

Friends House Stained Glass Artist Leads a Colorful, Sculptured Life

For more than a decade Andy Stein has had a love affair with stained glass. From lamp shades and candle holders to framed glass art, boxes and large architectural panels, the Friends House resident is using his talent and creativity to create unique pieces right in his home garage.

"It's a very meditative hobby," Andy said. "It's just me and the glass in harmony. It's very relaxing."



Andy Stein has pursued his artistry for over a decade.

Andy began working with stained glass about 12 years ago, when an artist friend decided to pursue other interests. "No one in his family was interested in carrying on the hobby so he gave all of his glass and tools to me," Andy said. "I have experience as a mechanic and woodworker but I didn't know what to do with everything so I decided to take a class in the Bay Area. After that, I was hooked."

Andy creates both two-dimensional and three-dimensional pieces from the estimated 100 sheets and pieces of stained glass he has, representing all of the colors of the rainbow and then some. Most of his work is abstract using only colors and shapes to represent what's in his mind's eye.

"Like any artist it starts with a vision," Andy said. "I see what I want to create in my head and then make it a reality. The challenge is to figure out which pieces of glass and colors fit together to create that vision."

When he moved to Friends House in December 2021, he was fortunate his home came with a garage to set up his shop. "I don't need a large space to work but I do need a large space to store all of the glass," he said.



Stein's beautiful artistry of vibrant roses in stained glass.

Andy loves to share his art, often gifting pieces to friends and family. He also does visual presentations at Friends House about the history of stained glass, often showing his own work to fellow residents as examples.

The origins of stained glass are not certain, but ancient Egyptians were probably the first people to discover glass while making their vessels; the oldest examples of man-made glass are Egyptian colored glass beads from around 2700 BCE. Stained glass windows were first used by well-to-do Romans in their homes in the first century AD. Stained glass is popular today and can be found in many homes. For years, artists used hot irons and lead to join the pieces of glass. Nowadays, Andy, and most other artists, use the safer and more efficient alternative of copper foil and solder.

Many of both his and his wife's family members lived in life plan communities like Friends House throughout the years, which gave Andy a unique view of community life. "I've always viewed life plan communities as places where everyone watches out for each other and where I can be myself," Andy said. "That's true here at Friends House. That's why as a handy guy I'm happy to help my Friends House neighbors with small projects around the community. I believe in paying it forward."