

Hearts of Glass

Sam Desmond

A bastion of pioneering in the arts scene on Long Island is housed in the inviting and authentic artist workshop/studio at 813B Montauk Highway in Bayport. Colorful Visions, producer and retailer of fine craft home décor and jewelry, was established in 2001 by mother/daughter glass artists Sandy and Kathy Seff. At its inception there were few arts organizations in the area, but fourteen years after firing their kiln, Colorful Visions is a prominent member of the Patchogue Arts Council, Islip Arts Council, East End Arts Council, and Women Sharing Art. With a strong commitment to preserving Long Island's natural beauty, an invaluable source of inspiration for the Seffs, Colorful Visions often donates pieces from their collection for charity auctions held by Citizens Campaign for the Environment and the Long Island Pine Barrens Society, among others.

Sandy, who fell in love with the craftsmanship and characteristic posterity of stained glass while studying abroad in Salamanca, Spain, has been a lifelong artist. While busily raising her four children in Blue Point, Sandy's works comprised media as far ranging as water color, quilting, knitting, crocheting, macramé, and fashion design. It was in the Seff's household of culture, creativity, individual expression, and scientific acumen (husband and father, Tom, is a retired Connetquot science teacher), that another generation of artists was born. Kathy, the youngest of the four Seffs, was twelve when her mother reignited her passion in glass art, studied graphic design at Suffolk CC, served as a Creative Director for a prominent marketing firm in Ronkonkoma, and has had a successful freelance career in New York City before pursuing glass art full-time at Colorful Visions. During this interview the family worked together as Tom painstakingly removed panes of antique glass from an original window panel in preparation for Sandy and Kathy's design which was developed with close attention to the homeowner's aspirations for the restoration. This was a brief glimpse into the everyday activities of Colorful Visions, but displayed the deep testament of the company's devotion to community, history, and fine artistry.

With their artwork finding homes internationally--the United Kingdom, Spain, Greece, Belgium, Norway, and Japan---the Seffs also boast a strong hometown following with custom pieces on permanent display at the Bayport Blue Point Library, Grey Horse Tavern, and ante-bellum transoms and doors all over Suffolk County. Collaboration on restoration projects, a delicate and highly specialized service for any artist, is a welcome challenge at Colorful Visions where the Seffs skillfully provide as much interpretation and expertise as needed by their treasured patrons.

When asked about what classifies something as art, Kathy responded that, "it makes someone stop and look. Anything intriguing that makes someone take notice and puts them on pause." She elaborated saying, "It's easy to fall in love with the bay on a beautiful day, but even on a grey, foggy afternoon, there's tremendous depth and beauty to all those shades of grey. We created pieces inspired by those rough days down at Bayport Beach and people got to see the beauty in something they originally thought was cold and uninviting." With a wide variety of glass art techniques mastered by the Seffs ---traditional stained glass, crushed glass, multi-layer, water color effect, graphic inspired---there is undoubtedly a piece that will speak to every client's taste. To build on the lasting beauty of glass art, whose metal oxide colors shine brilliantly for centuries to come as did the windows in the Spanish village of Toledo that Sandy fell in love with decades ago, the Seffs produce home décor pieces capturing the spirit of a season instead of specific holidays so their clients can incorporate pieces in their home for longevity.

This approach to both art and commerce is what Colorful Visions' role in the community is all about. As Sandy says, "A strong presence of arts in the community creates a sense of cohesiveness, justice even. Art allows people of diverse backgrounds and viewpoints to come together to openly discuss a piece and learn about each other." Indeed Colorful Visions accomplishes this ability to play catalyst with style. Their bright, enveloping studio with customized telephone booth and Jackson Pollack inspired flooring, is a forum and marketplace for treasures to become heirlooms.