

As the scope turns

Artisan Beverly Forester's handmade kaleidoscopes are sold around the globe.

JUDY LANGDON



Most baby boomers can remember playing with their first kaleidoscope — a cardboard tube with an eyehole that displays changing, colorful, geometric designs when turned.

That's how Broken Arrow artisan **Beverly Forester** first became fascinated with kaleidoscopes. The retired nurse founded her home studio, Keepsake Kaleidoscopes, five years ago. Her works range from traditional tubes to triangular and rectangular designs, as well as “scopes” made from stoneware bud vases. They are not toys, but works of art, costing hundreds of dollars.

TulsaPeople recently visited with Forester before she headed to a national kaleidoscope convention in Maine.

How did you first become interested in designing kaleidoscopes?

I held my first kaleidoscope, the small cardboard kind, when I was around 5 years old. I was fascinated by the colors and images, and have loved them ever since. Twelve years ago, while on vacation in Stowe, Vermont, I saw my first kaleidoscope that was truly art. I came home determined to learn how to make them. Now my scopes sell at that same gallery.

What subjects do you frequently use in your kaleidoscopes?

My specialty among kaleidoscope artists is my floral work. I use real flowers, leaves and butterfly wings. When I make custom kaleidoscopes for weddings, anniversaries, special trips or in memory of a loved one, the customer collects items

that tell their special stories. My bead scopes hold glass beads and pearls. The goal is to make a beautiful image when seen through the mirrors.

Approximately how long does it take you to design and complete one kaleidoscope?

It takes about a week to design and create each kaleidoscope. If I'm making a floral kaleidoscope, there is an extra three weeks to allow the flowers to press properly.

How difficult is it to make these pieces of art?

The magic is in the mirror systems. So, the outer part of a kaleidoscope can vary. I do the more traditional triangular shape, but also a rectangular bead scope and a large special edition, which is a trapezoid.

Since my specialty is floral work, I'm now making my own vases and using them for the body of the scope. ... I cut all my own glass and mirrors. Then, there's soldering and resin work.

The mirror systems are intense. I make three types: two mirror, three mirror and reversed taper. Each gives a very different image and is based on exact cutting of mirrors. Everything has to be perfect. However, that's part of the challenge. When I'm finished ... oh my! It's worth it all.