



# RADIANT RAYS OF LIGHT

*Carlyn Ray Designs dreams up stunning light installations  
with her clients' help*

by ALAENA HOSTETTER / *photography by* HOLGER OBENAU

**V**ERTICAL RODS OF TRANSLUCENT glass are cradled in place by short, jagged spears of raw white quartz in an assemblage that hangs over a dining table in North Dallas. It changes colors at the homeowner's behest—bright blue, purple, pink and green emanate from the stunning fixture, depending on which holiday is impending or the homeowner's mood.

"When we turned it on for the first time, it was so rewarding to hear her gasp with excitement," says Carlyn Ray, a Design District glass artist who created this stunning custom piece in collaboration with her client Tricia Wortley.

Delighting her customers all starts with a conversation. Ray loves for her clients and their designers to be involved in the creative process, from conception through completion, when she makes them a custom piece of glass art, a chandelier, wall sconces or light fixtures.

Ray sits down with her sketchbook first and offers clients drawings that they can give feedback on. After a sketch is approved, she builds a prototype, often with cardboard, metal or sample glass. Clients are invited into Ray's Design District studio to choose colors and metal finishes, and to monitor the progress of their custom fixture, making alterations as needed along the way.

"When clients are involved, they really feel like they're a part of the piece," says Ray. "Being part of the creation of the piece brings them joy, because creativity—expressing yourself and using your imagination—is joyful."

That collaborative nature has led to some showstopping pieces in Ray's clients' homes.

Consider the aforementioned Wortley chandelier, for which Ray collaborated with Tricia Wortley's designer of 30 years, Connie Davis. "Tricia loves color and gold and beautiful things," Ray says. "Everything in her home is custom-made; it's pretty spectacular."

"We could never have bought anything close to this at a gallery," says Wortley. "Creating this piece with Carlyn has been a labor of love and fun. It's an amazing work of art and engineering."

Then there's the "glassicle" chandelier in the foyer of another of Ray's clients, the Sherman family.





Dangling vertical rods of glass are anchored by two crescent moons in conversation with one another, mimicking the play between the two crescent-shaped staircases in the foyer. The glass rods hang at varying lengths and are flecked with gold leaf, which broadcasts a rich, dazzling ochre color once the fixture is turned on.

The fixture shows off its different angles and dimensions depending on where the viewer is standing. “Countless pieces of glass were brought to our home, and it was as much fun looking at the glass as it was watching Carlyn react to how they interacted in our home,” says Brian Sherman. “The natural lighting, angles, time of day, location, size and scale were all dancing through her creative brain. The educational process for us was equally as enriching. The final installation was even more rewarding.”

The Shermans requested another piece—a massive, 12-foot-wide undulating glass “weaving” wall installation for the dining room—for which Ray worked at

length with their designer, Richard Gordon.

Ray decided on colors and Gordon used modeling software to map the shape of the finished piece on the wall. Ray made a miniaturized mock-up for the homeowner and designer to approve, then all systems were a go.

“We had asked her for a movement and color scheme she hadn’t created before,” says Sherman. “Carlyn is one of the few artists we have worked with who has been willing to be pushed outside of her comfort zone. She listened, interpreted our desires for the piece, and then just did what makes her special.”

The gradation of colors from black to red to yellow isn’t a typical color scheme in Ray’s repertoire, but the homeowners were specific about which colors they wanted to avoid. The striking color combination and the way the finished piece twists in space, draws viewers toward it, begging for a closer look.

“The most wonderful part of the process was Carlyn’s unrelenting enthusiasm to dream up something great

for our space,” says Sherman.

“It’s very much them and fits their décor,” Ray explains.

Ray says all her clients are hands-on throughout the entire creative process. And, when they receive a compliment on their piece, she says, “The person is really complimenting their work as much as mine.”

Sparking that creative energy in others is more of a calling than an occupation, according to Ray. “It’s my purpose in life to share that happiness and that connection with people,” she says. \*

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