

# UNBREAKABLE SPIRIT

Experiences and emotions meet molten glass in Madison Kopsa's deeply personal creations

BY REBECCA L. RHOADES



**Madison Kopsa instantly** connected with glass blowing.

Growing up, Kopsa always had gravitated toward art – mostly sculpture – but after studying graphic design at the Minneapolis Institute of Art and feeling unfulfilled by working with a computer, the Iowa native decided to return to her hometown of Cedar Rapids. It was there, at Kirkwood Community College, that a friend suggested she try her hand at glass.

"I fell in love," Kopsa recalls. "It's hot, it's magical, it's molten. It just felt right."

A few years later, in 2016, Kopsa found herself married and with a four-month-old baby. Instead of settling down, the couple sold their belongings, packed up their car and traveled the country. Kopsa had her first artist residency in Tennessee and took classes at the Corning Museum of Glass in New York.

Finally, the family made their way to Arizona, staying first with Kopsa's in-laws in Surprise and then renting a home in Scottsdale. "The whole time, I was putting my feelers out into the glass community here," Kopsa says.

Her first Valley gig was at the now defunct Circle 6 Studios, a glass blowing and custom art glass gallery in Phoenix. "They did a lot of First Friday events," she says. "It was always hot glass, cold beer. It was a really happening spot."

It was also where she met Scottsdale glass artist Newt Grover, who's known for his large installations and one-of-a-kind light fixtures. It's at his studio that she now hones her craft. "I mainly do production work for him, helping create his sculptures and chandeliers," Kopsa says. "Then, in my free time, I'm able to work on my own creations."

Those include sculptural pieces that are deeply intimate in both story and in shape. "I try to make things that are meaningful to me," Kopsa says. "Whether it's experiences I've had or dreams that have come to me, I try to put that into my work. It's less about pretty and more about the concept."

Glass bubbles bulge outward from welded metal structures as if straining to break free from a cage. Female figures display voluptuous curves and pregnant bellies. A series of crowning babies showcases both the magic and misery of childbearing. A certified doula, Kopsa is influenced heavily by childbirth.

"Many of my pieces can be very visceral," she explains. "But there's power behind that. For some people, it makes them feel uncomfortable, but others say it's amazing, and they've never seen anything like it. "I have an idea of what my pieces mean to me," she adds. "But if you're drawn to it, and it means something to you, and you display it in your home, I hope it brings happiness and joy to you."

See Kopsa's work at Philabaum Glass Gallery in Tucson and on her website at [www.kopsaglass.com](http://www.kopsaglass.com).