



## CRAFTS

# MULTI-TASKER

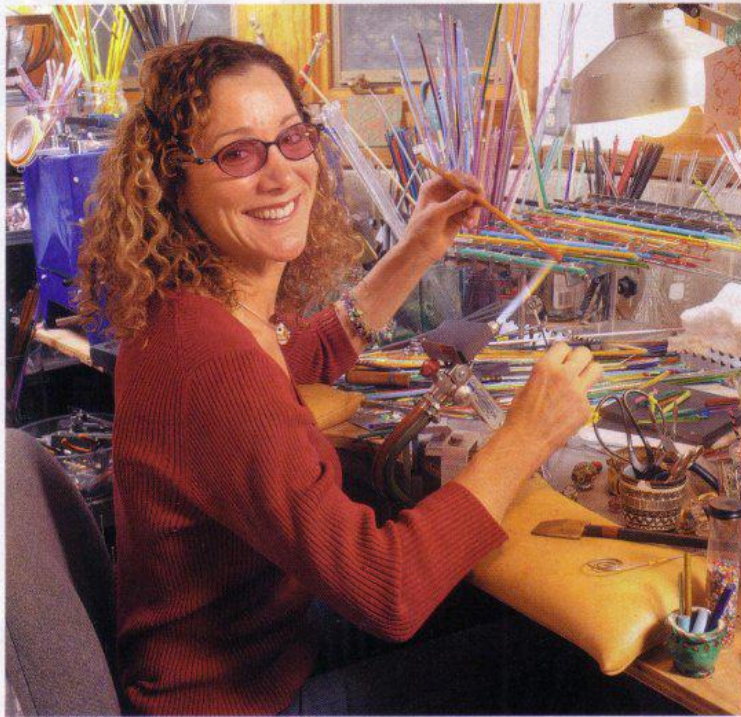
*An artist in glass, clay, sculpture and jewelry,  
Markels Lorini creates her pieces with the goal of bringing joy*

BY LORETTA RADESCHI

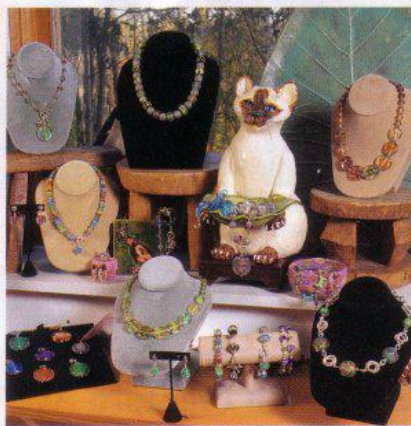
**F**ar off a paved road, at the end of a dirt driveway and nestled in the woods of Chester Springs, lives a dynamo of an artist—Markels Lorini. She sculpts clay, teaches pottery, creates glass beads and makes jewelry. All with exuberance and panache.

“I experience life and art without a lot of premeditation,” say Markels. The name of her workshop/gallery, Diving Cat Studio, reflects that attitude. Its logo is a large, robust cat in a diving position with its front paws together, its tail flying behind it, back paws turned upwards and a broad grin on its face. The idea for a diving cat came serendipitously to Markels while she was in a clay class several years ago. “I was enjoying the process of sculpting an animal. Then, for comic relief, I decided to sculpt it in a diving position. It was so much more fun.” That quirkiness and spontaneity echo the carefree, uplifting spirit Markels exudes, much of which she attributes to her love of animals.

“I make animals because it’s where my sensitivity lies,” she explains. “I can express myself so well through them.” Her favorite subjects are found in the forest and fields around her home. Squirrels, chipmunks, birds, lizards, mice, turtles, salamanders, foxes, insects and butterflies inspire her, as do leaves, rocks and branches. Then there are her pets—three dogs, 10 domestic cats and strays that she feeds. They also act as her muses. The ideas she creates from nature are sculpted in clay and



Joel Zarska





in glass and illustrated on vessels.

The levity seen in Markels' diving cat is evident in much of her work. Among her clay pieces are an overly fed queen bee and baby bee with extra sized wings, a variety of robust cats in different poses, quirky looking dogs and delightful dragons. Her passion for shaping clay is long-lived. It began in grade school where she discovered that clay allowed her the freedom to create in three dimensions with few limitations.

For a recent clay show, she created a mound of stones, sticks, letters and animals surrounding bowls of offering. That particular piece, she says, "Really explains where I come from and what I do. Words can complicate things. Animals have a direct communication."

