



Jeff Hormuth at his Magnolia Glass Studio. CHANTEL HORMUTH

Studio opens doors for 'magic trick' of glassblowing

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Glassblower, Jeff Hormuth loves to see his students' faces light up. As a teacher in his newly minted Magnolia Glass Studio, he is moving past a crossroads in his career.

Sideline with eye complications from working with glass for 23 years, Hormuth dedicated the past five years to building his dream studio, which opened at the start of the new year. Seeing the studio as an artistic pursuit, he designed the space with the hope of making a destination for glass artists and community members to come together.

With no pre-existing pamphlet or blueprints, he tore down and built up the studio, and relied heavily on trial and error. The completed studio boasts eight rental booths, two glass lathes, a dedicated tool area, an oxygen-generating machine, and a place to mix raw glass colors.

At the center of it all is an octagonal table available for renters and students coming to take classes. It's also the spot where Hormuth gathers attendees at Magnolia Glass' Third Thursday Open Studio events, with the next one happening on Thursday, April 19.

"I've tried to make a studio where all the tools are there for anyone coming in that's interested," says Hormuth, who is proud to see his final construction.

Hormuth became enamored with glass objects on a visit to Washington, D.C., as a kid. Wide-eyed he asked the former U.S. Senator and Florida Governor, Lawton Chiles if he could have the paperweight that sat on his desk, which was met with a smile and a polite no. However, it would be many years before he and his passion for artistic objects would come together again.

He followed the band The Grateful Dead to the west coast before settling in Oregon where he encountered glass again. This time, he pursued it under the mentorship of a close network of glassblowers. He says that while there wasn't as much scholarship or as many classes on glassblowing in the U.S. as there is today, much of Hormuth's skills were self-taught and learned from hours of watching and

If you go

What: Third Thursday Open Studio

When: 6-10 p.m. Thursday, April 19

Where: Magnolia Glass Studio, 1400 West Orange Ave Suite 12

Cost: Free

Contact: For more information, visit <https://www.facebook.com/MagnoliaGlassTLH/>.

working with other glassblowers.

"You're taking a solid, turning it into a liquid, then back into a solid again," says Hormuth. "The colors, the flame, the heat, are all yours. It's kind of like a magic trick and that's what draws me to it."

He's blown glass in sheds, basements, garages, and back porches, dedicating himself to an art form that was largely underground until recent years. He acknowledges Dale Chihuly's influence on bringing the art form into the public eye, and admires his business acumen. However, Hormuth clarifies that the work Magnolia Glass Studio makes is different from what might come to mind when people think of glass blowing.

Their method is borrowed from the scientific community's approach to producing labware and Pyrex. He works with borosilicate glass, which is rated underneath quartz crystal in terms of toughness and durability. Equipped with safety gear, Hormuth says he would rather be hot than cold, a good outlook to have when the heat tops out around 2300 to 2400 degrees.

"What we do is a form of lampworking," explains Hormuth. "We're melting tubes and rods of glass with torches. It's fire. It's a solid. It's flowing, constantly in motion, and you're never done learning."

Transitioning into the art world has been a new venture for Hormuth, but he welcomes the challenge with big, bold ideas. Sometimes his process is pre-planned, while other decisions are intuitive — work-

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ing on twisty canes of glass until suddenly the sculpture moves in an entirely unexpected direction.

He's been commissioned to craft "bubble chandeliers," as well as marbles and wine glasses. His moonshot goal is to one day create a set of glass chairs or even a glass table. Completion time is dictated by the size of the project, and can take anywhere from a few hours to a few days to finish.

"Glass works you and then one day you start working the glass," Hormuth said. "It takes many years of being told what to do before you tell glass what to do. No matter how hard glass feels like it's getting away, and you're losing control of it, you can always put it back together."

The classes he offers follow the seasons, and students have made icicles af-

ter the uncommon Tallahassee snowfall this winter, ornaments around the holidays, and shamrock pendants for St. Patrick's Day. As Hormuth covers basics in his lessons, he is gathering inspiration for his own projects.

The space also allows him to watch the six resident glassblowers bounce ideas off of each other and fill the studio with their collaborative energy. On Third Thursdays, with studio hours from 6-10 p.m., Hormuth invites the Tallahassee community to come talk with the artists, ask questions, touch the art, pick up a torch, watch demonstrations, and sign up for classes. As for his future plans, he's champing at the bit to remove his construction hat and blow glass again.

"I'm ready to use my playground," says Hormuth. "It's just now opening up its doors to me and it's really a beautiful thing. My motor skills are all there and my brain is racing, but I haven't put it all together yet. I'm excited to see where I'm going to be next year."