

# 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 differ-

ent 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 expending her production by creating glass powder-room sinks, using a crackling technique she learned from Bob



Glass knob with grapes

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](http://www.glasshart.com).

Lamorinda Weekly business articles are intended to inform the community about local business activities, not to endorse a particular company, product or service.



Bathroom sinks

## Flying A Named Orinda Small Business of the Year

By Laurie Snyder



Allen Pennebaker

Photo Andy Scheck

"I need to start timing my gas purchases to when I'm here in Orinda," said Contra Costa County Supervisor Candace Andersen before a packed house at the Orinda Country Club March 20. Andersen, one of several dignitaries present for Orinda's State of the City Address, was also on hand to honor Flying A Gas Station, recipient of the 2013 Best Small Business Award.

Founded by Allen Pennebaker and his wife, owner-operators of Orinda Motors since 1996, Flying A has achieved a devoted following by offering low gas prices, hand car wash and detailing, and "old time customer service" – fuel pumped by attendants who also squeegee windshields ([www.orindaautodetail.com/flying-a-gasoline](http://www.orindaautodetail.com/flying-a-gasoline)).

In their nearly two decades of

civic engagement, the Pennebakers have also spearheaded or sponsored numerous community events, including Orinda's annual Fourth of July celebration, the Orinda Classic Car Show, and the Orinda Baseball Association's annual Opening Day.

"This is a great community to do business in," observed the Orinda native and Miramonte High School graduate in accepting the award. Pennebaker acknowledged his management staff individually in front of roughly 100 business professionals, city officials, and representatives of the offices of Congressman George Miller and state legislators Joan Buchanan and Mark DeSaulnier.

The event was presented by the Orinda Chamber of Commerce and the Rotary Club of Orinda.

## business briefs

**Hello Tiara Opens in Theatre Square**  
Orinda Theatre Square, Ste. 138  
(925) 253-5050  
[hellotiara.com](http://hellotiara.com)



Sue Kim styles young Annabelle's hair with a comb and hair pins, while Kate and Hunter Welch observe.

Photo Mina Lucacher

Want your hair to be styled with unique accessories for your next big event or party? The new Hello Tiara store that opened this month in Theatre Square offers just that. The jewelry and accessory boutique offers a complementary styling when you purchase merchandise. "We carry a whole line of hair clips, brooches and other accessories," explains owner Sue Kim, "and we want to show people different ways to wear and use them." Kim is an Acalanes graduate who studies fine arts at the San Francisco Academy of Arts. "I always loved artistic expression," says the young owner. She opened her first boutique with long time friend Steve Kim in San Francisco. "We had a lot of foot traffic there. People from all over the world helped us gauge what they were really looking for," she says, "but I missed the family and happy vibe of Lamorinda, so we looked for an opportunity to come back." Kim says she's very happy to have found the space in Theatre Square, between Barbacoa and Living Lean. "We can really build relationships with our customers here." The partners immediately joined the Chamber of Commerce and reached out to schools to start supporting them. They are also offering events for different age groups, such as birthday parties and 'girls-night-out' parties where everyone leaves with adorned hair or other styled jewelry. The jewelry and accessories that contain crystals have a lifetime guarantee. "If you lose a stone," says Kim, "we'll replace it." She says she shops in Europe and Korea for her merchandise and that most of her pieces are hand-made by people she visited.

**Storyteller Finds a New Home**  
3506 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Ste. E, Lafayette  
(925) 284-3480

The place for children's books in Lafayette will now be at 3506 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Suite E, the new location of Storyteller beginning the first part of April. "The space is very well located for a lot of foot traffic and it is the right

size for us," says Storyteller's owner Linda Higham. "We plan to continue our business as usual there." Higham indicated that the owner of the building on Lafayette Circle had asked the bookstore to leave, but that she is happy to have found a similarly sized space in a good location. Suite E is located on the courtyard behind McCaulou's and Whole Foods in a busy shopping center. Higham did not know yet when the grand-opening celebration would be scheduled. "It will take us one or two weeks to move," she says. Her current lease ends at the end of March.

**Si Si Caffè Celebrates 15 years**  
910 Country Club Drive, Moraga  
(925) 377-1908

Cathy Corsi, her daughter Cynthia Corsi and granddaughter Cara created a bright display at the beginning of the month to celebrate the 15th anniversary of the beloved independent coffee shop in Moraga. The café, which opened next to Cathy Corsi's salon, was a natural extension. Over the years, Corsi has trained generations of local high school kids as bartenders, she has expanded the range of quality drinks and pastries offered and the café gradually became a ritual stop for many local groups and residents. One of the first spots for nearby elementary and middle school kids to safely hang out, it is also a gathering place for cyclists and senior groups. In spite of its tiny size, Si Si Caffè has become one of Moraga's iconic businesses, now managed by three generations of Corsi women.

**News from the three Chambers of Commerce**  
Lafayette

Chamber mixer at YogaWorks at 5:30 p.m. April 10, 1131 Locust Ave., 2nd Floor, in Walnut Creek.

Ribbon cutting at 5 p.m. April 11 for Gomez and Associates, French for Fun, and Chalmers Fitness that share the building at 3381, 3383 and 3385 Mt. Diablo Blvd. Come celebrate the Renaissance and transformation of this location with owners Carlos, Catherine Jolivet and Marilyn Chalmers.

**Moraga**

General membership meeting starting at 7:30 a.m. Friday, March 29 at the Hacienda de las Flores, 2100 Donald Dr., Moraga. A special agent from the FBI will be the guest speaker discussing cyber fraud.

**Orinda**

Miramonte Parent's Club Heart of the Home Kitchen and Garden Tour of Orinda will feature six extraordinary indoor and outdoor kitchens presented by the Miramonte parents' club from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. April 18. For tickets and information, visit [www.miramonteparents.com](http://www.miramonteparents.com).

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**local** businesses  
will keep them open!

If you have a business brief to share, please contact **Sophie Braccini** at [sophie@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:sophie@lamorindaweekly.com)