



# HEART OF *glass*

BY GINA MAKKAR // PHOTOGRAPHY BY JASON HARTOG

Whether you're looking for old world charm or modern elegance, stained glass can add a warmth and interest to your home that's sure to reflect your unique sense of style.

Victoria Balva of Artistic Line Studio lights up homes with one-of-a-kind hand-crafted glass projects – from domes to skylights to hanging glass panels.

“I started as an art student in the Ukraine, but then I fell in love with glass,” says Victoria. “But I was not a glass artist, I was a painter.” When she stumbled across a jewelry school, she jumped at the chance to experiment with metals. She soon realized she could combine her love of painting with the art of glass.

When she came to Canada a decade ago, she had no idea what turn would foster her talent. With a vast knowledge in a variety of mediums, she began volunteering

at a glass studio, often spending 10 hours a day pouring over tools and learning techniques.

“Glass is a material that is in demand, and I feel that is somehow a reflection of our time,” says Victoria. “We’re so busy. We’re always thinking about something. That’s why I like working with abstract designs. Just looking at the colours, shapes and textures makes you feel something without having to think. It’s something everyone can enjoy.”

After finding success with a few showings of her own, she and husband Eugene launched Artistic Line Studio in the Lorne Park area. From the suspended glass mural installed in the chapel of Father Michael Goetz Secondary School to residential stained and leaded glass dome skylights, Artistic Line Studio has served both public and private clients all over North America.

While Victoria spends her time creating a whimsy of textures with glass and patterns, Eugene puts his background in civil engineering to work by managing the technical aspects of the pieces, like ensuring sound structural support and reinforcing glass panels, so that pieces like skylights and windows meet building codes. “High quality fabrication reinforced with steel bars, that’s all Eugene,” she laughs. “Plus he’s the installer. He has no fear, and not many would work at the heights he does.”

Don’t know if you should divide a space or brighten a dark spot?

Artistic Line Studio works closely with clients at every step of the custom creation process. “People love their homes, and some look for function, like to cover a window for privacy, and others want to accent their home with glass that is like a piece of art.”

Whether you’re modern and minimalist or traditional in style, Victoria researches each project to uncover the perfect design, from matching the motif of a much loved chandelier to replicating the windows of an English castle. “The first time I visit someone’s home, I look around to see what styles they like, and how they react to an object or my portfolio. Are they contemporary or traditional?”

With access to a variety of tools, materials and new techniques, Victoria says it’s easy to control costs and stay within any budget. “People think it’s expensive so they don’t even want to try to call for an estimate, but when they do call they say ‘Oh, I thought it would be more.’”

The turnaround time for those looking to create a masterpiece is three months, and for Victoria, the development of each project is like a mathematical formula. She follows a precise blueprint, from sketches and design to installation. “I love glass, I just love it,” she says. “I do what I like and I do it from my heart and my clients see that and like what I do, and they continue to support it.” **OH**