

Artist Profile:

Marlow Gates

Friendswood Brooms

Hours by Appointment

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Artist Bio

Marlow Gates is a second generation broom maker, carrying on his father's tradition of craftsmanship in broom making. Rumor has it that Marlow has been tying brooms since he was five. (Marlow will give a free cake tester to anyone who brings in the tabloid article from 1977 that verifies this rumor.)

With a degree in design from NC State University, Marlow now joins his wife, Diana, in creating brooms as a functional art form at their studio in Big Sandy Mush (Leicester), NC.

Using natural wood handles and broomcorn, Marlow and Diana make each broom by hand with techniques that date to the 1790s.

Marlow and Diana spend many hours hunting for handles in the woods of western North Carolina in the winter months, looking for the branches, limbs and roots that have the most character. Marlow and Diana try to show off what Nature has created.

Marlow and Diana share in the design, sewing, and finishing of each broom.

Diana prepares the handles by shaping, carving and sanding each one by hand. Marlow then ties the heads on the handles in an intricate hand-woven Shaker design.

Freed from the constraints of the machine, Marlow and Diana are investigating shape, size, color, texture, and the other fundamentals basic to any art form. They continue to draw inspiration from the teachings of Marlow's father and mentor, and master broom maker, Ralph Gates. Ralph truly was a master craftsman and considered by many to have pioneered Brooms as art.

Artist Statement

Each broom is a unique, functional piece of sculpture, incorporating traditional Appalachian strength and longevity.