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THE STUDIO GLASS MOVEMENT: Selections from the Esterling-Wake Collection

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SHELDON MUSEUM OF ART
University of Nebraska–Lincoln



THE STUDIO GLASS MOVEMENT

Selections from the
Esterling-Wake Collection

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THE STUDIO GLASS MOVEMENT

Selections from the Esterling-Wake Collection



SHELDON MUSEUM OF ART

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CONTENTS

- 4 **Foreword and Acknowledgments**
Jorge Daniel Veneciano
- 6 ***Celebrating the Studio Glass Movement***
Sharon Kennedy
- 12 ***The Language of Glass: Material, Method, Meaning***
Therman Statom
- 15 ***Selections from the Esterling-Wake Collection***
Sharon Kennedy
- 34 ***A Conversation with Steve Wake***
Gregory Nosan
- 38 **Checklist of the Exhibition**
Compiled by Ashley Hussman
- 42 **Selected Bibliography and Notes**
- 43 **Contributors**
- 44 **Copyright**



FOREWORD AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Jorge Daniel Veneciano, Director

Upon visiting the glass collection housed in the Esterling-Wake home, I began to imagine these remarkable works on display in Sheldon's Great Hall. I pictured them in translucent splendor, imbuing the natural light that sweeps through the space daily. Few works in our collection can withstand the light from the cathedral-high windows at each end of the museum's nave. These exceptional objects, however, hold their own against the daylight and harness its energy in the service of their own visual beauty.

For their generous assistance with this exhibition and catalog, we thank first and foremost the collectors, Linda Esterling and Steve Wake. Their keen visual acumen and sensitivity are manifest in the collection of works they have carefully assembled over the years. They have graciously permitted numerous visits to their home and freely shared their knowledge of and passion for glass. Linda and Steve have also been generous advocates and supporters of the Sheldon Museum of Art for many years. It is an honor to host this selection of works from their collection.

This project also allows us to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the studio glass movement, whose members consciously broke away from the factory model of glass production in 1962. The exhibition sets us on the right course as we prepare to celebrate the museum's own fiftieth anniversary in 2013. Also, it allows us to showcase Sheldon's own early examples of work from the studio movement.

Producing a project of this nature and quality requires a professional staff to execute it. We proudly recognize and thank Sharon Kennedy, who organized this exhibition, applying her curatorial sensibilities to its research and presentation; Greg Nosan, who edited and organized this catalog with grace and contributed the thoughtful interview with the collectors; and Ashley Hussman, who compiled the exhibition checklist with her characteristic attention to detail.

Despite a heavy exhibition schedule and overseas travel, artist Therman Statom was able to contribute an essay, sharing his views on working in glass. We thank him and his assistant, Holly Kranker, for their cooperative spirit. Jim Wawrzewski, who created the design for this series of publications, again lent us his impeccable sense of style. John Nollendorfs exercised patience and skill in photographing the works in multiple locations, assisted by associate registrar Genevieve Ellerbee. Collections manager Stacey Walsh handled loans and the production of labels, and the exhibitions team of Ed Rumbaugh and Dave Harvey insured the safe handling, transport, and installation of the artwork. We thank all of them for their efforts.

Finally, the museum's general operations receive support from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln; our programs benefit from the generous funding assistance of the Sheldon Art Association, the Nebraska Arts Council, and the Nebraska Cultural Endowment. We thank them wholeheartedly for their trust.

Opposite: Janusz Walentynowicz. *Tove*, 2006 (cat. 32).

CELEBRATING THE STUDIO GLASS MOVEMENT

Sharon Kennedy, Curator of Cultural and Civic Engagement

In March 1962, one of the first glassmaking workshops outside of a factory was held on the grounds of the Toledo Museum of Art in Ohio. Led by glass pioneer Harvey Littleton, the event was attended by a handful of enthusiasts and a few in the industry. The challenges soon became evident when participants found the first batch of glass to be unworkable. Even so, the possibilities this meeting offered opened the door for the studio glass movement, which empowered individual artists to design and create glass outside of the factory setting.

