

Atlanta

NEXT WEEK: LEGAL GUIDE

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FOOD & TRAVEL

Georgia Aquarium: Big Catch for Downtown Atlanta

COVER STORY, PAGES 10-11



Photo by Matthew Paulson

SUPER BOWL LIII



OVER 1 MILLION VISITORS EXPECTED TO BRING BIG BUSINESS TO ATL.

PAGE 8

EAT YOUR HEART OUT



AJT SERVES MUST-TRY RESTAURANT REVIEWS & COMFORT FOOD RECIPES.

PAGES 19-26

BELTLINE ARTIST



29-YEAR-OLD ADAM PODBER'S LARGE-SCALE PROJECTS ADORN LOCAL LANDMARKS.

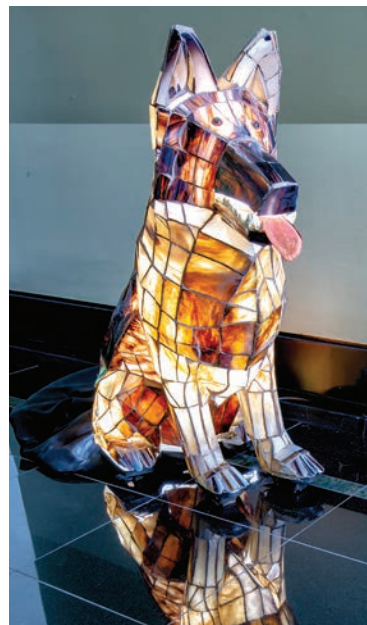
PAGES 30-31



Photos by Duane Stork unless otherwise noted // **Diane and Paul Heller** transferred their love of music into his art, creating illuminated 3-D glass with instruments ... especially guitars. Note the saxophone on the wall where Paul uses real instrument pieces in his sculptures. A Heller sailboat is on the left.



Heller's trademarked glass guitars frame the family fireplace under a set of Diane's happy flowers. The flanking custom golden olive wood panels were designed by Israel Peljovich (Arts-N-Laminates).



Heller's 3-D German shepherd (left) "guards" the home's front door and can be seen at the I.D.E.A. Gallery in Chamblee. Heller spent time this summer in the Hamptons, New York, displaying his interpretation of the historic Montauk lighthouse which was built in 1796 (right, courtesy of Paul Heller).

Chai Style Art

Pop Art That Makes You Smile

Atowering 6-foot-7-inch glass artist, Paul Heller specializes in big pieces of 3-D art. His home studio is filled with fiber optics, plexiglass, molds, resin, lighting components, power tools, a bandsaw and equipment for cutting glass. "I create art that makes people smile," said Heller. He proved that it's never too late to start serious endeavors outside one's comfort zone by reinventing himself after retiring from the hotel business at the age of 50. After five years of being an adjunct business professor at area Atlanta universities, Heller poured his heart into becoming a professional glass artist.

His wife, Diane, a top fundraiser for the local Susan G. Komen breast cancer research foundation, is a registered dietitian and a member of the board of directors of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. They have three sons in their late 20s, all of whom like to have input into his work.

Their contemporary home is replete with Paul's art and intriguing 3-D objects that are typically colorful or metallic, in a wide range of mediums. Paul's German shepherd creation "guards" and illuminates the home's

front entrance; sailboats portend a breeze in the great room; his Star of David clock is irresistible; and his musical instrument creations set a performance stage.



**Marcia
Caller Jaffe**

To Diane's dismay, Paul has taken over many areas of their home as his sprawling glass studio. Apart from the basement storage area, glass and tools can be found on the ping pong table, and crates of glass occupy much of the garage. The studio is a hotbed of creativity and technology, constantly pushing the limits of what is possible in glass. Who else would make his own bowtie out of reflective, mirrored glass?

Illuminated glass art creation is Heller's third act. No such thing as retirement.

Jaffe: You began in the hotel business?

Heller: Atlanta was a progressive, growing city to be a hotelier with multiple locations. I enjoyed the broad challenges of wearing lots of "hats:" operations, sales, human resources, renovations, administration, as well as the real-estate and financial side. My favorites were satisfied customers and mentoring employees.

