trained as a social worker and practiced for some years before having her children. Then, like many Lamorinda women, she looked for a creative outlet; in her case, something that would incorporate her fascination for light and colors. "I spent 10 years in Norway when I was a child," she remembers. "In the eighth grade we were sent for a week to a business and my choice was a glass making plant. I was fascinated by the material, how heat changes the nature of glass and how it can be transformed." This

love of glass gave Hart the idea for her new career.

In her garage workshop, Hart recently worked on a series of cabinet knobs. "You start with a plain sheet of glass that is colored by using powders that are fused into the glass," explains Hart. She installed two different kilns in her workshop where pieces are processed, sometimes for hours. "The knobs are then cut from the sheet and the decorative/creative process continues with layering and fusion of different colors and shapes to create the look I want."

The knobs require five different layers. Each color melts at a different rate, so the pieces often have to be fired multiple times. "When I want to create three-dimensional pieces I fire the base at a high temperature. I create the structure that will go on top; then fire the two together at low temperature." For the little knobs that display a 3D cluster of grapes, she fired each grape separately then fused the clusters onto the bases.

Hart can inlay motives or etch shapes into tiles, as she did with some green ginkgo tiles - the shape of a leaf has been etched so it looks like leaves have been fused into the glass. She uses a mold to create rounded shapes such as soap holders or decorative bowls. "If someone has a theme for the decoration of their home, I can create knobs, accent tiles for the floor, backsplash, etched cabinet glass and decorative bowls that will all be a variation of their theme," she says.

Hart is now expanding her production by creating glass powder-room sinks, using a crackling technique she learned from Bob Leatherbarrow in Canada. She is also starting to experiment with lighting fixtures.

"The investment to start was quite significant," she says, "but the goal is to make this a sustainable business."

One of Hart's challenges is to find the right venues to showcase her work, since art galleries are not the exact fit, and she is considering joining the 2014 Lamorinda Home Expo in January.

For more information, visit www.glasshart.com.

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Glass knob with grapes



Bathroom sinks

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