Leading up to this important event was the general resurgence of interest in traditional arts and crafts following World War II, partly due to the G.I. Bill of Rights, which included craft training. Institutions such as the California College of Arts and Crafts saw dramatic increases in enrollment and with it a greater appreciation for handcrafted objects. In 1951 the Corning Museum of Glass opened in Corning, New York, under the patronage of Corning Glass Works. Eight years later, the museum mounted *Glass 1959*, an important exhibition that included glasswork from twenty-two countries. Despite this growing enthusiasm, those in the industry still maintained that quality glass could only be made in a factory with a team of assistants, enormous furnaces, and extensive equipment.

Littleton, who challenged this belief system, was a man who seemed destined to pursue a profession as a glass artist. He was born in Corning, where his physicist father conducted research for the glass works and his neighbor and mentor, Frederick Carder, founded the famous Steuben Glass. Since university glass programs did not yet exist, Littleton trained in ceramics and began teaching at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Captivated by the potential of glass as an art medium, he traveled to Italy, visiting the famous glass factories of Murano and Naples and dreaming of the day he could make his own glass.

Littleton also met and befriended Dominick Labino, a Toledo-based engineer and glass enthusiast who had built a furnace capable of melting glass for blowing. Due to his astute understanding of glass science, Labino was able to create blown and hot-worked vessels whose forms complemented the nature of the material itself. This sensitivity is exemplified in the clarity and quality of the vase in the Esterling-Wake collection (page 8). Labino's presence at the 1962 workshop proved invaluable, as he helped solve logistical concerns such as furnace design and material choices. When the first glassblowing attempt failed, it was Labino who offered marbles from the Johns Manville Company, where he worked.

Opposite: Harvey Littleton. *Blue Sliced Descending Form*, 1986 (cat. 15).





With a product that could more easily be melted down, attendees saw their glassblowing efforts realized.

Before the March workshop was over, a second was being planned for June, and soon after, the fledging movement began to expand and flourish. Littleton campaigned for a glass program at Wisconsin and, in the interim, invited students to blow glass on his farm. The following year, a graduate glassworking course was offered. Soon after, Littleton took a sabbatical and again traveled to Europe, where he discovered the unusual form of glass art undertaken by the Bavarian sculptor Erwin Eisch. Emphasizing creativity and individuality over craftsmanship, Eisch's approach would

have a tremendous impact on American glassmakers. In his own work, the artist avoided transparency, which he considered too easy a route to beauty. In *Buddha Transparency* (page 10), for example, he manipulated blown glass and covered portions of the piece with enamel decoration. Littleton invited Eisch to demonstrate glassblowing with him at the 1964 World Congress of Craftsmen in New York, a capstone event for the movement and for Littleton's artistic career. Concurrent with the conference, the Museum of Contemporary Crafts presented Littleton's work in a solo exhibition. Almost simultaneously, the Museum of Modern Art purchased one of his works, a 1963 piece titled simply *Vase*.

Encouraged by the interest shown in his work and excited by what he was learning from Eisch, Littleton continued to hone his artistic skills. Beginning with anthropomorphic sculptural forms, he soon began to experiment with color and over time discovered a technique and style that became his signature. In the series *Solid Geometry*, he fused a single overlay of colored glass to a crystal core and encased it in more clear glass. He later added other colors and began slicing the highly polished pieces to create the illusion of multiple forms within the glass. Gradually he began bending and twisting his works, giving them the sense of movement and flow that can be seen in *Blue Sliced Descending Form* (page 6).



Above: Dominick Labino, *Vase*, 1980 (cat. 13).
Opposite: Fritz Dreisbach, *Mongo Vase*, 1980 (cat. 10).



After 1964 the momentum for Littleton and the movement continued to build as glassblowing was introduced at multiple universities and colleges. Tom McGlauchlin, one of the early workshop participants, started teaching glassblowing at Cornell College in Iowa. He later became known for his abstracted human faces and deeply textured matte finishes, as can be seen in *Amanda in Her Aggressive Mode* (page 38). One of Littleton's students at Wisconsin, Marvin Lipofsky, went on to teach at the University of California–Berkeley, and a program at California College of Arts and Crafts soon followed. Another workshop participant, Norman Schulman, established the glass program at the Rhode Island School of Design; he was assisted by Dale Chihuly, who soon thereafter established the Pilchuck Glass School near Seattle, Washington. In Ohio, Fritz Dreisbach, a former assistant to Littleton, directed a joint degree-granting program with the Toledo Museum of Art and the University of Toledo. Dreisbach's interest in the chemistry of glass, combined with his studies of glass history, resulted in works such as *Mongo Vase* (page 9). Made with canes of colored glass, this piece demonstrates Dreisbach's particular interest in *latticino*, a technique often used in decorative glass of the Italian Renaissance.

