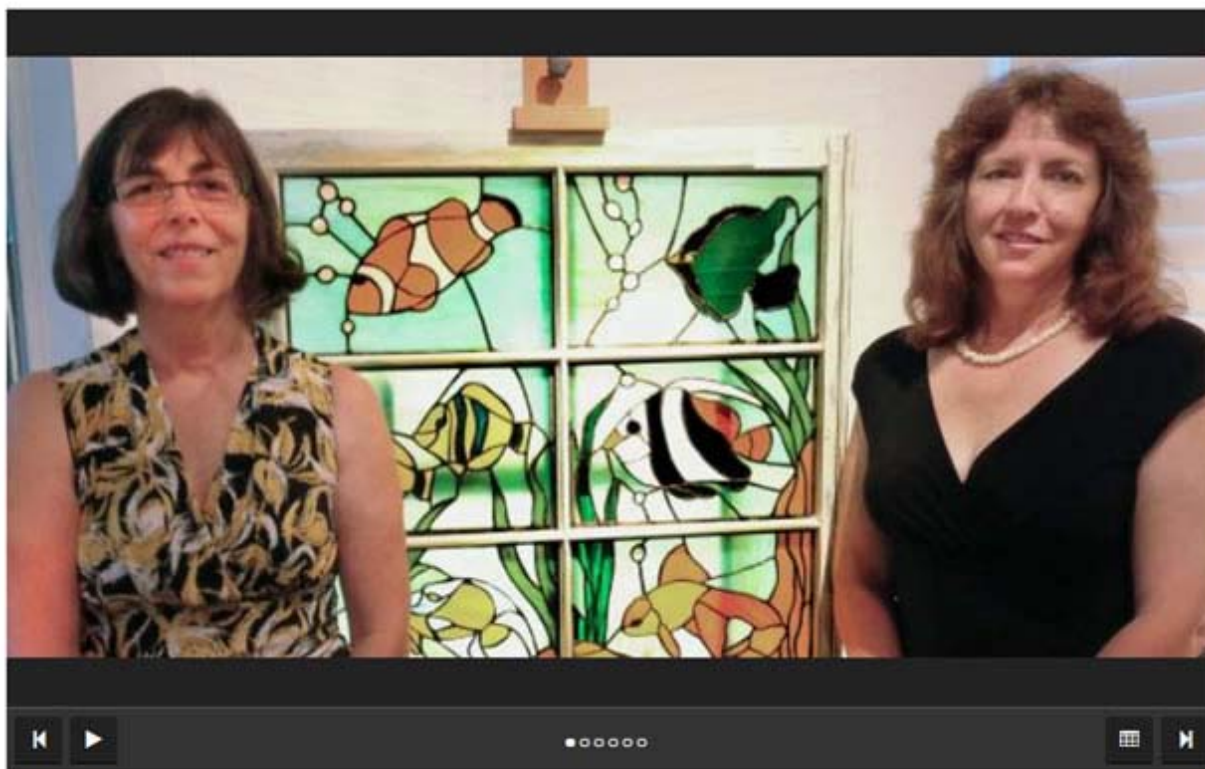




Cultural Collage: Slidell artists take a clear-eyed approach to creating stained glass



By Kathleen DesHotel

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A puzzle is a problem designed to test ingenuity or knowledge. Jeanine Bernard and Kelly Dellsperger, of Slidell, enjoy this type of challenge in their art. They are immersed in creating stained-glass and fused-glass images.



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“I love choosing the right colors and designs of glass and shaping each piece for my chosen image, then fitting them together like a puzzle,” Bernard said of the process. “I enjoy working with my hands.”

Both women have business backgrounds, Bernard in banking and Dellsperger in construction. Dellsperger says this experience will help their art endeavors.

“I like things orderly and in place. This could be why stained glass appeals to me so much. I can create a pattern and organize colors and pieces to create art,” Dellsperger said.

Bernard said it was her late sister, Carol, who got her interested several years ago.

“I visited her in Saginaw, Michigan, and she was doing stained-glass work,” Bernard said. “I was immediately hooked. I took a class as soon as I got home. Later, Kelly had an interest in it, so I trained her in the process. We have been in sync ever since.”

Eventually both women realized that the same tools used in stained glass worked for fused glass. Bernard had a kiln, so they tried their hands at it.

Because there is no local training available for fused glass, they are learning by trial and error.

“It has been a challenge with a few disappointments. Conversely, when a project turns out even better than we expected, it’s quite satisfying,” Bernard said.

“Sometimes we just scratch our heads and wonder what went wrong and why; then the next time, it comes out perfectly,” Dellsperger said. “We are still in the learning process with the fused glass but are having fun experimenting.”

They inspire each other. Since Dellsperger became proficient, competitiveness has grown. This has pushed each one to design more special works and discover in the process how many personality traits they have in common. The teacher finds her student to be amazingly creative.

Both find the process to be relaxing and rewarding. For Dellsperger, work is sometimes stressful, and she finds that doing the stained glass allows her to shut her mind from work and find peacefulness and joy in the art. She gets excited as each piece takes shape and comes alive.

“I love when it is complete, and I’m amazed that this is something I created,” she said.

When the partners decided to begin showing their work, they realized a name for the endeavor would be needed. They asked family members and friends for suggestions, but none pleased them.

As they were beginning their efforts in fused glass, Dellsperger said, "We were confused about a name to be called, and Confused Glassworks just popped into my head like a light bulb snapped on. We liked it."

Now with an identity and a love of the art, they are brave enough and have experience enough to take in clients who have ideas about what they would like.

"Some of the ideas come from clients and others we think of ourselves," Bernard said. "We assist in creating beauty that will be enjoyable to them for years to come."

The pair works together on fused glass but independently on the stained-glass pieces. Their styles are markedly different.

Dellsperger gravitates toward bright, bold colors and tropical themes.

Bernard's are subtle and varied in subject matter. For instance, both have done works to fill window panes with stained glass.

Dellsperger's "Oceans 7" is filled with brightly colored fish swimming in turquoise waves. Conversely, in Bernard's window of "Bluebird's Paradise," the flowers are shades of delicate pink in contrast to the blue of each bird and soft green leaves.

While these artistic products may seem simple to some, in reality, they require preparation, research, confidence, tools, pizzazz and finesse. Also, their business savvy serves the partners well with marketing, accounting, and organization.

Despite the Confused Glassworks name, nothing about these two is disorderly or muddled. Rather, they are focused and talented in their chosen genre of art.

To discover more about their works visit confusedglassworks.wordpress.com or email confusedglassworks@gmail.com.

Kathleen DesHotel writes about the cultural arts in St. Tammany. To reach her, email kathleenfocused@gmail.com.