



# Amherst Company Transforms Ashes into Art

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**By Matthew Campbell**

Customers around the world are sending their loved one's ashes to an Amherst company, and receiving art in return.

You can't tell but Vincent Penna is holding a piece of his mother.

"Ashes to ashes, dust to dust, that is a piece of my mom inside the heart," says Art From Ashes customer, Vincent Penna.

After losing his mother last year, Vincent knew he had to do something special. But he didn't want go to with the traditional urn.

"You know, you put somebody up on the mantle. We didn't want that," Penna says.

Instead, he chose art.

"The heart was so symbolic of that relationship that we shared and thought that she would live on in our hearts forever," he says.

Consider it a mobile memento. Vincent, and customers from around the world, are turning to the Amherst shop, Art From Ashes.

"We wanted people to have a way to remember their lost one, but in a way that's very positive," says co-owner Deb Brown.

And also discreet. Customers choose from what looks like typical glass art. Rather than paying a visit to the grave, you can literally hang memories in your home or wear them on your wrist.

"You have one of these on your windowsill, or you wear a bracelet, and each time you twist the bracelet, you think of your father. It's really really special and comforting," Brown says.

"Memories actually promote healing. That's how people actually work through grief. The artwork was a perfect venue," says co-owner Jane Giat.

And a perfect avenue to add touches of personality.

"People felt that it represented their mother, her vibrant personality, her positive outlook," Giat says, listing reasons why customers select certain pieces.

All a customer needs is a teaspoon per remembrance. The ash is shipped in a complete kit, and given to local glassblowers. The ash is added to the molten hot glass, then double rolled to seal it in.

"It's not morbid. It can be completely uplifting and positive," Giat says.

And to customers it means everything.

"I've made it know to my family that I would love this heart to be placed in my burial vault when I die, because this symbolizes that she'll be with me forever. That's how much this means to me," Penna adds.

Pieces start at a little over \$100 and are usually completed within three to five weeks.