

With Wings of Glass



1. The apple did not fall far from the colorful tree with this artistic mother-daughter duo, Melissa Brown, left, and Sophie Crowson. 2. Precise and time-consuming glass work results in a showpiece. 3. Mosaic art that celebrates victory. Can these joyful Hallelujah Ladies get an amen? 4. Outside of Dragonfly Art Studio 5. Hanging artwork on display

WITH GLASSINE WINGS and iridescent rainbows of color, dragonflies have helicoptered the earth for 300 million years. For as long as she can remember, Melissa Brown has felt an affinity for these creatures and their flights of fancy. The effervescent insect was the inspiration when she and business partner Sophie Crowson named their Mineola glassworks company “Dragonfly Art Studio.”

On any given day, as the East Texas sun shines into the storefront, prisms of colored light dance about, bringing living energy to the displayed glass objets d’art. Functional glass and purely artistic objects are found in their shop in profusion.

“Glass is a limitless medium,” Brown says. “You can paint on it, you can melt it, and you can make mosaics or stained glass.”

Stained glass is an ancient art form, with colored glass windows dating back to a monastery founded in 686 AD. It’s also the best-loved form of expression for Brown and Crowson. But it’s expensive to create. The costs of glass, solder and other supplies have as much as tripled since the duo began practicing their art form back in 1989. Brown says it can get quite expensive to create inventory. While they do have a few exquisite pieces of traditional stained glass in their shop, they concentrate most of their stained-glass work on custom orders. And they are not at a loss for those.

“If someone is having a custom piece made, it sometimes

means more than we know,” Brown says.

Crowson chimes in about their shop-visiting customers: “What I would like for people to feel is comfortable, but I also want them to have something that they want. And if we don’t have it, we can make it.”

To fill their shop and offer affordable gifts for any buyer, the pair has stretched their creativity to include a dazzling selection of art made with glass, and glass items painted with art. Glass is the medium for most of the art they produce, and the inspiration often comes from elsewhere. For example, following an ominous health scare for Crowson (which turned out to be a misdiagnosis), the two emitted a sigh of relief and then celebrated imaginatively. They created a line of whimsical creatures called Kindred Spirits, which happily glow to remind the owner to smile through difficult times and to laugh during the best of times.

The name Kindred Sprits also might be a nod to the unique bond that Crowson and Brown share. Not only are they both artists and self-proclaimed best friends, they also are family—mother and daughter! Crowson has another daughter, Dana, and about her sister, Brown says, “We all come from the same vein. If she lived here, she would be doing this with us.”

Crowson, noting the nature of their closeness, adds, “People we meet are amazed that we can work together. But neither



of us needs to be in charge. We have each other’s best interest at heart.”

That interest includes creating inventory, and they both have their specialties. They also work on some of the same product lines, such as their colorful Hallelujah Ladies mosaics. These are a celebration of life, womanhood and God, all in one. They are made to rejoice at victories, give gratitude for God’s favors and mark special occasions. All are pieced from vibrantly colored glass, and each is marked with special symbols, such as hearts, flowers, pets and even dragonflies. There are dozens of Hallelujah Ladies in the shop, and many customers select these best-sellers to mark special victories. If a buyer has the time and wants a particular motif or color scheme, Crowson and Brown will custom-make a small, medium or large piece.

Other popular decorative items include mosaic letters, delicate hanging dragonflies, whimsical mermaids, and one-off pieces created. They also offer wind chimes made from melted and flattened glass bottles, and also from bottomless bottles fashioned to create bell-like chimes.

On the functional side, the pair creates colorful fan pulls, plant stakes, jewelry pieces and what they call “wallflowers and rooters.” The wallflowers are hand-painted bottles that have a hole to accommodate a nail for hanging and displaying fresh flowers or to grow plants in. The rooters are a variation of the

painted bottle for the same purpose but are fashioned to hang from a chain.

Because they make all of their wares, Crowson and Brown need time to make inventory. As people-lovers, they tend to visit quite a bit when the shop is open, so it can be hard to find time to do the meticulous work required to make their art. As a result, several years ago, they made the decision to reduce regular shop hours. Now, the doors are open only Thursday-Saturday. It’s a happy medium that allows them to create on the other days. But they are also people-pleasers, so they do want customers to know that on off-days, they can open the shop by appointment.

When you do stop by, Brown says, “We hope people leave here being encouraged to do everything they want to do. We want to be encouragers and an inspiration to others to pursue their own passions.” And she adds, “We don’t go to work every day. We go to play.”

It wasn’t always that way, though. Brown took a leap of faith, leaving suburbia and a corporate job, to join Crowson in their shared dream of owning an art studio. It seems she took her own advice.

“We always say to everyone: Follow your heart, for everything you do flows from it.”

She and Crowson have done exactly that, and in the process, they’ve gained their very own wings.

Are You Safety Savvy?

