

Dovetail Artisans Color Glenside

Neighborhood Spotlight

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By: Andrea K. Hammer

Glenside - In the vivid world of Glenside's Dovetail Artisans, gurgling fountains, ticking clocks and swinging pendulums awaken the senses.

On Glenside Avenue just off the area's main Easton Road artery, some nearby arts-related destinations include Galerie Hamid: Ethnic Arts & Jewelry, Not Just Antiques and J.A. Ceramics Studio and Gifts. Although Glenside is well known for concerts at the Keswick Theatre, exhibits at Arcadia University Art Gallery and contra dancing at Glenside Memorial Hall, local shops supporting crafters give this Montgomery County neighborhood its variegated personality, providing a place for artists to display their talents.

After working as a hospice worker for 10 years, Dovetail Artisan's new owner, Elayne Aion, who has lived in Glenside for 11 years, learned that Dovetail was for sale two days after deciding to leave her job. Although she describes her previous work as "spiritual" and feels lucky to have maintained special friendships developed with program volunteers, Ms. Aion revels in the artistry that currently surrounds her each day.

"It's singularly the most joyful experience I could imagine," she says.

Ms. Aion adds that the work of diverse artists at Dovetail draws a similarly eclectic audience. Residents bring visitors from Colorado or relatives from Virginia, which, she says, helps to put Glenside on the map.

"It's healthy for the whole area and keeps business robust," Ms. Aion adds. "We need beautiful things to draw people into our stores."

Noting that some businesses have remained in Glenside "forever," she says that people sometimes forget how important it is to support them. Other shopkeepers have welcomed her revitalization efforts, and they frequently send each other customers.

"I will never sell items online because it's all about relationships with people, who I'm happy to see. I need interaction with people," she says.

Dovetail is a social spot where friends from the neighborhood run into each other and new acquaintances strike up conversations about displayed pieces.

"If we don't support artists, life would be bleak - in black and white. Art puts joy in the world the way nothing else can and creates a spark you can't get anywhere else. Putting good things out in the world increases our chances of survival," says Ms. Aion, who is committed to featuring primarily U.S. artists, with a few from Canada, as well as several fair-trade crafters from overseas.

The following are just a sample of Dovetail's many talented artists:

From Abington, Benjamin Gealt and Aliza Yonet Herman, who always dreamed of starting a jewelry business, launched Yonet Custom Jewelry Designs in 1998. As Tyler School of Art graduates who majored in metalsmithing, they create jewelry made from sterling silver, semi-precious stones, glass seed beads and other materials.

From Rochester, N.Y., Cheryl and Don Olney join their creative energy at Louise's Daughter Studio, named in honor of her mother. Previously working as a social worker and toymaker, they are self-taught artists who now design spirited figures along with whimsical boxes, vases, pins and other pieces.

Jeanne Rorex Bridges, an Oklahoma native of Cherokee ancestry, makes fine art prints and tiles. After studying traditional Indian art forms, she has developed a contemporary style, which is reflected in vibrant but tranquil scenes.

California artist Chris Stiles, who was always drawn to working with his hands, describes his relationship with materials as conversations. He creates birds, owls, vases and bowls that are part of private collections, galleries and museum shops around the country and beyond.

Several Dovetail artisans also contribute some of their proceeds to nonprofits and other programs. Basic Spirit, which makes pewter jewelry and yoga figures, gives 10 percent of its profits to charitable projects. Putumayo World Music, which adds to Dovetail's serene atmosphere and is available to purchase, also donates a portion of sales to nonprofits doing good work where the music originates.

In cooperation with several nonprofit organizations, Dovetail is developing a program in which 15 percent of the purchase price on selected shopping days will be donated. She is also scheduling a June demonstration by Kansas artist Diana Brooking Hochman, who molds and paints concrete leaves, which are often used as birdbaths.

The Dovetail Artisans is located at 105 E. Glenside Avenue. For more information, call 215 887-2220 or visit www.thedovetailartisans.com.

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