

CLG Originals a 'glass act'



Connie L. Govier owner of CLG Originals in La Mesa.

by Cynthia Robertson

It is nearly every woman's dream to have the power of turning heads when she enters the room. Connie Govier does so in quite a different way. Whether she's at the grocery store or walking down the street, she has people stopping and pointing.

"It's dichroic glass," she says when people ask about the pendant she's wearing. "I make jewelry."

Almost holographic in appearance, dichroic glass contains very thin layers of elements such as chromium, silicon and zirconium, thereby creating different colors. The colors that Govier is wearing is reflected in the pendant. When light shines directly through it, the glass virtually glows in other-worldly colors.

When she is working at the kiln in her garage, Govier feels as though she is transported to another world for the beauty and the often surprising results.

"When the glass melts in the kiln, all kinds of different designs can happen that I never thought possible," she said. "I do a lot of trial and error. The designs all come out so unique. I cannot repeat the same design. That's why it's an art form rather than simply a craft. I sometimes wish I could repeat a creation because I've made so many favorite pieces."

ations but is learning to do so as her business, called Connie's Luminous Glass Originals, picks up.

"The way I walked into this was just by coincidence," she said. "I'd been taking stained glass classes at Alpine Glass, but all that cutting and precise fitting just wasn't my thing. Doing stained glass is like staying within the lines of a coloring book."

But I have a friend named Gloria who got her MA in SDSU, and she was always encouraging me to take a class in this or that. She got me to try this glass fusion class, and that's when I discovered dichroic glass. That was in January of 2003."

The students were told to experiment and play around with stacking the pieces of glass on top of each other. "We were told to make anything we wanted, from jewelry to plates to mobiles," she said. "I loved the freedom of that. And when I got my stuff from out of the kiln, it was like magic because it looked better than what I'd imagined it would."

In her first couple of classes, Govier made a light-catcher. She also made a few pendants she felt worthy enough to wear. She decided to give one to her sister as a birthday present, so she went to visit her in Sacramento. "We were walking around Old Sacramento and she was wearing this necklace

I had given her. People kept stopping us and asking about it. My sister said she felt like a celebrity, that her sister was some great artist," said Govier, laughing.

"I'd never considered myself an artist. I'd was in public administration work at both SDSU and the County, and I was always taking classes in politics and business. I was very left-brained. I always thought of myself as an audience rather than an artist."

While Govier and her sister were walking around in Sacramento, they stopped in an art co-op. "The owner saw the necklace and said he wanted to carry my line. I told him I didn't have one. That's when I began to realize I could really make a business of this," said Govier.

Yet Govier doesn't hound craft shops and art galleries to commission her glass pieces. "For one thing, I find that most shops add too much cost. My \$25 necklace would suddenly go for \$100. That didn't seem right. Besides, I prefer to connect with the people who buy my pieces," she said.

Home sales parties are how Govier makes her business grow. Somebody will invite four or five friends over, and Govier will give the hostess the piece of her choice. "It doesn't even feel like work when I approach my sales this way. I got

into it by yet another fluke," she said. "After all, I didn't even start out with the idea of having my own business."

But six months after she had started making dichroic glass jewelry, Govier was in a doctor's office when the receptionist mentioned that she was going to a friend's daughter's graduation party and needed something. Govier just happened to have some of her glass creations with her.

"This same girl called me up after the party and said, 'Connie, everybody just loved it and the woman with the graduating daughter wondered if you'd bring some of your things over.' So she invited us for high tea. I sold a couple of hundred dollars worth of things right there, met some great people and had a wonderful afternoon in a gorgeous mansion. I thought 'this is the way to make my sales'."

Every artist experiences some crisis or disaster during creative work, and Govier is not alone. However, she is still able to use those crises in making something beautiful. "One time, someone who was helping me carry plates I'd made dropped an entire box of them. I just said, that's okay, don't worry, though I was in shock. But I was able to make some wonderful necklaces from the broken plates," she said.

One of her newest ideas to use the dichroic glass came about by accident as well. Govier had made a pendant in the kiln, but the hole had completely sealed up. "It occurred to me that I could attach it to a night light. The result of the light shining through is gorgeous," she said. "Dichroic glass is really made to show off light."

Govier fires up the kiln a few times a month. It takes three hours to do so because it is a smaller kiln, and every fifteen to twenty minutes she has to turn the heat up. But with her now breaking even in sales, she is about ready to purchase a much larger kiln. She will be able to make larger quantities and even bring her prices down. She plans on making Christmas ornaments.

Whatever she does, she will be making heads turn and eyes sparkle. Govier's e-mail address is clgo@sdccu.net