There were many success stories of employees starting at the front desk and rising to general manager. One employee got a \$10,000 reward for capturing a Top Ten Most Wanted person in the hotel courtyard with armed FBI agents. We lodged all sorts of guests from Cirque du Soleil performers to [actor] Morgan Freeman.

Jaffe: How did you transition to a career in education?

Heller: I always wanted to teach at the university level. I joke that as my first son left for college, I got 30 students to replace him. I loved turning the "light bulbs" on in students' minds. My objective in teaching business courses was to promote creative, resourceful and persistent problem-solving skills through real-world mini-cases. Teaching is a license to learn. I would reach out to industry thought leaders to help develop lecture and case materials. I taught courses including social media and search engine optimization, marketing management, hospitality, corporate finance and information systems at Georgia Tech, Georgia State, Mercer MBA, Kennesaw State and Oglethorpe.

Jaffe: I see you as a high-energy technical genius. Describe your artistic style.

Heller: Contemporary with hints of pop art, ab-



This full-size Heller creation epitomizes his jammin' feel for rock and roll.

stract elements and intrigue in every piece. It is a bit outside the box in terms of categorization, as it includes a combination of mosaic, stained glass and electronics. Unlike a stained-glass artist, my craft is done without leading. Like mosaic artists, I mount glass to a form; however, I use much larger pieces of glass and clear adhesives to allow light to penetrate the finished piece. I have developed proprietary techniques to enhance glass coloration.

I'm 50 percent a glass artist, 40 percent a carpenter, and 10 percent an electronics engineer. I create the custom 3-D forms with plexiglass, wood and fiberglass, requiring a multitude of carpentry skills. The illumination is accomplished with low-voltage and long-lasting LEDs.

Creating cityscape and landscape 3-D murals are my most recent fascinations. The 3-D-featured elements of the murals extend toward the viewer and create a different experience when seen from varying angles. Re-

cently-completed murals include: the Washington Monument with Cherry Blossoms, New York City with the Statue of Liberty (and iconic buildings), and a golf course landscape. I'm looking forward to a major corporation or museum commissioning something in Atlanta.

Jaffe: How do you generate ideas?

Heller: My first piece was conceived while taking my only art class: "Mosaics" at the Spruill Center for the Arts. Diane and I had just returned from a singer-songwriter festival and had been immersed in music. I made a guitar, and weeks later it ended up in a recording studio in Nashville. Music inspired my initial pieces, including guitars, saxophones, pianos, a five-piece drum set, and a cello. What I like most is creatively collaborating with buyers or design professionals to inspire my illuminated sculptures. Past collaborations have resulted in 3-D dogs, sailboats, and super-sized wine bottles and



Heller designed these gargantuan goblets and wine bottle customized for various restaurants and cocktail lounges.



Courtesy of Paul Heller Heller relished posing with country singer Miranda Lambert after he created an illumination of her own guitar.



Courtesy of Paul Heller In addition to this inviting set of clubs, Heller has done a larger landscape of a golf course.



Photos by Duane Stork
Heller is inspired by monuments and famous street scenes. Note the detail in his use of cherry blossoms.



Heller's USA illuminated sail boat creation shares a corner with a scene of Jerusalem the couple bought in Sfat, Israel.



The Hellers use rectangular and square shapes throughout the house. This black metal staircase railing was transferred from their previous home.

glasses. I exhibited in the Hamptons in early August, which inspired two new pieces: the Montauk Lighthouse and a 6-foot swordfish. I made an 8-foot-long illuminated guitar for a music venue in Nashville.

I can make anything based on what a client is interested in, including customizing coloration and scale. Many art objects over time become unnoticed in a residence or office. Illuminated art is very different as the viewer's attention is captured from the vivid colors radiating.

Jaffe: Where can we see your work?

Heller: They are for sale at I.D.E.A. Gallery in Chamblee, drop by my East Cobb studio or visit my website, Paul-HellerArt.com. My favorite creations are from collaborating with clients. I exhibit

my work at a combination of industry design and hospitality shows and high-end art shows which have me trucking around the country to places like Las Vegas, Miami, Nashville, Chicago, and Pier 94 in Manhattan. ■

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