



VISUAL ART

# Through the Looking Glass

Tracy Silva Barbosa

As a child of Portuguese immigrants, painter and glass designer Tracy Silva Barbosa first encountered art in the works of the Catholic church.

“I was always drawn to the arts, but I did not have much exposure to museums,” she says.

Barbosa would peek at the pictures in her mother’s Bible, or notice stained glass in church in her native Taunton.

Barbosa considers herself foremost a glass artist, trained at the Massachusetts College of Art in Boston and the Pilchuck Glass School in Washington.

But when she graduated, she no longer had the 2,000 lb. melting tank, kilns and other tools needed for glass art.

“That prompted me to paint on canvas, and I was able to produce the same effect. These were sketches for glasswork, but people liked the paintings,” she says.



than three years ago, has been treated with respect, she says. “I always had this theory, that if space is treated with a dignity and care that honors the person using it, that gets reciprocated. People will respect it.”

Barbosa also is involved with “artsadvocacy,” which means lobbying for government funding of the arts. Although the New Bedford area is not the same as living in New York City, she says as an artist she is appreciated here.

“People want me here, and they are good at showing it. I know the mayor on a first-name basis; I love that,” she says, adding that many economic development programs exist in town to help artists become self-sustaining entrepreneurs. ♪

(Left) *Three Wishes*, Etched, leafed, and painted layers of plate glass in an oak frame, 60” x 24” (Below) *Western Ocean I*, Acrylic paint, silver leaf, on canvas, 52” x 52”

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Her glass art contains both urban and flora elements, and is inspired by Asian landscape paintings and medieval relicology. She utilizes painterly strokes and photographic imagery in the plates of glass she layers together.

Her work “Three Wishes,” features a hazy New Bedford skyline, with etched and leafed glass plates layered in, exuding an organic feeling.

Before moving to New Bedford, she gained access to the tools she needed at UrbanGlass in Brooklyn and was involved in the New York City art scene.

Now, she does commissioned work for private collections or individuals—but also works on community projects. “Ever since I was in art school, public art is a goal of mine.”

Some public works include a large 35-foot mural in the Carney Academy Public School Greenhouse, and a bus shelter installation in Providence. The former, which was installed more

