

# Suzanne Mears: Glass Artist

BY TIM FARLEY

Oklahoma artist Suzanne Mears didn't give much thought to glass art, but then one day she woke up.

Literally, she opened her eyes one morning in 2002 and thought "this is what I will do," she recalled.

From that point, she pursued her work with glass and she's never looked back. The methods to her madness depend if she's working for a client or designing a piece for herself.

When Mears is working for herself, she manufactures

whimsical totems which have proven to be "good sellers" at the gallery.

"All of them have names," she said. "That defines the fun. For me, glass has been very fun."

When she's working for a client, the final products are typically large structural pieces. The difference between the structural artwork and the totems keeps life interesting, she said, admitting it can be a challenge, which is something Mears thrives on.

"When you're selling your work it's easy to get trapped into a



*Aqua Seas Kiln formed glass,  
17"h x 15" x 12"w*



*Tropicana - Kiln formed glass,  
24"h x 10"w x 6"deep.*

particular pattern. You don't expand your vision," she said.

It typically takes Mears two pots of coffee, a quick trip through the TV news channels and a look at her emails for the vision to crank up each day.

"After all of that, I go into the studio and get started. Once you get in there and get your hand wet, it's on," she said. "You lose all track of time."

The medium she works with is considered warm glass, which reaches temperatures of 1,100 to 1,700 degrees. With five kilns in her studio, Mears uses all of them for different purposes. Unlike other art forms, imperfections in glass can be rectified or totally changed by creating a new piece of work.

"You can take what you have, melt it down, use another mold and turn it into a different piece," she said. "You never get bored with this stuff."

While she's being creative, Mears also takes safety precautions when working.

"If you fall with this stuff, it can be dangerous," she said, a reference to the extreme temperatures used when creating glass masterpieces.

"I love working with kiln formed glass for the technological challenge of mastering kiln firing, the complexity of the medium and the never ending possibilities of design, color and theme," she wrote on her web site, [www.suzannemears.com](http://www.suzannemears.com). "The joy of glass is the light which plays through the piece. As the time of day changes so does the art. It never stays exactly the same. It's a delightful, challenging dance."

Working with glass is a tedious process that can take hours of labor. The process involves cutting the glass, putting it together and forming the design. The glass is later put into the kiln and may stay for various amounts of time, ranging from eight to 40 hours depending on the project.

But don't think Mears leaves the studio and watches afternoon soap operas or goes shopping at the local mall.

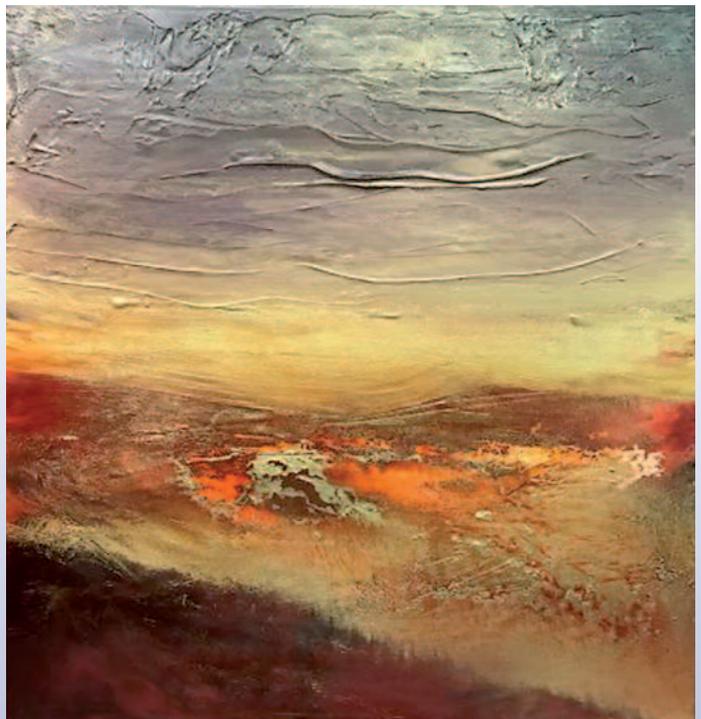
She's also a painter with a unique technique that doesn't include brushes, but rather her hands.

"Glass is active and is all about colors whereas paintings give me peace and tranquility," she said, comparing the two art forms.

Currently, her paintings are geared toward atmospheric landscapes. Using her hands instead of brushes, she works with a limited palette. The work she creates is based on memories, fantasy and freedom, said Mears, who was born



*Overlook - Oil and gold powders on canvas, 30" x 30"* Oil paint colors used: Raw light ochre (Norma), Permanent Alizarin deep permanent (Sennelier), Crimson Lake (Sennelier), Antique Red (Sennelier), Venetian Red Earth (d'Iotalia), French Ardoise Grey (Williamsburg), Warm Grey (Sennelier), Cobalt Violet Deep (Williamsburg) VanDyke Brown (Windsor Newton), Cold Wax Medium (Williamsburg), Liquin, Gold powders, Camsol.



*Sunset Magic - Oil and Gold powders on canvas, 30" x 30"*

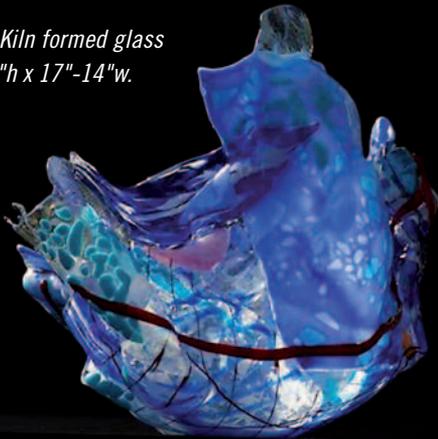
and educated in Iowa, later used a decade of global travel to develop a diary of ideas for her artwork.

“When I paint, I always have something in mind,” she said. “I choose the colors and squeeze the paint out of the tubes onto the canvas.”

She mixes in cold wax with the paint and allows it to soak onto the canvas while she works. After she’s finished, turpentine or mineral spirits is applied and allowed to dry overnight.

“If I love what I created then I leave it alone,” Mears said. “If I don’t, I create a whole new painting. I may let it percolate for a couple of days, play with it some more and create a certain landscape mood. If I can’t get it I keep working until I do get it.”

*Blue Glace' - Kiln formed glass sculpture, 12"h x 17"-14"w.*



Apparently, Mears has made it work more often than not. Her work is collected and placed in private collections around the world. Mears’ creations have been purchased by buyers in Hong Kong, England, Scotland, Mexico and St. Croix.

Currently, Mears’ work is in the Joseph Gierrek Fine Art gallery in Tulsa, Howell Gallery in Oklahoma City, Pippin Contemporary gallery in Santa Fe, N.M., G Glass Gallery in Guthrie and Pez Gordo Gallery in Los Cabos, Baja Mexico.

Born and educated in Iowa, Mears moved to Oklahoma in the 1970s, but it was a decade of traveling during the 1980s that gave her the genesis for her future creations. During those years, she traveled in Mexico, the Caribbean, Europe, Crete, Nepal, Tibet, China and Africa, according to her web site biography. In the 1990s, she lived in San Francisco for several years and later moved to the Colorado mountains before returning to Oklahoma City to make it her home base. ■



*Gold Showers - Oil with gold powders on canvas, 60" x 60", 9500*

*Arabian Nights - Kiln formed glass sculpture on repurposed steel base, 16"h.*

