

Studio to close after 20 years of art

Mother-daughter glass art team to retire

Sam Desmond

Closing in December of this year is a bastion of pioneering in the arts scene on Long Island. 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. Housed in the inviting and authentic artist workshop/studio at 813B Montauk Highway in Bayport, the store has been a fixture of the community.

At its inception, there were few arts organizations in the area, but 14 years after firing their kiln, Colorful Visions became 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 Awards, 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 watercolor, 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 12 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. Going on to pursue a career in the airline industry, Kathy traveled the world for her new career, but always came home to her art.

With their artwork finding homes internationally—the United Kingdom, Spain, Greece, Belgium, Norway, Japan, Korea, PR China, and the Philippines—the Seffs also boast a strong hometown following, with custom pieces on permanent display in antebellum 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, watercolor 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 has been 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 Jackson Pollock-inspired flooring, will always be a defining forum and marketplace for treasures to become heirlooms, even after its closing.