

Judaica artist specializes in 'reverse painting' technique

By Randall P. Lieberman

Jewish Journal • Nov 21, 2016 at 11:11 am



Judaica artist Lori Charnow demonstrates her unique “reverse painting” technique in the studio of her Boynton Beach home. Beth Black/Staff photographer (Beth Black / Forum Publishing Group)

Boynton Beach Judaica artist Lori Charnow has been drawing or painting her whole life, but she only became a professional artist three years ago.

"A friend of mine took over the gift shop at my temple and I started thinking about what I could do to provide her with a few pieces to put in there," Charnow said. "I decided I wanted to make functional, beautiful art that people could use to celebrate the Jewish traditions."

In order to do this, Charnow taught herself the technique of "reverse painting" — which uses clear glass (plates and glassware) as the canvas.

Most of Charnow's pieces thus begin with meaningful Hebrew and/or English phrases done in reverse calligraphy. Each piece is then hand-painted, in reverse, from behind — starting with foreground detail and ending with background color. This is the exact reverse of traditional canvas painting — and so lends the technique its name.

"The beauty of the glass enhances each piece and protects the artwork underneath," Charnow said. "The result is functional, food-safe, decorative and ritual 'artware' designed to celebrate family holidays and milestones — adding beauty to the experience and strengthening ties to one's family and its traditions.

"Many of my pieces are now custom-designed — becoming unique heirlooms destined to be handed down from generation to generation. But these are not your grandmother's pieces. They are traditional, but at the same time contemporary and designed to appeal to modern tastes."

Sue Harrington — director of the Nathan D. Rosen Museum Gallery at the Sandler Center of the Adolph & Rose Levis Jewish Community Center in Boca Raton — loves Charnow's work and has a whole exhibit cabinet featuring Charnow's pieces in her gallery on the campus of the Jewish Federation of South [Palm Beach County](#).

"I have had Lori's work on display all fall — changing out items for special holidays," Harrington said in an email. "Lori is wonderful to work with. Her beautifully painted, functional glass pieces — for both Jewish celebrations and daily use — bring a fresh, contemporary look to traditional Judaica.

"The Nathan D. Rosen Museum Gallery at the Levis JCC's Sandler Center proudly displays (and sells) these quality works of art by this talented artist."

One of Charnow's best customers is Nina Rosenzweig, of Boca Raton.

"Every time I walk into the Sandler Center, I buy one of Lori's pieces of art," Rosenzweig said. "They are absolutely beautiful to look at. I bought some for myself — and some as presents for my daughter and granddaughters."

The name of Charnow's business is Living Art by Leah: Glass Artware with a Judaic Flair. Customers can have a custom piece designed or choose from a large collection of ritual, decorative or commemorative art designs including:

- Retirement Gifts
- Family Trees

- Gifts of Appreciation
- Commemorative Pieces
- Certificates of Achievement
- Special Birthdays/Anniversaries

"Not all my work is Judaica, but a lot of it is," Charnow said. "I want to help everybody celebrate their special occasions, but as a Jewish woman it is special to me to help Jewish people take part in our traditions. Living Art by Leah is hand-painted, functional, Judaic art created out of a desire to honor the beautiful traditions of the Jewish people.

"Each unique piece is baked to a permanent, but delicate finish. Our mission is to create decorative, ritual and hostess pieces that add beauty to our traditions and celebrate Jewish life from one generation to the next (in Hebrew — 'L'dor Va-dor')."

With that in mind, Charnow currently has a few items for sale which would be perfect for gifts to celebrate the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah.

For more information about Charnow or Living Art by Leah, visit the website, www.livingartbyleah.com or the Facebook page, www.facebook.com/livingartbyleah; email info@livingartbyleah.com; or call 561-350-9361.