

2022 Arts Council Choice Award Winner

Karen Deguire

I am a creative force of nature. It's the air I breathe, the way I worship. I am always looking for new ways to bring beauty into existence. I studied oil painting, ceramics, photography, and theatrical costuming in college. I dabbled in all of those things as hobbies and professionally, until I discovered a local maker space that offers all kinds of new technology. The laser cutters presented an amazing opportunity to use materials I hadn't explored before, and quickly I had a new passion with endless possibilities and abounding inspiration.

My laser-cut art consists of many layers and many steps. The design process on the computer can take weeks for a single design. Once I decide on a color scheme, I paint each 1/8" sheet of birch wood by hand with water based wood dyes and metallic acrylics. I then cut them out one by one on a 60-watt CO2 laser. When the layers are cut, I meticulously adhere each layer together using a roller and dental tools to control the glue. I find the precision involved in this step is very satisfying and therapeutic for my mild OCD. The layers are pressed one at a time in a custom jig I made with three four-way pressure clamps to insure adhesion. After all the layers are secure, I seal the piece with polyurethane and place a hanger and bumpers on the back. Every piece is one of a kind and a labor of love.

My influences are rooted in nature, sacred geometry, and architecture. Everywhere I go, I see a new design in the making or a shape to be created. I believe my ability to organize shapes and colors into universally resonant motifs is one of my greatest strengths and I enjoy sharing the results with others.