As Therman Statom discusses in the essay that follows, over the last five decades, an increasing mastery of the technical aspects of glassmaking has allowed artists more freedom to express themselves. Knowledge of the medium's history and a better awareness of European approaches have fostered new ways of both appreciating tradition and transcending it. Artists who view their work as sculpture, for example, have tended to avoid making functional objects, instead creating artworks that do not resemble glass at all.

Fifty years after the Toledo workshop, the options for working in glass are many and varied thanks in part to the vision and tenacity of a few determined individuals. To celebrate the golden anniversary of the studio glass movement, the Sheldon Museum of Art has joined other institutions around the country in hosting an exhibition of glass art. Situated in the light-filled space of the museum's Great Hall, *The Studio Glass Movement: Selections from the Esterling-Wake Collection* highlights works from the exceptional holdings of Linda Esterling and Steve Wake. Glass pioneers such as Littleton and Eisch are represented alongside early glass artists whose works appear in the Sheldon's own collection. Also included are pieces by leading artists that offer a glimpse at the remarkable range of styles and techniques currently in use. Taken together, these works exemplify the rich creative energy that the studio glass movement unleashed, an energy that continues to expand as more artists discover glass as a compelling medium in which to express their unique visions.

Opposite: Erwin Eisch. *Buddha Transparency*, 2003 (cat. 11).



THE LANGUAGE OF GLASS: MATERIAL, METHOD, MEANING

Therman Statom

I have had the opportunity to be involved with the development of glass art for quite some time. It is truly amazing to see the technology employed by today's glass artists—I feel left in the dust, so to speak. Fortunately, good art is not just about technique: in the case of glass, a different and very special dialogue exists between material, process, and concept that I believe has few parallels in the visual arts.

Because of the immediacy of the glassmaking process and its affect on the final look of a piece, in this medium, all methods and techniques are directly linked to aesthetics. In essence, the fact of how a work is made can have a direct impact on what it means at its core. Glass has a life of its own; it can talk back to the artist and be a source of inspiration. All materials have a language, and to me, glass has the most varied of any medium. That language includes density and reflectivity, for instance, among many other physical qualities—but it also, and maybe more importantly, includes intellectual concepts and ideals.

To my knowledge, never before have glass artists had so many methods to choose from. Each artist in this exhibition, for instance, uses a method or twist of a technique that probably did not exist forty years ago. With the advance of the studio glass movement in the 1960s, artists began to discover and explore new modes of expression by working directly with glass. As a result, more technologies are now being employed by glass artists than by any others: I am surprised there is not someone out there in the world *eating* glass.

In the early 1970s and 1980s, the glass movement saw the infusion of many European glassworking technologies. For a while, new techniques seemed to take precedence over expression and concept. Everyone thought they were—or wanted to be—an Italian or Scandinavian master hot-glass worker. Suddenly, though, after years of integration, the new techniques started to take on meaning. The level of craftsmanship rose and, most importantly, new forms of expression and content did, too. At no earlier point in the history of the medium had so many developments happened in so short a time. In recent years, it appears that more practitioners outside of the craft world are using glass in their own works of contemporary art.

I learned how to blow glass in 1970 under the instruction of Fritz Dreisbach and Dale Chihuly at the Rhode Island School of Design, which was a fantastic creative environment. Dale was a real catalyst in all of our lives, personally and professionally. All the early work I did was blown and very much technique-oriented until I was asked to experiment more. I would have a somewhat technical session in the glass studio followed by one in which only experimental

Opposite: Therman Statom. *Shadow*, undated (cat. 29).



processes and ideals were engaged. These latter sessions were about moving me to a new place as an artist: any technique was fair game as long as it was new or approached the material in a new way. None of the traditional tools of glassblowing were permitted: I burned things like musical instruments, I chopped molten glass with an axe, and I cast large, six-hundred-pound blocks of glass in what became, essentially, live performances. At times Chihuly thought I was crazy, but he always supported me in my efforts.

