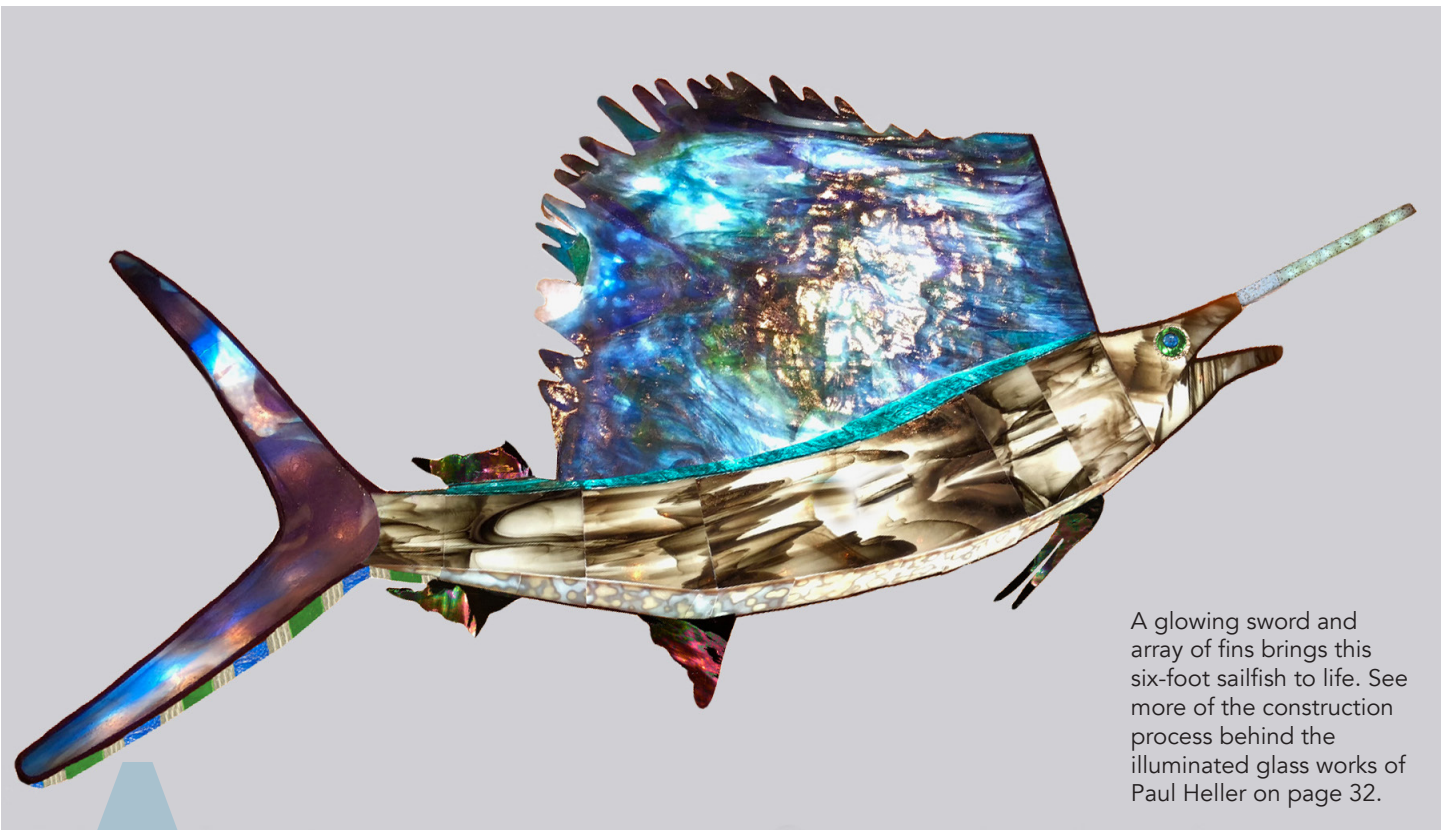


Merry and Bright

Atlanta-based sculptor creates illuminated glass pieces inspired by life on the water.

STORY BY TIA LYNN IVEY



A glowing sword and array of fins brings this six-foot sailfish to life. See more of the construction process behind the illuminated glass works of Paul Heller on page 32.

As the glow of the holiday season wanes with the new year,

one artist is creating ways to keep light into your home year round, through custom illuminated glass sculptures.

Atlanta-based artist, Paul Heller, has spent years developing these one-of-a-kind art pieces, honing a mix of carpentry with artistic inspiration, much of which has come

from his life spent on the water.

Heller, a retired hotelier who once hailed from the breezy Elkhart Lake of Wisconsin, has incorporated his love of sailing into his pieces, which require various skill sets to bring to life.

"I consider myself 50 percent a glass artist, 40 percent a carpenter

and 10 percent an electronics engineer," says the self-taught artist. "My art is tough to categorize as I don't believe anyone combines illumination, glass and complex 3D forms like I do."

Many of Heller's pieces are inspired from the days he spent sailing in his youth. "On Elkhart Lake, I worked

| behind the brush |



Paul Heller installs a stage sign at a Nashville live music venue, The Local.

for four summers at a boat rental. I learned a great deal of carpentry and fiberglass techniques that have become integral to my work now in constructing the lit 3-D forms.”

His current line of lake-themed pieces include sailboats, fish and lighthouses. Heller plans to expand that theme to create boat-houses; and murals with subject elements including multi-deck docks, sailboats, fishing, waterskiing and canoeing and kayaking.

“Sailing is my favorite life activity; get me out on a Hobie Cat in gusty wind conditions and I’m in my element. Combining two of my passions, glass art and being on the water has been a great way to interact with others in the sailing community. I have been able to create many different sailboats including my latest with a billowing spinnaker,” shares Heller.

Heller pioneered this burgeoning artform to make it his own after years of experimentation and brainstorming with tradespeople who had a knack for his vision.

“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 shine

through,” explains Heller.

The road to artistry was a long and winding one for Heller, who did not launch his artistic career until after he retired at the age of 50.

“Art is an amazing endeavor later in life that has allowed me to reinvent myself in a totally new arena. I adore being in this art zone where passionate creativity abounds and time flies by,” revels Heller. “For decades as an Atlantan hotelier, I was busy building my business, helping raise three great sons and coaching. After retiring, my first pursuit was teaching as an adjunct professor at Atlanta business schools. My next seemingly casual interest was taking a class in mosaics at the age of 55. With my love of live music, my first project was making an acoustic guitar. Months later this guitar ended up in a recording studio in Nashville and this casual interest suddenly became a passionate pursuit.”

Now, Heller happily partners with clients to craft the perfect illuminated stained-glass piece that captures their own interests, styles, and sentimental memories.

“I enjoy collaborating with my clients to develop the size, coloration and details to get them truly excited. This results in a treasured artform that lights up their lives,” says Heller.

To learn more about Heller’s illuminated glass pieces, visit paulhellerart.com.



Heller begins by cutting a wood outline of the art piece with a jigsaw. He then creates a light box with an outer metal band and wires long-lasting LEDs to provide illumination to the piece. Finally, he cuts and mounts the glass onto the light box form to create the finished piece.