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LOCAL STORIES | OCTOBER 24, 2022

# Life & Work with Joyce Rooks

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Today we'd like to introduce you to Joyce Rooks.

Hi Joyce, thanks for sharing your story with us. To start, maybe you can tell our readers some of your backstories.

I began my art adventure in ceramics at the UCSD Crafts Center. After taking classes for a few quarters, I ended up teaching ceramics for a few years. During that time, I was also playing guitar in the all-female band "The Cockpits" which then became "The Dinettes". It was during the era of punk rock and we became pretty popular in San Diego, I continued with ceramics while I also worked at Tower Records and later made a move to Los Angeles where I worked at CEMA Distribution (Capitol/EMI Music) for several years. I returned to North County after the Northridge earthquake in 1994 and also returned to the Crafts Center where I began making glass beads and learning as much as I could about glass. Over the years I became very active in the world of glass and glass bead making culminating in a trip to Murano, Italy to study with Lucio Bubbaco, a maestro in the art of lampworking which is what glass bead making is called. Since then, I continue to teach and sell my work to jewelry designers, bead stores, and at bead shows around the U.S. More recently I've been living in the desert and have been doing more and more kiln work or glass fusing. Music has always been and continues to be a huge part of my life, I began playing cello at age 12 and have played in community orchestras and ensembles and recording and touring with various bands and projects.

Can you talk to us a bit about the challenges and lessons you've learned along the way? Looking back would you say it's been easy or smooth in retrospect?

I've always had a "day job" but luckily my jobs have been related to my interests of art and music. The last job I had was working for Whole Foods Market which I retired from last year. I worked in the vitamins and supplements department which I considered to have a never-ending knowledge base to learn from. I've always been a gardener, growing vegetables, herbs, and flowers so it just fit. The hardest part was FOMO as I would see friends being able to spend all of their time on their creative endeavors and I had to punch a clock. In the last year of the old UCSD Crafts Center, I was the interim director and had to go through the trauma of the Crafts Center being shut down. All of these experiences are lessons learned.

As you know, we're big fans of you and your work. For our readers who might not be as familiar what can you tell them about what you do?

I've never felt as if I "specialized" in any one thing. When I was younger that was kind of frustrating. I wished I could be one of those people that spent their whole life doing one thing incredibly well. As it is, I think I do a lot of things very well and I continue to learn and get better with all the things I do. Sometimes I feel that there isn't enough time or maybe I should try to stick to one thing but it doesn't seem to be in my nature. Over the years I've noticed that many of my favorite musicians and artists are really multi-faceted and maybe become known for one thing but digging a little deeper you may find that a favorite musician is a fantastic painter, sculptor, or writer. I would say for myself that I'm most proud that I have so many abilities.

Do you have any memories from childhood that you can share with us?

2 memories:

The first time I saw a glass worker was at Disneyland when I was 5 years old. The man was making glass ships and other items which I have since learned was made of borosilicate glass. My mom bought a ship but had to drag me away from the exhibit after a while. I met the glass worker years later when I started making glass beads. Bill Rasmussen was revered and respected in the glass community.

The first time I saw a live orchestra in person. We were visiting my grandparents in Baltimore and I got to see the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. I remember being blown away seeing and hearing violins live for the first time. I was so excited and decided then and there that I would play the violin. It wasn't until much later when I took orchestra class in middle school. The teacher started handing out violins to kids and by the time he got to me they were out of violins. He handed me a cello and said "you have good cello hands!" At first, I was disappointed but quickly came to love my new instrument and still play it to this day.

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