



Jeffrey Moyer stands in the doorway looking out on his back garden where a piece of his glass art stands along with other sculptures amid the flowers.

AN ARTIST'S CHALLENGE – TURNING GLASS INTO ART

Story and photos by COLLEEN NELSON

The lane to artist Jeffrey Moyer's studio home near McCracken hugs the side of the hill, leading upward through a green canopy of trees until it bumps into the edge of a Zen garden.

Flowers bloom, a fountain splashes and a bronze Buddha keeps a calm eye on the mossy stones that lead to the porch where Moyer stands smiling. Welcome to that place where art gets made, from pencil to paper, to the careful sifting of color onto clear glass, then into the kiln to be transformed. The medium may be the message. But what it takes to get there is a story in itself.

"The purpose of the maker is to make," Moyer declared. To that end, this well-known watercolor artist moved to Greene County 15 years ago to "diminish distractions, to optimally devote my energy and attention to the making of art."

Exchanging city life for country living was a deal struck between friends. Clay artist Laura Schlesinger and her husband, Michael, were ready to move to town just as Moyer was ready to make good use of the secluded life. In 1998 he

bought their hillside farm and applied his landscape design skills to building gardens full of pathways, pools, hidden nooks, flowers that bloom from spring to fall and art, plenty of art.

Moyer set up his studio for watercolors, but in 2003 an injury affecting his ability to work in watercolor with the precision he demanded led him to try other mediums - first stained glass, then kiln fused glass.

"The more I worked with glass I began to understand its properties and potential," Moyer admitted. After several years of experimentation he had mastered techniques to create the stylistic nuances that characterize his glass art. Still, "there are roads not yet taken; the possibilities remain endless."

Moyer has the artist's eye that knows where each color will go, which colors should be overlaid and in the end, where the focal point of light, pattern and imagery will come together to make it speak to the viewer.

For Moyer, inspiration starts early in the day - in the kitchen, small, intimate, glowing with polished copper and scads of Schlesinger's wonderfully painted cups.

"I sit here with my coffee and look out the window and think about what I'll do next. I start to see it in mind's eye and then work from photographs I've taken in my travels to India, Thailand, Egypt, Mexico and elsewhere, or from images I've collected, until I have a sketch. Then I leave it alone until the next day and finish it in a day or so. When I have it the way I want it, I ink it in."

His work table is brightly lit and surrounded by jars of powdered glass, each a different shade, with a number on the lid that might match the number of a section of the inked sketch beneath the clear glass substructure of the painting-to-be.

It takes many careful hours to add color atop each inked section, then overlaid colors and finally the powdered glaze before carefully moving the piece to the kiln near the back door.

After being fused and cooled it will emerge, sometimes flawed by an unintended bubble, sometimes pristine and glowing and ready to be finished, exhibited and sold.

Those sold and waiting to be shipped out sit boxed up in another room, waiting for the next trip to town.

In the back garden, amid pathways, stone benches and scattered sculpture, one of the glass paintings Moyer has kept for himself - "there's a flaw from the firing in one place" - stands elegantly mounted on a steel frame shaped by metal artist Rick Bartoletti of Carmichaels.

Light catches its circular depths and turns the fire between the bare trees into a blaze

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JEFFREY MOYER



Jeffrey Moyer shows a piece done on black glass that was fired in the kiln to produce this effect. The portrait on the wall is Moyer's father, done by artist John Yothers.



Artist Jeffrey Moyer prepares a fresh design that will soon have layers of colored glass powder applied to transfer the sketch into another piece of glass art.

of brightness below a full moon. It captures the essence of Moyer's sense of the spiritual and the ritualistic quality of life and how it connects us.

"There are many paths, but we are all seekers; we are all kindred, yet respect one another's differences and diversity." His images inhabit "landscapes of the nearly familiar, meant to evoke recognition and resonance in the province of the viewer's inner vision. Above all, they celebrate life and love and the sharing of these gifts."

Moyer's own path to art included no formal training but college brought the order and discipline that any artist needs. He attended Dickenson College and graduated with a degree in history and English in 1970. "It is a decision I have never regretted. I believe it helped me to learn how to learn, a skill I have done my utmost to apply to all my life's endeavors."

The Navy brought him to Iceland, Norway and the United Kingdom and led to seven years living in Wales, becoming saturated with the subtle hues of the hills and the exquisite colors of well-tended gardens.

Inspired by the many watercolorists he met and how enthusiastic they were about the medium, Moyer began entering ex-

hibitions and built a body of work that filled a portfolio by the time he returned to the states and Washington County in 1984. His first one-man show was at the Olin Fine Arts Center at Washington and Jefferson College that year.

Moyer's mentor was the late Paul Edwards, former chairman of W&J's art department, who looked at his work and encouraged him to pursue his muse. Other artists were there to collaborate with and befriend when he became part of their world of shows, being shown and being challenged to greater heights.

Moyer learned that "art must speak for itself, and it must reflect the individual perspectives and nature of the artist, as well as embrace those more universal qualities that unite us all."

Annual shows are an artist's bread and butter and Moyer and Megan Harrington of the Century Inn, Scenery Hill, have been serving up fine portions of what Moyer makes along with the works of guest artists at the Inn for 25 years.

Moyer's art is available locally at the Main Exhibit Gallery, Ligonier, Gallerie Chiz, Shadyside and Artbeat Gallery, Waynesburg or by appointment. ■



Finished and ready to go, this piece was purchased and will soon be catching light in another art lover's collection.