As craftspeople and artists, we develop our work but also, at the same time, we shape our own intellectual and technical processes. My performances at RISD were a kind of conversation between myself and the material. How, I asked, was I to decide what to make and how to make it? Where does beauty exist, or better yet, what is beauty? How does the making of an artwork influence the artist? These considerations greatly affect the scope of the technology that artists employ in their process. In general, most of my later projects have been more concept-driven, which has led me to draw upon a very broad range of techniques. I still blow glass, however, and I still use glass in all states—broken, found, constructed, painted. Over the years, the medium has enabled me to address my interest and belief that art is not the object itself, but rather one’s individual experience of the object.

Oftentimes in my own practice, a process or technique takes precedence over the look of a finished piece. What is important is that what is learned and the rules defining the success of an artwork are relative. For example, maybe not all works need to be shown in an exhibition. When I was on Chihuly’s research and development team in the 1970s, I was impressed by the amount of work that was created as a result of this philosophy. Dale’s techniques, even though very traditional, offered new opportunities for expression. Often, innovating within a tradition is more difficult—and more productive—than employing new techniques.

Steve Wake and Linda Esterling’s collection of glass is excellent. I have been to their home and feel safe around the works on display there, maybe because so many of them have been made by friends. *Collection* is not quite the appropriate word for the artworks that Steve and Linda have assembled over the years, perhaps because they have such a close, intrinsic relationship to the objects themselves. Their holdings represent an extremely broad range of styles, techniques, and artistic content, from William Morris’s refined sculpture and Jay Mussler’s adhesive and lamp-worked paintings to the messy silicone glue-jobs of my own work.

My biggest challenge in encountering the objects in the Esterling-Wake collection is that, as a glass artist myself, I have a tendency to look at the works from a technical point of view rather than seeing and appreciating them for what they are. At moments, however, I have been able to step outside of this technical cloud and experience these works in a state of wonder and surprise—in exactly the way I hope this exhibition and catalog will help you to do.

Opposite: Therman Statom. *Moon Portrait*, 1993 (cat. 27).



DALE CHIHULY

(American, born 1941)

Green Venetian with Calla Lilies, c. 1983 (cat. 4)

Blue Baskets, undated (cat. 5)

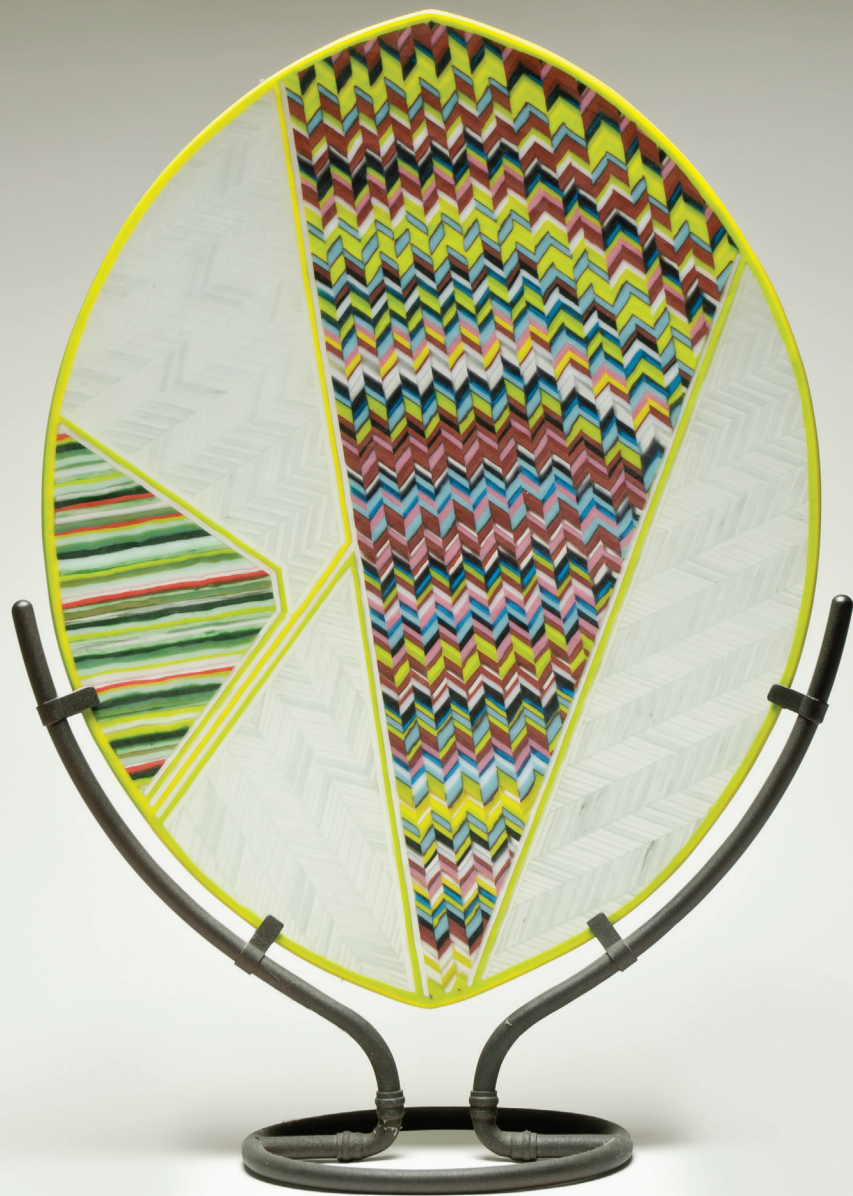
Dale Chihuly, a Northwest Coast native and founder of the Pilchuck Glass School near Seattle, has been a powerful force in the studio glass movement. Although he adopts a traditional team approach to production, the scale, unconventional style, and sheer volume of his work has elevated the medium to new levels.

