

Liz Ross interview

Moments in Time

In her new Serenity Spheres™ collection for Department 56, designer Liz Ross set out to create peaceful worlds in miniature, places to go to daydream or rest a weary, over-taxed brain.

By Barbara Knox

"I've always had the need to create, the need to make things," says designer Liz Ross who has, most recently, created a specialty line of waterglobes called Serenity Spheres. Sometimes, says the ebullient and endlessly inventive Ross, that constant creative cacophony in her head can get a little bit daunting. "There's just never any downtime in there!"

Although the Serenity Spheres line is new, the process of designing, inventing and creating is nothing new to Ross. A former design director at Williams-Sonoma, a brand manager for Papyrus Stores and a senior art director at Schurman Fine Papers, Ross is currently designer and



owner of two companies. Through The Monkey and The Peddler, a company she formed in 1995, Ross designs and manufactures porcelain dessert and cocktail plates that are available in such places as Neiman Marcus, Saks Fifth Avenue and Henri Bendel. Through her second company, Re:Design, Ross concentrates on diverse product design.

"Serenity Spheres were really born 12 years ago," says Ross, explaining the genesis of the waterglobes line. "I was missing New York and wanted to encapsulate the city in a waterglobe." But the idea went into a drawer and wasn't unearthed until a bad bout of carpal tunnel syndrome left Ross unable to do much more than clean her files. "Suddenly I came upon the idea and discovered that I still liked it." After expanding her designs into a series, Ross went looking for a company that could bring her ideas to reality, and she discovered Department 56.

"As I learned more about [Department 56] Villages," recalls Ross, "I realized that my Serenity Spheres were natural extensions of the Villages. It's like taking a magnifying glass, looking into a Village, then lifting out one moment in time and capturing it in a waterglobe."

Ross added inspirational quotations and soothing sound—courtesy of her sound designer husband David Westby—to her waterglobes to add dimension to the initial concept. "I look at what people want today," says Ross, "and I see what's 'big': candles and home spas, mood music and luxurious bedding. People are looking for a place of refuge. Even if you're not a collector of waterglobes—and collecting waterglobes and snow domes is huge!—these Serenity Spheres are pieces that people can relate to. They make wonderful inspirational gifts. It's all about holding captive a single, peaceful moment in a transient time." +



The Central Park Serenity Sphere, which conjures up autumn in New York, was the first of 12 designed by Ross. See Directory, page 31, for product details.