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From The Pros | EcoSmart

Glass Act

Recycled glass brings beauty to area homes

By Lisa Romano

Green building is building such momentum that in certain circles it has become mainstream rather than a fringe design style reserved for the more avant-garde.

With so many options available for building a green home, it's only natural that options for green décor are starting to emerge as well.

Bill Hess, an Afton-based artist and product designer, merges his aesthetic vision, technical background and a passion for sustainability into the creation of eye-catching products for the home. At his studio in Nelson County, Hess uses glass bottles collected from area recycling centers to craft everything from lamps to bike racks. Expanding on the colors of the bottles he collects, Hess melts the glass and reforms it in a variety of patterns and textures. The result is a loose patchwork effect that pleasantly catches the light.

"What makes my products special," Hess explained, "is the soul that really comes through from the history of the material and the history of the glass's use."

With a background in sustainable product design, Hess is drawn to functional objects created from waste materials. After working with recycled metal to create sculptures, Hess began experimenting with glass a few years ago and

found it added a nice dimension to his work. His experiments in recycled glasswork started with tile and evolved into clocks and complicated yet elegant lamps with the wiring embedded inside solid glass forms. He was even commissioned to create a bike rack as part of the Art In Place Program.

When it comes to the cost of his materials, the price is definitely right for glass bottles donated by friends and collected from recycling centers. But it's really his desire to create sustainable products that drives Hess to use recycled materials. "I have a deep-rooted belief in lessening our impact," said Hess, "and I am committed to [smarter design], using products and materials that are already out there."

Aside from adding value to what



Artist Bill Hess recycles local glass into both functional and decorative of art.



had become a waste product, Hess is also drawn to the aesthetic quality that recycled materials bring with them. "I love being able to show people how to use products that

Glass block and lighting elements take on new depth when carefully handcrafted by an artisan.

are also pieces of artwork," the artist said.

For now he is sticking with metal and glass, though Hess said he would like to investigate using recycled plastics.

In addition to clocks, lamps and tile, Hess also creates coaster sets, sun catchers, trivets, bowls, birdbaths

and wall sconces. He may also be commissioned to create sculpture, blocks for glass walls, and glass tile for use in the kitchen, bath or outdoor spaces.

Hess works directly with clients to determine just the look they have in mind.

A limited selection of his pieces are on display at Vivian's Art for Living on Charlottesville's downtown mall. The artist also welcomes visitors (by appointment) to his studio. Original artwork ranges in price from \$40 for a set of four coasters to about \$250 for a table lamp.

What better way to accessorize green living than with the ambers, blues and, yes, greens of beautiful recycled glass decorations? ■

SOURCE FILE

Ideas On Legs

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(434) 361-9322
www.ideasonlegs.com

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