The artist's 1968 Fulbright Fellowship in Venice formed the foundation of his career. Upon a return visit twenty years later, he saw a private collection of Art Deco vases that inspired him to begin his *Venetian* series. Working together with Murano glass masters such as Lino Tagliapietra, Chihuly morphed traditional Etruscan vase forms into seemingly organic outgrowths of coils, leaves, and spiraling knots. In works such as *Green Venetian with Calla Lilies* (at left), he combined classic Venetian techniques including *calcedonio* and *ghiaccio*, which evoke the appearance of layered stone and cracked ice, respectively. For color he experimented with bubbly mixtures, metallic pigments, and oxidations to create attention-grabbing pastels.¹

Quieter in feel are Chihuly's baskets, begun in 1977 and modeled after ancient Native American basketry. Inspired by examples on display at the Washington State Historical Society, the artist created a form that could favorably exploit the properties of molten glass, stating, "I wanted mine to be misshapen and wrinkled like some of the older baskets I had seen."² His intimate series of small, glass-stitched nesting baskets offers viewers a sense of discovery. The cloudy transparency of *Blue Baskets* (above), for example, invites us to look through—rather than down into—the vase, where we find a family of miniature baskets nestled within.



Opposite: Dale Chihuly. *Green Venetian with Calla Lilies*, c. 1983 (cat. 4).



KLAUS MOJE

[German, born 1936]

Song Lines, 1995 (cat. 18)

Untitled 11, 2006 (cat. 19)



Born in Germany, Klaus Moje grew up in a post-World War II environment in which he was influenced by constructivist traditions and the Bauhaus movement. Trained to be a glass cutter like his father and schooled to be a master grinder and etcher, Moje enjoyed an early experience with stained-glass windows that soon evolved into a desire for personal artistic expression.

The development of Moje's glasswork closely parallels that of abstract painting movements. The teachings of Bauhaus master Josef

Albers provided him with a model for approaching color, while the mathematical precision of 1960s Op art influenced his geometric style. In 1982 the artist moved to Australia to establish a glass studio at the Canberra School of Art. Australia's intense light and vast landscape, together with the colors of his natural surroundings, have all inspired Moje's work. His interest in aboriginal art is especially evident in the *Shield* series. In *Song Lines* (at left), for instance, the composition and characteristic hatched pattern of aboriginal bark painting is alluded to in the vertical orientation and in the pattern created by combining mosaic with translucent etched glass.¹

For thirty years, Moje has been using as a standardized canvas a shallow, bowl-shaped depression that sits within a wide, flat rim. Through his bold overlay of color, repeating patterns, and variation, he activates the shallow space and gives it a sense of rhythm. The artist created *Untitled 11* (above) after he resigned from his position in Canberra and moved to the coast of New South Wales, where he scuba dives regularly. His close observation of marine life, sand, and waves undoubtedly informed this work.

Opposite: Klaus Moje. *Song Lines*, 1995 (cat. 18).



