

Susan Rohr Interview – Historic Kenwood Artist Enclave

By Brian Lynch

How did you get started in your crafts?

I got started gardening in my twenties, at a home that I bought that was overgrown and in need of attention. I wasn't sure how to start, so I just cleaned up and became attentive to the plants that were already there, and learned what they were.

I learned how to make stained glass, by working in a stained glass studio for an entire summer. I took my wages in supplies and equipment. It was a perfect learning environment, as I got to work and learn from some real masters of the art.

What is your "method"?

My gardening is based on using plants that are colorful, water-wise, unique, and suitable for my "tropical garden" theme. My style is informal with a structured plan.

When I started creating stained glass, I used ready-made patterns. Now, I design original patterns to reflect my own individuality. I use the "copper-foil" method for smaller pieces and "lead came" for larger pieces.



How has your work developed through the years?

My gardening has developed through the years by experience, education, trial and error, research, and curiosity. My garden in Colorado was based on a “Alpine garden” theme with berms, rock gardens, a 40 foot arbor, a fountain, and an ancient, stone garden bench. My Florida garden developed as I learned about the seasons here, and plants that were unfamiliar to me. Through experience, I knew to start with basics, such as installing trees and hardscape, (paths, walkways, pergolas, arbors, etc.) first. I created outdoor “rooms”, or groupings, to highlight specific types of plants, or complimentary textures and colors. The garden has been changed continually as I evaluate how my plan has worked.

I have just resumed my stained glass art after a hiatus of seven years. After moving to Florida in 2007, there were too many things going on in my life and my art stayed in the boxes they were stored in.

What would you call your style?

I would call my gardening style eclectic, but orderly. Exciting and calming at the same time.

My stained glass art has been varied. I’ve made glass panels for furniture, glass boxes, sun catchers, stained glass and mirror combinations. The designs styles were modern, Victorian, Art Nouveau; for personal use, as gifts, and a commercial project for a restaurant. My next project is in the “Mission” or “Craftsman” style for installation in my Craftsman Bungalow home.



What are the best and worst things about being an artist?

The best thing about being an artist is using your imagination to create a work of art that is original and one-of-a-kind.

The worst thing about being an artist is finding the time to devote to your projects.

What has been inspiring/influencing your work lately?

The winter season has inspired me to pursue my stained glass art since the garden is somewhat dormant now.



Who are your favorite artists in your field?

I don't have a favorite artist in the gardening field, nor stained glass. I have heard good things about the artistry at Grand Central Stained Glass and Graphics store in St. Petersburg.

What is your favorite customer quote or story?

I was commissioned to create a custom stained glass for one of my favorite restaurants in Fort Collins, Colorado, "Café Columbine". It was the largest piece that I had done and was designed to be at the entrance of the restaurant. I decided the best way to eat at my favorite restaurant, often, was to barter a portion of the commission in exchange for meals. My husband and I ate meals on my "tab" for about two years. It was delightful.

What is your favorite piece of art or fine craft that you own?

I own a beautiful, French, nude sculpture and mirror. It is an antique and I would love to know more about it. I haven't been able to identify the artist or the age.

What advice do you have for aspiring artists?

Don't be afraid to experiment to discover your talent. It may feel awkward when you start, but give yourself a chance and don't be hard on yourself. Enjoy the experience!