

Honoring state's birthday

Blenko Glass offers first look at 2022 West Virginia Day piece

By **FRED PACE**
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MILTON — Every year, Blenko Glass Co. in Milton celebrates West Virginia Day by releasing a limited-edition piece of glass art.

This week, the company gave a first look at the 2022 piece, which will go on sale at noon Saturday, June 18, which is two days before West Virginia Day on Monday, June 20.

The piece, known as "Cabin in the Woods," will be available for online purchase only, company officials said.

"Celebrate West Virginia's 159th birthday with a beautiful piece of Blenko," Travis Mount, marketing assistant at Blenko, said in an email.

Designed by glass artist Kelsey Murphy and blown from tangerine glass, Blenko's newest birthday piece is approximately 7 inches long by 6 inches wide and 12 inches tall from the base to the chimney, according to Mount.



BLENKO GLASS CO. | Courtesy photo

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Mount said each piece is completed with a roughly 7-inch-tall twisted charcoal drop-in stopper to resemble smoke billowing from the chimney.

“Only 159 pieces will be offered, and each stoppered bottle will be sequentially numbered and the base of each piece will bear the signature of Blenko Glass Company President John W. Blenko, designer Kelsey Murphy and the Blenko 2022 stamp,” he said.

Mount says the colorful creation is inspired by the

cabin Blenko once provided their resident designers and artists, giving them not only a place near the factory to live but also a taste of the West Virginia experience.

“The cabin was coupled with the thrill of working with numerous tanks of beautiful molten color and the freedom to create wild and wonderful forms and objects,” he said. “Artist and designer Hank Adams and others lived in that cabin during their residency at Blenko. The idea of a quiet retreat to escape to and from there to pursue one’s muse is time honored. Ralph Waldo Emerson had perhaps the most famous

lakeside cabin in the woods, Walden Pond. It is a nod to that creative escape that inspires this year’s West Virginia Day piece.”

Although the original Blenko artist cabin is now gone, Murphy said, “It inspired me to commemorate the unique experience of the designers and artists who benefited from a situation available in a few places in the world. As another year begins, a new and exciting future will unfold. Happy birthday, West Virginia.”

Blenko Glass Co. has been producing works since 1893. The origins of the birthday piece date back to 1980, when the Dia-

mond Department Store in Charleston commissioned Blenko for a special piece to sell exclusively in their stores for West Virginia Day.

The Charleston Town Center mall opened in 1983, and in the same year The Diamond’s inventory was liquidated and the business closed, but Blenko continued to make the birthday piece for its customers.

Mount said the first 50 pieces will be offered for auction on Blenko’s online store beginning at noon June 18. The auction will run through June 22, lasting five days in total. The pieces will start with an opening bid of \$159.

The remaining pieces numbered 51 through 159 will be offered on the website at <https://blenko.com/shop/>, he added.

“Please be aware that these items will sell fast,” Mount said. “If you are interested in purchasing a particular number, you should be paying close attention to our website at the time of launch. We also suggest that you create a user account on our website prior to the launch to avoid having to go through that process during checkout. This is not mandatory, only a suggestion. You will also be able to check out as a ‘guest.’”

Mount said they want to

limit one piece per customer.

“We are going on the honor system and hope you will respect our wishes so that each person may have an opportunity to own one of these historic pieces,” he said. “We will be monitoring the sales closely, and any sales found to have purchased multiple pieces will be canceled, resulting in the loss of any piece you may have purchased.”

For questions or concerns, contact Blenko via its website at <https://blenko.com/contact> and a member of its customer service department will reach out, Mount said.