

*Crafted Lives*  
**Transparent Style**

*The home of Bullseye Glass owners Lani McGregor and Dan Schworer is a showcase for the couple's decades-long passion for glass art. In the last year, it's also been an oasis.*

**INTERVIEW BY** *Brian Libby* **PHOTOGRAPHY BY** *Robbie McClaran*





**OVERLEAF:** Behind the couple are kiln-formed glass works by Chick Butcher (left) and Cobi Cockburn (two panels).

**LEFT:** Artwork drove the décor. Jessica Loughlin's *Unfolding Continuum* wall panels suggest drifting Oregon clouds.

**BELOW:** Charissa Brock's bamboo *Nest* connects the house to a small forest of bamboo surrounding the property.

**RIGHT:** The *Confluence Table*, combining cast glass, Oregon maple, and steel, was a joint project of Bullseye and furniture maker Made. Overhead, 26 kiln-formed elements make up Emily Nachison's *Constellation Field II*. In the corner stands David Nash's *Charred Tumbleblocks*.

*After a year dealing with business problems, the couple is thrilled to focus on art again.*



THE HILLSIDE HOME OF LANI McGregor and Dan Schwoerer in Portland, Oregon, offers panoramic views of both the nearby downtown and Cascade peaks such as Mount Hood and Mount Saint Helens. But the real eye candy is inside. Schwoerer co-founded Bullseye Glass Co. in 1974; McGregor is executive director of the company's Bullseye Projects, an exhibition and educational space with an artist residency at the factory. Their home, expanded many

times and now occupying three levels, is a showcase and celebration of art – much, though not all, of it glass. Perhaps even more than that, it's a collection of stories about the works' creation.

Over more than four decades, Bullseye has built a first-class reputation for helping artists push the limits of creativity and artisanship. Last year, though, the company was beset by reports of dangerously high levels of cancer-causing

contaminants such as cadmium and arsenic in the neighborhood – chemicals the company (and other nearby glass manufacturers) used to color its glass. Having regularly complied with state regulations for emissions and testing, Schwoerer and McGregor were shocked, but the company immediately ceased use of the ingredients and ultimately spent about \$1 million on new emission control devices; it no longer uses arsenic.)

Today, Bullseye has regained its status as the Pacific Northwest's leading colored art-glass manufacturer, having won back the community's trust. Schwoerer and McGregor are delighted to take up their core passion again: collaborating with glass artists. That zeal is reflected on just about every wall of the house, not to mention suspended from the ceiling and resting on tables and floors. Take one step into the

home, and the couple eagerly describes each artwork's provenance.

**This house has gone through numerous expansions over the years, spilling down the hillside on three levels. I love the big pieces of exposed steel. What was it like when you first moved in?**

Lani McGregor: If we had any sense, we would have knocked it down. It was built in 1959. When Dan first bought it in the late '70s, all the ceilings were low. It was four rooms with a tiny hallway. But it had strong bones. It was built by a contractor, we think with leftovers from other jobs. By the time I moved in in the early '80s, Dan had already knocked down most of the walls – he's an engineer by training, so we didn't use an architect. Every piece of the house is a laboratory.

**When entering the house near the dining room, one of the first things you see is a beautiful**





**custom table that fuses wood and glass. I believe you call it the *Confluence Table*. What's its story?**

Dan Schwoerer: That's a good example of one of the major themes in our house: the crossover of materials. When you run a glass factory, you take material and its making for granted. Ours starts with the sand and the soda and all the minerals to make the different colors of glass. So when we went to collaborate with [Portland furniture maker] Made, we invited them to come to the factory. They were fascinated. Then I said to them, "Now we need to go see where the wood is made." They said, "It comes off a truck." I was so disheartened.

So [Made founder] Bo Hagood said, "Sounds like a good excuse for a field trip." His team of woodworkers, along with our glassmakers,



**ABOVE:** The couple has followed Claudia Borella, whose *Transference 7* sits near the kitchen, since she graduated from art school.

**LEFT:** Dafna Kaffeman's urchin-like *Tactical Stimulation* (one of a series) reminds McGregor of Bertil Vallien's quip, "Glass eats light." "I can almost hear it nibbling every time I pass," she says.

