



GLASSBLOWER TODD HANSEN OF ART OF FIRE STUDIOS IN LAYTONSVILLE.

A TOUCH OF GLASS

Vases, decanters, ornaments – delicate objects made of glass in a myriad of shapes, colors and designs. Before these objects became objects d’art, they began as shards of glass heated to 2,400 degrees Fahrenheit and then literally blown by mouth (via a tube) into a desired shape – a “glass menagerie” of art pieces.

From the ancient Romans to contemporary artists like Dale Chihuly, blowing glass continues to fascinate people, although it also continues to be a dying art form. Foster Holcombe and Theda Hansen, founders of the Art of Fire Glass Studio, have been creating and teaching their craft locally since 1984. After outgrowing their small Savage Mill shop, the artists re-purposed a dairy barn in Laytonsville to include an extensive gallery and hot shop. The pastoral setting adds to the ambiance for artists as they create their glass pieces surrounded by natural light, fresh air and a very “un-mall like” experience.

Todd Hansen, studio manager and glassblower at Art of Fire, exemplifies how the apple does not fall far from the tree. Having grown up in a glass blowing family, he understands the rewards of working with the hot, fluid material.

“The slightest break in concentration can have negative results of varying consequence, usually losing your hard-earned work to

the intense heat or dropping it on the studio floor. But the reward of completing a beautiful piece of glass that began as an idea or a thought is quite satisfying.”

Regardless of artistic abilities, Art of Fire offers glass blowing classes for all levels of talent or interest. From introductory to advanced classes, students learn from highly experienced and talented instructors trained in studios around the country, including the Corning Museum of Glass. In addition, “Create Your Own” workshops let you design and blow your own bowl or ornament with instructor guidance.

“We make ourselves available to students, renters, gallery shoppers, and anyone who has a question, a burning desire, or a passing interest in the glass blowing process,” Hansen says. “We are passionate about what we make and how we make it, and that influences our interactions with everyone who enters our shop.”

In addition to classes and the chance to observe and feel the heat of glass blowing, literally and figuratively, the Art of Fire gallery offers a variety of hand-made items for sale. From hanging jelly fish ornaments to one-of-a-kind wine glasses, Art of Fire has a glass object for you – decorative, useful and always unique.

– Molly Golubcow