

Creative Infusion

JACKI COHEN CRAFTS WONDERFUL WORKS OF FUSED GLASS ART

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PHOTOGRAPHY PROVIDED

Whenever local fused glass artist Jacki Cohen opens her kiln, she takes a deep breath. She never knows just what to expect.

"The biggest learning curve is figuring out the kiln," says Cohen. "You have to keep records. Long lists of what works and what doesn't. Sometimes you can salvage things."

Although she says she's never had any total disasters, as a self-described perfectionist, she wants her work to be flawless. But she's had 12 years to hone her craft.

More than a decade ago, Cohen took a stained glass class at Scottsdale Community College that changed her fate. She learned how to cut glass and the mechanics of the medium, eventually discovering her current passion: fused glass.

Fused glass is essentially the layering or stacking of multiple pieces of glass on top of each other, firing the pieces in a kiln, which can get up to 1,800 degrees, eventually fusing all the separate pieces into one final product. To do this, Cohen purchases large sheets of colored glass, breaks them strategically using her glass saw or special glass cutter and then creates her products.

"Fused glass gave me more options. I instantly fell in love with it," she says.

Cohen has always been interested in art, although she never studied the subject in school. As a Valley native who graduated from ASU with a business/marketing degree, she worked as a buyer for Dillard's. It was at the department store that she learned to refine her eye for color and layout—a trait that would serve her well when she became a glass artist. Three years ago, she started her own business creating fused glass art products.



"This is what I can do forever," she says. "For me, when I'm working with glass, it puts me in a meditative state. I can work for hours and forget about everything."

What defines her work? Graphics and whimsical touches. Many of her glass objects are adorned with hearts (one of her personal favorites) and cacti. She says she's inspired by bright colors and fashion, too.

"I think art should just make you smile. You should like to look at it. It doesn't have to be complicated."

Cohen creates pieces that are both functional and beautiful. She makes vases, crosses, bowls, candle holders, spoon rests, knobs, pulls, salt and pepper shakers, and garden stakes in addition to Christmas- and Jewish-themed objects. Her two permanent collections include an 11-piece wall installation at Congregation Beth Israel in Scottsdale and three pieces in the Keaton Fine Arts Gallery in Superior, Arizona.

Her favorite pieces to craft? The commissioned ones. She has made an array of unique gifts for bridal parties and sports fans, and loves when her clients are happy with her work.

"When I make something for somebody, I really put my heart and soul into it," says Cohen. "I do this. It's all 100-percent handmade by me. I don't buy pre-made. I cut my own stuff. It's local art from a local artist."

She says people have even asked "You're the real Jackie?" when she answers the phone.

"I'm a real person. You can come talk to me. It's not a big factory," she says. "I'm really proud of it. I produce so much with just me."

To shop her designs, visit JackiCohenGlassArtDesigns.com.