**OPPOSITE:** "Placing art is about conversations," McGregor says – between viewers and the art and between pieces of art. At left, Clifford Rainey's *Graphen* torso chats with Silvia Levenson's swing-and-shoes *É Volava Via (She Flew Away)* tucked in a corner. Susan Harlan's *Night Reflections* wall pieces eavesdrop in a nearby nook.

got into a van and went to Zena Forest Products. It's a very small business in the Willamette Valley amid old Oregon white oak that was previously operated as a hunting preserve, I believe. It's almost like something out of Grimm. You find your way into this magical forest, about an hour south of here. They are stewards of this forest in the most amazing way. Most of what they grow goes for wood flooring, but we wanted to do as much as we could here with locally sourced sustainable woods. So we worked with them on the kitchen. All the wood is solid Oregon white oak. But the most fun was we assigned the woodworkers to design the glass.

**Where does this desire to collaborate with artists in other mediums come from? Is it just serendipity or does it spring from something deeper?**



Schwoerer designed this bridge of cast glass and steel connecting the decks with the carport. "Dan is a relentless builder," McGregor says.

McGregor: That was one of the things that really, over the years, gnawed at us, that glass has been too insular. From the Venetian era, glass has been more secretive and insular than other mediums, partially because it requires such a long technical internship.

**I love the multipart cast-glass art hanging over the dining room table. Is that another result of collaboration?**

McGregor: We continue that crossover between materials. This piece is by the head of fibers at Oregon College of Art and Craft, Emily Nachison, and it's on the theme of transformation. What we have are representations of animal, vegetable, and mineral. The most obvious is the deliquescence of the mushrooms, how they come out of the earth and melt back in. So there's this circle of deliquescing mushrooms and minerals



*Outside are views of downtown Portland and Cascade peaks.*

and birds. It has limited whom we can have to dinner. We try not to have tall friends.

**The glass panels by Jessica Loughlin hanging on the dining room wall seem almost like an extension of the view out your windows. Was that the intent?**

McGregor: For the 30-plus years I have lived here with Dan, the artwork on that wall has always driven everything else on the main floor of the house. At the start of our last remodel we'd installed Klaus Moje's 16-panel *Aperto* there. In the fall of 2014, a museum curator asked us to loan it for an exhibition. We set out to find another work that might define the space as Moje's had.

It was a no-brainer. We'd worked with Jess Loughlin since she'd been a student in the glass program that Moje founded at the Canberra School of Art in the early 1980s.

**RIGHT:** In the lower garden stands Jun Kaneko's *African Reflection, Blue, Red, Yellow*. "People worry about the fragility of glass," McGregor notes. "Properly placed, it's a remarkably resilient material." The 2,700-pound set of 18 slabs survived an earthquake in New Mexico.

**BELOW LEFT:** The couple doesn't like to dictate the look of commissions, but they asked Kate Clements to make something red for this mantel space; she responded with the kiln-formed glass-frit *Red*. The title refers to a favorite play about Mark Rothko, who rants about "overmantels" – art as decoration.

**BELOW RIGHT:** Ted Sawyer's *Treble I, II, III* reveals itself as glass only on closer inspection, an illusion the couple delights in.



Loughlin's work in glass is about space and light. It's also about elemental transformation. Water becoming air, air becoming cloud, clouds reflected in water. It seemed to perfectly bridge art, space, and architecture. We live on a hillside that looks out over Portland's Wil-

lamette River and across to a horizon that's always filled with clouds. We wanted to bring that sky and those clouds into the house.

**One of my favorite parts of the house is the glass bridge leading from an upper-floor**

*Schworer loves glass as an architectural element.*

**walkway to the carport, which I know doubles as a spot for outdoor entertaining. How did the bridge come about?** Schworer: I'm always looking for ways to use glass as an architectural element. It's like transparent stone. You can stand there and have your martini almost as if there's nothing below you.

**How has the house served as a haven amid the emissions controversy?** McGregor: It reminds us why we do what we do. The other factories near ours were sold and have since set up operations in Mexico. We stayed, because our people are here, our passion is here. And nowhere else that we know of has the unique set of craftspeople who can come together to mix materials in these Portlandian ways.

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Clifford Rainey's *Ghost Boy* sculptures reflect a theme in the collection. McGregor is interested in the "difficult point" when adulthood begins. Rainey, she says, "is the master of that underpopulated thematic corner of glass."