CLOSE UP: CAIN INC. ARCHITECTURAL ART GLASS

ONE-OF-A-KIND

THE WHIR OF AN OLD ELECTRIC motor breaks the silence in the pastoral setting of Bremo Bluff, Virginia. Wayne Cain of Cain Architectural Art Glass is meticulously crafting another beveled glass window, transom, door or skylight that will soon grace the halls of someone's home.

Though most glass bevelers today use modern high speed diamond equipment, Cain uses machinery that dates to the early 1900s in the old weathered barn with a wood burning stove that serves as his shop.

"Twenty-five years ago, I found some old beveling equipment at a Richmond glass shop that was being stored and they sold it to me," says artist Cain. "I could not find any old bevelers and could not find any literature on it, so basically I started tinkering and playing with it until I learned to make angled beveled glass." As a self-taught artist, he had been making painted glass, stained glass, carved glass and decorative pieces for about nine years when he got the machinery.

Each piece of glass in a beveled design is shaped, ground and polished on the five different machines made around 1915 by Henry Lang. Cain first grinds the glass on the roughing mill to make an edge, then gives it a finished edge on the fine roughing mill. Then he takes it to the stone smoothing wheel and uses water to produce a satin finish.

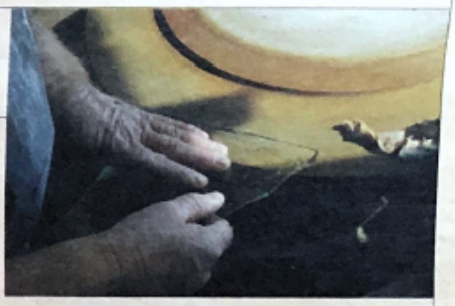
On the cork machine, Cain uses pumice on the four-inch cork wheel to polish the piece. Then on the four-inch wide felt wheel on the polishing machine he uses cerium oxide to create the finished piece. The entire process takes about 20 to 30 minutes for each piece. Then all the pieces are connected with lead to create the final product.

But while Cain's methods in the workshop are old school, he uses the Internet in his office to show clients the progress on their designs.

"The Internet has changed the whole course of how we do the business, opening up my work to more people and letting them be a part of the process," said Cain. "My work is very laborious but it is for people who want something truly hand done. I think of it as a new art form and I love what I do."

— DEBORAH RIDER ALLEN

Above, Cain shows a sample of one of his designs. His shop is in an old barn, heated with a coal stove, behind his home.



In his shop, Cain uses one of the 1915-era machines to work on a beveled edge of a piece of glass. He uses five machines to bevel, smooth and polish each piece of glass, which take 20 to 30 minutes per piece.

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