

ACT Two:

The art of Debi Normington

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The life of an executive in the high-tech industry is nothing short of demanding. It often starts at 4:30 in the morning on the treadmill while simultaneously checking voicemail messages and responding to emails and text messages. Seven years ago this was the life of Debi Normington, and seven years ago she had no inkling that her life would be headed in a different direction.

Nowadays her typical morning starts off with a bowl of oatmeal and a trip to the gym with her husband Dave. However this time, she doesn't

begin until 6:30 and heads off to work around 9. Although if you were to ask her; it's not really work. Normington is a glass artist and owner of "All Fused Up."

Most people dream of having one successful career and Normington is now on her way to a second. When speaking to her, it is easy to tell that glass art is a passion and one that completely fills her mind and soul.

"I have always loved glass and have collected hundreds of pieces before I began designing them myself," she says. She has originals from such artists as Dale Chihuly,

Scott Chaseling, Deborah May and her favorite Jose Chardiet as well as dozens of others.

Strangely enough, Normington showed her interest in art at an early age. In the 7th grade, she won first place in an art contest. Although her parents were quite proud, her father advised her to make sure that she continued her education and go to college so she could get a job to support herself. This was advice that she definitely would take to heart.

After graduating from Syracuse University with an MBA, she soon moved to Northern California and



found work in the high-tech industry. Very quickly, she rose to the ranks of senior management.

Normington had worked for firms such as Cisco, IBM and Tandem Computers. At one point, she was Vice President of Sales Operations at Cisco Systems managing over 1,500 sales and support personnel. "My husband and I worked for separate companies and our typical work week was 70 hours," she recalls. "All of our friends were part of the high-tech industry so even most of our leisure time was consumed with talking business."

In 2001, it would all come to an abrupt end. "I was at the pinnacle of my career working for one of the leading companies in the high-tech industry," she says. "However, most companies, including hers, were going through some enormous downsizing and she was forced to lay people off.

"This was the third time I was in this position and I couldn't bring myself to lay off so many people who had helped make the company successful for so long. It broke my heart and I decided it was time for a change," she recalls.

Her husband had retired two years previous so she decided to take an early retirement, move to Las Vegas where their son, Drew, was already living and enjoy traveling. They purchased a condominium at Turnberry Place which allowed them the freedom to travel whenever they pleased.

When Normington began furnishing her apartment, having spectacular glass accents was a must. She commissioned local glass artist Leslie Rankin to do some pieces for her home. They immediately formed a friendship and spoke at length about glass and Normington's glass collection. Eventually Rankin invited her to come to the studio and work on a piece herself.

At that point, she was instantaneously hooked.

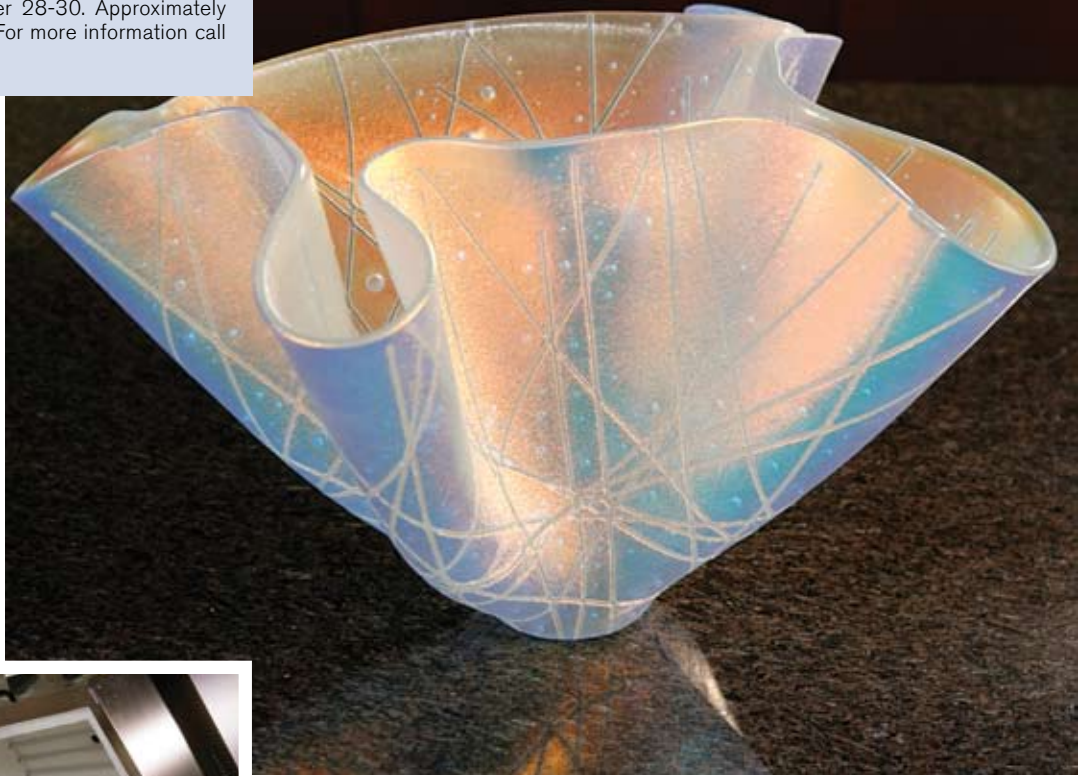
Normington soon purchased a kiln and began taking classes on all types of glass art. She even spent three days at the Corning Glass Museum in upstate New York taking classes and observing all the pieces on display. "As much as I can, I take classes and learn new methods and techniques to achieve new effects in my work. It is really fun to observe



Must see

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other artists and how they work. It is a never ending learning experience," she says.

The creative process comes to her in different ways. "During the course of the day, I might see almost anything that will inspire me to recreate it in glass," she says. "It could be the colors in a mosaic, the textures in nature or even a particular emotion I may experience looking at architecture – any one thing or a combination can inspire me."

Normington uses a special kind of glass called "compatible glass" which allows different colors to fuse together without breaking. She'll cut the glass in exact shapes and places

them into a kiln which heats the glass hot enough so that it fuses or melts together. Cutting the glass may take from six to eight hours and it takes about 24 hours from the time the kiln starts to heat up until it cools down or "anneals." If the object

is going to be a bowl or some other shape, it will need to make one more trip to the kiln.

"When I am alone in my studio, it is such an amazing feeling to create something," she says. "To see a piece transform from sheets of glass into a beautiful work of art is an incredible endorphin rush...better than running... and almost better than chocolate!"

Her art can be an individual piece or collaboration with other materials. One of her prize pieces inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright's Shoji screens, she lovingly calls "Prairie Koshi." An homage to Wright, it is a wood panel screen with several inlaid glass pieces. She also produces bowls,

tabletops, platters, wall and table art. Normington also collaborates with other wood and metal artists on pieces of a larger scale.

Most of her work is abstract art with bright primary and sometimes secondary colors. "Rarely," she says, "do I do a piece that does not include bright red." Many of her pieces also include dichroic glass, allowing the piece to look different according to how and where it is being viewed. Normington also prides herself in never duplicating any of her art.

About half of her work is commissioned and the rest she displays at local shows and at Collectors Fine Art, Lake Las Vegas. Normington will also be showing next month at the First Annual ARTEXPO here in Las Vegas.

For most of her life, Normington has collected art and now looks forward to becoming a highly sought-after and collectable glass artist. She can be reached at 363-8696 and her website is www.allfusedup.com. ■