



James Vella's (RIGHT) blown-glass horns get smaller toward the top, creating a tree shape.

The artist: James Michalopoulos' vivid interpretive paintings local icons, but his broader body of work includes figurative

About him: Michalopoulos credits music with inspiring his distinctive style of painting New Orleans buildings, explaining that the distortions and exaggerations are all based on rhythm. He is a self-confessed fan of good wines and food (part of the inspiration for his restaurant Etoile in Covington) and is a partner in the production of Old New Orleans Rum, a Louisiana sugar-cane based rum distilled locally. He spends several months a year at his home in the Burgundy region of France.

His tree: A twisted assemblage of materials and found objects created from things in his studio, topped with a high-flying Santa Claus.

What he says about it: "This is a first for me; I have never done a tree before. My tree is cyclonic and it tries to put a new spin — literally and figuratively — on the traditional Christmas tree. I looked inside my studio and grabbed up everything that was lying



around and cobbled it together. It definitely has a celebratory character, but I would also say that it is positively atomic and molecular. I took some wire fencing and industrial strapping, added water bottles, garden hoses and extension cords. There are protons and electrons flying

around, and they all come together around the nucleus of Christmas."

Find out more: www.michalopoulos.com/



James Michalopoulos' materials four

Horns of plenty

The artist: James Vella, whose whimsical glass works range from flowers to roast pigs

About him: His Vella Vetro Studio suffered major damage from Katrina; it took him a year to rebuild it, running at full capacity to compose still lifes from his blown-glass objects and tell a story. He spends most of the summer away from New Orleans traveling and teaching in places like Canada, Germany — because of the heat, which exacerbates the hazards of the

His tree: A 7-foot composition of 65 blown-glass trumpets attached to a metal frame. LED lights and silver paint illuminate the cavity of the metal frame, illuminating the glass from the inside in blown glass tops it off.

What he says about it: "I wanted the challenge of trying to translate a literal translation of a Christmas tree, but I wanted it to be recognizable, so I used graduated sizes to produce pieces that can be interpreted as a cornucopia, which fits with the idea of a Christmas tree. I use more reflectivity and the LED lights to produce a silver

Find out more: <http://vellavetro.com/>