New Iberia Woman Creates New Art Form

By CAROL RAYMOND

NEW IBERIA - A bit of artistic training, a substantial amount of creativity, and an art technique is adapted into an original idea.

For Mrs. Evald (Celia) Beckstrom of New Iberia, her artistic career began with painting, with her first studies at the Boston Museum School of Fine Arts.

From there, she developed an interest in stained glass. An interest which resulted in a self-taught art and, with a lot of ingenuity, her self-taught work was adapted to a new style of stained glass designed for mirrors and pieces of cracked bottles.

Successful Career

The end result has been a successful art career for Mrs. Beckstrom, who has done pieces for Bayou Flair in New York, Ipswich in Boston, and the Massachusetts Audubon Society in related projects.

Mrs. Beckstrom has been living in New Iberia for two years and has formerly been a member of the Bayou Art Gallery in New Iberia.

With pieces of broken bottles, she has made mosaic type works such as coffee table tops and wall hangings. With stained glass sheets, she makes Tiffany type lamps, flower and butterfly designs, window screens and other pieces.

With the same designs and technique as used in making leaded stained glass pieces, she substitutes mirrors for stained glass sheets.

Begun Painting

"I started this sort of painting mainly," says Mrs. Beckstrom. "I became interested in stained glass but could not get the glass I wanted until one day when my husband and I started cracking bottles."

"Then when my husband transferred to the States (Boston), I became associated with a very fine craftsman in the Boston area. We worked more or less together until we were married."

Making mosaic with cracked bottles and adding the technique of leaded glass, Mrs. Beckstrom, with her ideas, developed her own style.

"I have never seen it done except by me." In other words, she has developed a new style or technique.

"My little girl was doing her homework one day and looking into a cracked mirror at the same time. I noticed, the light moving, catching the different facets of the cracked glass. And the idea for making the mirror pieces originated.

Does Other Work

And there aren't only the ones who work for Mrs. Beckstrom who continue to paint. When she began painting in Central America, she spent most of her life, she especially enjoyed painting the exotic flowers of that continent.

Since she moved to New Iberia about six years ago, she has been associated with a very fine craftsman in the Boston area. They worked more or less together until she and her husband came down here.

Mosaic with cracked bottles and adding the technique of leaded glass, Mrs. Beckstrom, has been involved in the work herself. Occasionally she gets suggestions from someone placing an order.

The only work she did not design herself was a copy of the Louisiana State Flag, which is an exact copy of the official flag. And of that she says, "Just to find the state flag to be able to sketch it was no picnic."

At Art Gallery

The piece measures 21 by 34 inches and, like many of her works, is for sale through the Bayou Art Gallery.

The gallery, located at 143 W. Main St., opened about two years ago by a group of local artists. Presently about 80 artists from such areas as New Iberia, Loreauville, St. Martinville, Lafayette, Jeannette and Houma are members. Their works are sold through the gallery.

To make a leaded stained glass or mirror piece, Mrs. Beckstrom's first step is to draw the cartoon. The colors of each piece are filled in on the cartoon and each is numbered.

She then makes three precision copies. With one, she cuts out each section individually and places it on the stained glass sheet of the appropriate color. She cuts the glass and places it on another copy of the corresponding number.

Begins Leading Work

Then she starts leading, generally in the lower right (Continued On Page 22)