

Cheryl Denton



Every glass artist is required to give up a few drops of blood for their craft now and then, and that's what happened at Cheryl Denton's home studio during her interview. A large box of bandaids above the work table attests to this regular sacrifice. Cheryl quickly applied the bandage and went back to demonstrating how she arranges the sharp pieces of glass into a design to be fused in her kiln.

Under her fingers, puzzling and seemingly random shapes develop into a hummingbird. To hold designs in place, she uses Elmers glue, to be burned away in the kiln as the glass fuses together. Cheryl uses this method to make coasters, trays, and hanging glass pictures. To add depth to the work, she will "slump" the flat layers over a form. A green turtle on her work table is ready to be slumped over a half round form--afterwards, it will stand up on four feet. The kiln where this transformation happens squats in her kitchen. At 23" square on the inside, the kiln holds a lot more than her first one, which was a small hexagon no more than 9" wide. Instead of taking four days to do one set of coasters, she can now produce four sets in two days.



Cheryl's solo exhibit "The Nature of Glass" will be hung up at the Coop on May 26th, so she is in the middle of creating a body of work that includes mosaic bordered mirrors, stained glass items and fused glass object d'art. A large Zebra drawing on the kitchen wall will be the template for a glass wall piece of 60-odd separate pieces. In this case, there will be one layer holding the picture, and another layer of clear glass on top.

How many layers can be fused together? Three is about as thick as she will do in one firing. Multiple firing can be made, each one strengthening the quality of the glass, but also running the risk of problems arising such as bubbles or cracking.

Cheryl holds out a block of glass with a rainbow of colors stacked inside of it, a solid hunk maybe two inches high. "Glass WANTS to be 1/4 inch thick when it melts. I had to build barriers to make it this thick" she explains. Bubbles in the glass and a leak in the barrier makes this item only a learning experience rather than a show piece.

Another method she uses is heating and fusing a photo to the surface. A feline portrait made in this manner rests on one surface nearby. The copper colored kitty was printed with a high definition laser printer using ink and paper containing copper. Paper burns off in the kiln, leaving the element fused to the glass.



Cheryl discovered glass art in 1990, along with the town of Northampton and western Massachusetts in general. "I thought all of Massachusetts was like the Boston area" she laughed. "Then when I got my first new car I took it for a drive and ended up in Northampton and thought: this is where i need to live! So I went home, packed up, quit my job and moved the next day." Shortly thereafter she began taking stained glass courses at the Glass Castle shop, eventually serving as a studio assistant to the owner. She had not concentrated on learning any other art before. After moving to Boston area the Bermuda native earned several different degrees: Physical Therapy, English Literature, Astronomy, Physics, and Accounting. She's been a number cruncher most of her working life and now takes care of the Coop books. Selling her glass pieces didn't even occur to her until after she moved to Shelburne Falls in 2007. Christine Conniff encouraged her to apply for membership, and despite her doubts about showing her work for consideration, she was accepted and has been a working member ever since!