*"Sculpting clay animals brings me joy and I like to share that joy," Markels states simply. In her gallery that's filled with her jewelry, beads, pottery and bowls, you'll always find numerous animal creations.*

Another installation included a series of birds sculpted from clay, including a brightly colored cockatoo and a parrot. For the National Liberty Museum's fundraising auction in Philadelphia a few years ago, Markels combined her clay and glass-making talents to create a realistic-looking dove holding a glass flower in its beak. "Making birds is comforting to me," she states. "It's about our spirits rising.

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To create the beads, no two of which are identical, Markels melts the glass in a torch flame of up to 2,000 degrees. The rising temperatures cause the glass to melt and move. As the colors and layers of glass converge, they form a unique pattern. After the glass has cooled, Markels couples the beads with hand-formed sterling to create her one-of-a-kind jewelry.

Markels has two worktables and different style torches for her glass. One space and torch is dedicated to glass sculpture; the other for Italian glass, from which she creates her beads and designs her original line of jewelry.

Her goal as an artist, she explains, is to instill a sense of pleasure and genuine intrigue in those who see her work or wear it. "Only after a person puts on a piece of my jewelry and likes what they see do I believe my artwork is complete."

Markels has studied techniques with glass artists whose work she admires, including Tom and Sage Holland, Brian Kirkfleet, Janice Miltonberger, Suellen Fowler and

Loren Stump. She recently attended a series of workshops in Murano, Italy, which included lessons with glass sculptor Lucio Bubacco. "I don't want to emulate anyone," she insists, "but appreciate the opportunity to learn from gifted artists."

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The Chester County artist generally dedicates a week each month to each medium. The transition is not easy,

Markels admits, but it is a good departure. "It keeps me fresh," she says.

Markels participates in a few select shows, mostly those in which she's invited, and fund-raising events. She has shown her work at the Wayne Art Center and at the annual benefit sponsored by the Cancer Center of Chester County. Primarily, she sells her work from her studio.

According to several craftspeople, Markels unselfishly recognizes, promotes and encourages talent in other artists. Two days a week at her studio she holds pottery classes for children and adults. Twice each year, Markels promotes the work of nine other Chester County artists through studio shows. The two shows are held at Diving Cat Studio the weekend before Mother's Day and the Saturday and Sunday following Thanksgiving. For information, e-mail Markels at (divingcatstudio@verizon.net). ♦

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Markels works with earthenware, red clay, stoneware and porcelain. Each has different qualities and characteristics and is chosen for a specific application. In addition to sculpting animals, Markels makes clay bowls. Often she embellishes them with an animal, such as a lizard, or enhances them with dots and swirls made from beads. "My work in clay and in glass influence each other," she explains. "I've begun to do more and more sculpturing with glass that looks like clay." In her clay work, Markels likes to use a broad palate of colors. To create certain pigments, she will make her own glazes and stains.

Markels' enthusiasm for working with glass is as intense as that of shaping clay. "When I first thought about working with glass, about six years ago, I thought I wanted to create glass sculptures because I've sculpted in clay. But my sister introduced me to glass by lampworking—taking rods of glass and forming small patterns and designs. After I tried lampworking, I was hooked. I bought a torch and never looked back. I started mak-

ing beads and became attracted to adornments."

It's not surprising that Markels' interest in art, and especially in designing jewelry, comes from her family. For 25 years, her grandmoth-

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er was the head of Women's Wardrobe at MGM Studios, and her mother, a costumer, would dress actors and actresses on movie sets. As a child, Markels would often visit the sets. "I've come to realize my pleasure in adorning people with jewelry has come from watching my mother and

grandmother at their work."

Markels' father was an artist. "Our home was always filled with artwork. I see now how much an effect being surrounded by art has had on me. Maybe that's why I work in several media, why I'm always dressed in artsy clothing and why everything in my house—glasses, dishes, rugs, furniture—is hand-made. Art is a lifestyle to me."

Her jewelry includes a variety of unique flame worked bracelets and necklaces with names as fanciful as the designs. There's Cat, Charm, Candy Charm, Cinderella, Bug, Bone, Butterfly and Face bracelets and an array of necklaces and earrings. Each is one-of-a-kind.

Many of Markels' glass beads are as amusing as her clay animals. She forms them into unique shapes as well as likenesses of dogs, cats and hearts. Other pieces, such as her glass pendants, are impressionistic in style, with soft, flowing colors. In just a few years, Markels has successfully evolved her fascination with glass beads into a full-time career.