MAY IS NATIONAL ELECTRICAL SAFETY MONTH. Take this quiz from the Electrical Safety Foundation International to find out how much you know about electrical safety in your home.

1. **True or False:** Using a corded telephone during a lightning storm is safe.
 - a. True
 - b. False

2. Why do some outlets have three holes?
 - a. To provide more voltage
 - b. The third prong is the “ground.”
 - c. To accommodate foreign appliances
 - d. It keeps the plug from falling out.

3. When using a portable generator during a power outage, you should _____.
 - a. connect generators directly to the household wiring only when an appropriate transfer switch is installed to prevent “backfeeding” along power lines, which can pose a risk to utility lineworkers making repairs
 - b. position the generator outside the house and away from doors, windows or vents that could allow carbon monoxide to enter the home
 - c. make sure the generator is properly grounded
 - d. plug it into a ground-fault circuit interrupter
 - e. All of the above

4. The most common scenario for electrocutions while using power tools is _____.
 - a. the equipment coming into contact with water
 - b. the equipment coming into contact with electrical wires
 - c. the equipment malfunctioning
 - d. exposure to bare wires by grabbing a cord with cracked or broken insulation

5. Smoke alarm batteries should be changed every:
 - a. month
 - b. 6 months
 - c. year
 - d. 2 years

6. You shouldn’t swim near docks or marinas because:
 - a. Boats may not see you and run you over.
 - b. There could be lost fishing equipment in the water such as hooks or tangled line.
 - c. The water might be electrified by docks or boats that leak electricity into the water.
 - d. All of the above

7. In a study conducted by Temple University’s Biokinetics Laboratory, what percentage of children 2–4 years old were



- able to remove the plastic outlet covers from sockets in less than 10 seconds?
 - a. 25 percent
 - b. 50 percent
 - c. 75 percent
 - d. 100 percent

8. The proper way to safely move away from a downed power line is to ____ until you are 35 feet away.
 - a. take small hops with your feet together
 - b. keep your feet together and on the ground at all times
 - c. skip so that only one foot is on the ground at a time
 - d. crawl on all fours

9. **True or False:** You can be electrocuted using a tree trimmer near a power line even if you don’t touch the wires.
 - a. True
 - b. False

10. **True or False:** Swallowing a button-cell battery can be fatal.
 - a. True
 - b. False

11. What age group has the highest risk of death from fire?
 - a. 15 years and under
 - b. 21–35 years
 - c. 50–64 years
 - d. Adults over 65

12. Birds are able to perch on power lines without risk of injury because:
 - a. Those power lines do not have power running through them at that time.
 - b. The unique skin on the feet of birds protects them.
 - c. Sitting on one wire does not provide a ground or connect a circuit, so the current doesn’t leave the wire and continues on its path.
 - d. Birds’ bones are hollow, allowing the current to pass through them without harm.

Answers:
 (1) b; (2) b; (3) e; (4) b; (5) c; (6) d; (7) d; (8) a; (9) a; (10) a; (11) d; (12) c

Observe Electrical Safety on the Outside

ELECTRICAL HAZARDS ARE NOT ONLY present indoors but also can occur outside. Follow these guidelines to help prevent common outdoor electrical hazards.

Power Lines

Before planting trees near a power line, do some research or speak with a professional at your cooperative to ensure that there's enough space for them to grow safely. If you suspect that a tree is too close to power lines, report it to your electric co-op.

Electricity can jump to nearby objects! Always keep yourself and any equipment at least 10 feet away from power lines.

Power lines also are found underground. Call 811 before you dig for any project.

Outdoor Outlets

Have ground-fault circuit interrupters installed on outdoor outlets. GFCIs automatically cut power when a plugged-in item comes in contact with water or begins to "leak" electricity.

Install weatherproof boxes or covers on outdoor outlets.

Generators

Of the 931 carbon monoxide fatalities between 1999 and 2012, 79 percent were associated with generators. Twenty-four percent occurred when generators were used inside an attached garage or shed.

When in use, position generators outside and away from doors, windows and vents.

Make sure your home is properly equipped with carbon monoxide alarms and test them monthly.

Make sure your generator is properly grounded. Do not plug it directly into a home outlet without a transfer switch to prevent "backfeeding," which could harm utility lineworkers making repairs.

Extension Cords

Extension cords provide a temporary solution and should not be used long term.

Never use an indoor extension cord outdoors. Outdoor cords will be labeled "for outdoor use" and are often orange.

Never attempt to extend the length of an extension cord by connecting it to another extension cord.

Only use extension cords that bear the mark of a nationally recognized safety testing laboratory such as UL, Intertek or CSA.



Before planting trees in your yard, speak with a professional to make sure they will have room to grow.



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Wednesday, City National Bank, *Hawkins*
Thursday, Brookshire's, *Winnsboro*
Friday, Economy Drug, *Grand Saline*