

# A GLASS ACT

A MODERN GLASSBLOWER SHARES HER PASSION WITH THE DALLAS COMMUNITY

BY EMMA BURLEIGH | PHOTOGRAPHY BY HOLGER OBENAU

To be able to take glass and delicately craft it into a work of art is a skill mastered by a talented few. Glassblowing is the practice of heating glass to liquidity and shaping it into something new and beautiful. Although this is a career

commonly dominated by men, Carlyn Ray, a modern glassblower, never saw this as a barrier as she immersed herself in the art form. Ray, the mastermind behind Carlyn Ray Designs, has a passion for glassblowing that is simply infectious. The

love she holds for her career is apparent in her work and has been shared with all that have paid her studio a visit.

A large part of her studio's uniqueness lies in the fact that customers are able to customize pieces to their own liking.

Whether it is a fusion panel, chandelier or glass weaving, Carlyn Ray Designs takes pride in their ability to work with the color, shape, texture and mass of the glass to make it just as the client envisions.

"Through our structural





engineer, fabrication team, lighting specialist and professional glass team, creative possibilities are endless," Ray stresses. To ensure that these creative desires are met, Ray includes the client in every step of the piece's creation. "I try to be a vessel and feed details and specific colors the client likes into the design, so they feel connected to the piece, like they were the creator," Ray says.

But Ray's team is not limited to just making art, they also enjoy teaching it at her studio, Dallas Glass Art. Through group classes, private parties and public showings, Ray and her team make an effort to share their passions and work with the surrounding community. "It really brings people together in a unique way," Ray remarks.

Particularly, the studio takes great pride in their program

Art Reaching Out (ARO). ARO is dedicated to working with female and at-risk students to bring them together and create an art piece to be publicly displayed. "For at-risk children, it is important to me that they learn about this space inside themselves that nobody can take away," Ray explains. "Art was a huge outlet and positive place for me when I struggled through school being dyslexic."

Combining STEM education with creative learning, ARO paired with Girls Inc of Metropolitan Dallas and worked together for nine months to complete a beautiful glass chandelier that now hangs in the North Park Center in Dallas. At The Hockaday School, students and faculty collaborated with ARO and JCDesigns to complete a 30-foot-tall sculpture for the school's Centennial

Center. "The process teaches students life lessons, combines self discovery with teamwork, has them make a large project they never thought possible, and combines STEM learning and art," Ray says.

Ray's own journey in glassblowing also began when she was young, when she was nine years old. "I was attracted to the fire, intensity and teamwork," she recalls. After completing her studies at the College of William and Mary and a semester studying abroad in New Zealand, Ray spent two years at the Penland School of Crafts to further her knowledge and understanding of the art form. From there, she went on to work for several different glassblowing companies and masters, including Dale Chihuly, before establishing Carlyn Ray Designs in Dallas in November

2013.

The complexity of Carlyn Ray Designs and all of its features is undoubtedly why it has proven to be so successful. "I love all aspects of my businesses and hope to continue to pursue them all," Ray says with pride. "They all carry the thread of sharing creativity."

Just as Ray delicately fabricates each of her glass pieces, she has weaved herself into the lives of the Dallas community and, as a result, has turned her art into something much greater. ➤

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