YOICHI OHIRA

[Japanese, born 1946]

Notturmo Vase, 2003 (cat. 25)

Cristallo Sommerso N. 28—Scolpito Vase, 2008 (cat. 26)



Born in Japan, Yoichi Ohira studied design and apprenticed in glassblowing before moving to Venice at age twenty-seven, working as an apprentice on the island of Murano. In his refined objects, he merges Asian and Italian cultural sensitivities, looking to—among other inspirations—the restrained forms of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean ceramics. Quiet and subtle, modest in size, and functional in appearance, these works are grounded in nature. In *Notturmo Vase* (at left), for example, two versions of a moon appear. The center band, which gives the work an organic quality, was created by adding re-melted glass powders and has been described as having a lichen-like appearance.¹ The intense black color resembles Japanese lacquerware, while

the transparent turquoise blue and lagoon green colors recall the Murano goblets of the Renaissance, the period Ohira most reveres. The neck, which he considers to be of utmost importance, displays a small purple splash of color.

In the recent series *Cristallo Sommerso*, Ohira deviated from his past work to create perfectly clear vessels. These pieces pay homage to his early teacher Kozo Kagami, who founded the crystal factory in Toyko where Ohira first apprenticed.² Works such as *Cristallo Sommerso N. 28* (above) consist of a thick-walled body with a small neck and brown lip-wrapped mouth, a typical attribute of Murano glass. Within the simple cylindrical container a clear bubble was submerged, carved, and polished according to Ohira's finely drawn designs and guidance. The sculptural vessel reflects the artist's lifelong fascination with transparency. In its purity it resonates with the natural world, a strong force in his life and work.

Opposite: Yoichi Ohira. *Notturmo Vase*, 2003 (cat. 25).



JOEL PHILIP MYERS

(American, born 1934)

Arctic Landscape V, 1991 (cat. 24)

Arctic Summer I, 1990 (cat. 23)

Formerly a ceramic artist, Joel Philip Myers taught himself to blow glass while working at Blenko Glass, a tableware manufacturer based in West Virginia. In 1970 he started the glassblowing program at Illinois State University in Normal, where he taught for thirty years.

During a sabbatical in Austria in the late 1970s, Myers began the *Contiguous Fragment* series, from which these vessels derive. Ten years later, he further developed the idea of fluid movement in his *Fish and Water* series, which was inspired by the quality of the light and waterways he experienced on his annual fishing trips in northern Scandinavia. Beginning with a flattened spherical shape that represents a universal form, he then chooses colors from the natural world to fill it. Like a painter with a palette, he arranges the color on glass, creating abstract compositions that express, as he describes it, “both a spiritual and physical expansiveness which I feel.”¹

The artist devised a technique to apply and layer blown-glass pieces to the surface of his work, giving it a sense of depth and density. He added texture to some pieces by using a mesh-like imprint. He later began slicing open his vessels, discovering a prismatic effect that allows one to look into and through the object to see reflections and fields of color that appear to be floating. His approach, according to Myers, is “to allow the material an expression of its own. . . . I control and yet am being dictated [to] by the glass.”²



Opposite: Joel Philip Myers. *Arctic Landscape V*, 1991 (cat. 24).



LINO TAGLIAPIETRA

(Italian, born 1934)

Carved Vase, 1997 (cat. 30)

Stromboli, c. 2004 (cat. 31)



Lino Tagliapietra was born in Murano, where he became an apprentice in a glass factory at a young age. In 1979 he was invited to teach at Pilchuck Glass School in Washington State and found in the American glass movement a sense of enthusiasm and experimentation that changed his formerly traditional approach to glass.

The *Stromboli* series (including the example (at left) evokes a volcanic island off the north coast of Sicily that has been in a nearly continuous state of eruption for two thousand years. Using old Murano recipes, Tagliapietra incorporated vivid oranges, reds, and yellows that create a sense of heat, spilling them over a mass of deep blue glass to create an artistic translation of this natural phenom-

enon. For the vessel's opening, he chose a broad, uneven space that represents Mount Stromboli's disfiguration after years of eruption.

