

Employee Spotlight: Lisaida Archuleta

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Crafting enchanted works of art on glass

Lisaida Archuleta of the Facility System Engineering Utilities & Infrastructure (ES-UI) group stares at a finely crafted but otherwise plain vase made of glass. Picking up a Dremel rotary tool, Lisaida begins to outline an image she has formulated in her head. With great skill she uses the tool to remove minute amounts of glass, leaving behind a translucent piece of artwork that shimmers like winter-morning frost.

“I was about seven years old when I first started to draw, not on walls or anything like that, but actual figures on pieces of paper,” remembers Lisaida. “My dad took notice, so he had my mom go out and buy me some art supplies. Later, my parents invested in painting materials, such as brushes and canvases, for me to practice my painting.”

It was during her high school years that Lisaida honed her artistic skills by taking classes in architectural design. “When I was 14 years old, my dad owned a bar, and he let me paint murals on the walls, so long as they included portraits of him,” Lisaida says

with a smile. “I continued pursuing art in college, and even today I use these skills in my work here at the Lab.”

From painting to glass etching

Lisaida Archuleta uses a Dremel rotary tool to etch an image onto a glass vase.

Lisaida met her future husband in middle school, and during high school they took art classes and started dating. The couple subsequently married and started a family. “I kind of stopped doing art for a while, focusing instead on my three kids as a stay-home mom,” says Lisaida. “But as my children grew older, I started to teach them how to paint. That’s what got me painting again.”

Although Lisaida paints to this day, she has also discovered another form of art, one known as glass etching. Glass etching consists of creating images on glass surfaces through a number of techniques, some of which involve using acidic or abrasive substances. For her artwork, Lisaida uses a Dremel rotary tool to “carve” images into goblets, vases and other objects made of glass.

“I got into glass etching when my son told me, ‘everybody does paintings—why don’t you try something different?’” Lisaida says. “He said, ‘mom, why don’t you do something that nobody else really does, something that will make your own style really stand out.’”

At a loss as to what new medium she would explore, Lisaida discovered glass etching quite by chance. “At the time I was in charge of decorating for my nephew’s graduation party,” Lisaida explains, “and I was thinking about how I could make the decorations stand out. I was looking at this piece of unadorned glassware, and I thought, ‘You know, I’m going to try to engrave his name and some symbols on it.’ That’s when I really started getting into the craft of engraving.”

Relishing the fruits of creativity

Lisaida’s etching of an elk on a drinking glass. Elks are one of Lisaida’s favorite subjects to etch and paint.

As with her painting, Lisaida decorated items of glass at first for her personal satisfaction.

“I’ve never really been interested in showing my art to the public,” Lisaida says. “For me, art has always been a way to relieve stress—to work through some of the frustrations that sometimes come with life.”

It was only a matter of time, however, before Lisaida’s art would become known beyond her family’s intimate sphere. “So I had all my paintings piled up in this room, and all my engravings,” says Lisaida, “and a cousin of my husband says to me, ‘Why don’t you go to an art show?’ I was shy about my work, but I gave it a try. I was amazed at the reactions I got from other people, and it surprised me that some wanted to actually buy my artwork—it’s so satisfying that I have made something that someone else can love.”

In addition to participating in art shows, Lisaida has also started to enter and win local art contests, such as a poster contest for the 2018 Española Valley Art Festival.

“I have always been critical about my work,” Lisaida notes, “so when people love my work, it makes me feel so much better. I love it when people love my work.”

Dia del Los Muertos skulls etched on goblets by Lisaida. Such imagery has proved popular at art shows.

Lisaida Archuleta works as a drafting designer for the Facility System Engineering Utilities & Infrastructure (ES-UI) group.

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