Whereas this work is deeply carved and heavily polished by hand, Tagliapietra's elegant *Carved Vase* (at far left) seems to possess just the opposite characteristics. The objective here seems to have been more about creating perfectly designed lines that run vertically through the piece. While the works in the *Stromboli* series recall the energy of abstract expressionist paintings, works such as this reflect the harmonious architecture and designs of Frank Lloyd Wright, whom Tagliapietra admired.¹ The artist obtained the opaque finish and dizzyingly complex surface texture by using the cutting techniques *battuto*, which produces a texture similar to hammered metal, and *inciso*, which creates thin grooves or etchings.

Opposite: Lino Tagliapietra. *Carved Vase*, 1997 (cat. 30).



WILLIAM MORRIS

(American, born 1957)

Burial Urn, c. 1991 (cat. 20)

Cazo (from the *Mazorca* series), 2004 (cat. 21)

Originally a ceramist, William Morris began blowing glass after being hired as a truck driver for the Pilchuck Glass School in Washington. He later worked for Dale Chihuly and eventually broke out on his own. Since the 1990s, Morris has included references to ancient peoples in his work.

Works in the *Mazorca* series (including *Cazo*, at right) pay tribute to the spiritual and emotional yearnings of prehistoric civilizations. While expressing a reverence for the bonds that existed between humans and their environment, the artist also voices a concern for our own age. Corn is present in almost all the objects in this series. A staple crop of many indigenous groups, it was also seized and exploited by European conquerors. According to Morris, he was interested in objects of offering and abundance that may also lead us to our demise. "In a single crop," he reflected, "you can be blessed with corn, but also plagued with locusts, it's about how our lives are cyclic."¹

Morris's objects also include vessels that carry things such as the bones seen in *Burial Urn* (at left). Reminiscent of Egyptian funerary containers, these works are intended to, as the artist put it, "prod that remnant part of humanity's brain that still senses the ageless intertwinings of life and death."² This elongated vessel, rich in color, includes a small, clear viewing window. Through works such as this we are reminded of our temporary existence and of the harsh realities of nature. According to Morris, they confirm that "we really can't leave who we are."³



Opposite: William Morris. *Burial Urn*, c. 1991 (cat. 20).



LAURA DE SANTILLANA

(Italian, born 1955)

Black and Orange Rectangle, 2001 (cat. 8)

Green and Yellow Rectangle, 2001 (cat. 9)

After attending the School of Visual Arts in New York, Laura de Santillana returned to Venice, her birthplace, to work as a designer in her grandfather Paolo Venini's famous glass company. In 1990 she became an independent artist.

De Santillana's enigmatic quadrangles of color, collectively called *Tokyo-ga* after Wim Wenders's 1985 film of that name, were first realized in 1999. Responding to her need for order and regularity, the artist repeated the same formula for every work in the series. Yet she allowed for the chance occurrences that characterize the glassmaking process, knowing that no two works would be identical.

De Santillana's geometric pieces often consist of two bands of color and have been compared to books, bricks, stelae, and tablets. She makes them by blowing a glass bubble and compressing it into a rectangle. The form is complete when the two sides barely touch. It is the almost imperceptible space between the walls that the artist finds most interesting. She explains, "This pocket of minimal space . . . this almost invisible space, is the object of my search."¹ Once finished, the work acts like a screen, allowing light to reveal its interior. The slightly blurred appearance is achieved by removing the polished surface.

De Santillana's work has often been compared to the soft-edged color bands of abstract expressionist painter Mark Rothko. To this, she responds, "If you work in *incalmo* technique and the rich colours available in Murano, a Rothko-like image is what results."²



Opposite: Laura de Santillana. *Black and Orange Rectangle*, 2001 (cat. 8).



CRISTIANO BIANCHIN

(Italian, born 1963)

Urn, Thought Collector, 2005/06 (cat. 1)

The Putto Urn, 2008 (cat. 2)

Born in Venice, Cristiano Bianchin displayed a fascination with glass that began with his early exposure to the bounty of glassware in local showrooms. A childhood pastime was to dig for small objects that had washed ashore from the canals.

In the 1990s, the artist began his series *Thought Collectors*, objects that bring to mind Roman cinerary urns but exist, for Bianchin, as “containers of memory.”¹ These solemn vases are made sacred by accompanying tripod stands that balance them in space. In *The Putto Urn* (at right), the artist chose a dark amethyst color. His interest in monochromatic color emerges, according to the artist, from his “need to express order and purity” and avoids “the seduction exercised by a medium like glass.”²

In addition to glasswork, Bianchin has been knitting hemp since his youth. He likes the material’s demanding nature and distinctive neutral color. What he finds most satisfying, however, is how the contemplative, solitary act of crocheting counterbalances the team environment of glasswork. Works such as *Urn, Thought Collector* (at left) are almost completely covered in crocheted hemp. Acting as a second skin that protects the vessel, the hemp also adds a tactile component. The lid becomes the platform for carefully chosen found objects and molded forms that have specific associations. In their quiet, contemplative way, Bianchin’s works express his preoccupation with the passage of time and his desire to, if not stop it, at least slow it down.



Opposite: Cristiano Bianchin. *Urn, Thought Collector, 2005/06* (cat. 1).



DAN DAILEY

(American, born 1947)

Virtue, 2006 (cat. 7)

Woodland Woman, 1990/96 (cat. 6)

In 1973, after completing a Fulbright Fellowship that enabled him to work with Venini Glass Company in Venice, Dan Dailey returned to the United States, where he developed the glass program at the Massachusetts College of Art in Boston.

Dailey was introduced to Zap Comix artists early in his career and spent a year sketching cartoons. This graphic sensibility is still present in his work, which also possesses a strong narrative quality. As the artist put it, "I feel the need to tell more of a story . . . I am not satisfied by just making shapes."¹ This sentiment, although perhaps satirically expressed, is seen in *Virtue* (at left), a transparent, blown-glass sculpture of a plump, middle-aged woman with stylized hair, pursed lips, and elegant fingers that cross at her waist. There is also an underlying geometry to Dailey's figurative work, as can be seen in the figure's flat, elongated face and the corresponding vertical stripes of her blouse.

Upon close inspection, a masklike face can also be detected on the cut-out surface of *Woodland Woman* (above). The brilliant colors and speckled surface, a result of fired enamel painting, demonstrates Dailey's interest in Art Deco glass. According to the artist, "Art Deco is so deliberately geometric, so evocative of the 'streamline.' . . . It is suave."² Dailey works with a team of glassblowers, and even with their help, he is able to realize only about 10 percent of his drawings. While he contributes his own humor, satire, and whimsy to the process, the spontaneity of this team approach brings Dailey great satisfaction.



Opposite: Dan Dailey. *Virtue*, 2006 (cat. 7).



A CONVERSATION WITH STEVE WAKE

Gregory Nosan, Director of Education and Publications

GN: Steve, can you tell me a bit about how you first became interested in glass? Was there a particular experience that initially sparked your curiosity?

SW: Both Linda and I have been attracted to art for most of our lives. Linda has always been interested in visual art, especially the French Impressionists, in literature of all kinds, and in music—particularly Bob Dylan. As a young child, I was fascinated by a pair of tall vases in my grandparents' home that were made by Daum, the great French art-glass factory. In the 1960s, I started collecting glass made between about 1900 and 1925 by a number of artists and firms: Jean Daum, Émile Gallé, Tiffany and Company, Steuben Glass Works, and the H. C. Fry Glass Company. At that time, I also purchased a number of pieces of Czechoslovakian Tango glass. My interest in contemporary studio glass probably started in 1982, when I saw an exhibition of sea forms by Dale Chihuly at the Phoenix Art Museum. I was completely overwhelmed by the colors, shapes, and textures—and further surprised that this work was accessible in galleries. Soon it was my good fortune to meet Ferdinand Hampson, who had glass galleries in Chicago and Detroit, and who was one of the first promoters of the contemporary studio glass movement, which is celebrating its fiftieth anniversary in 2012. Linda, thankfully, shares my interest, and we have spent many wonderful hours searching, learning, and finding treasures to bring to our home.

GN: What is it that intrigues you about glass and continues to keep you engaged as time goes by?

SW: Glass is fascinating in that it is a very old process, maybe first discovered when lightning struck sand on a beach. Through great heat and effort, the grains of sand are transformed into solid, sometimes transparent forms that can be manipulated into an endless spectrum of colors, shapes, and sizes—sometimes for utilitarian purposes and sometimes just for aesthetic pleasure. In the last fifty years, artists all over the world have experimented, improved, and diversified these processes, using them to make everything from simple bowls and cups to extraordinary works of fine art.

GN: Once you were hooked on the medium, as it were, what ways did you find of learning more?

SW: We were very fortunate to have found support in a number of reputable galleries, especially Habatat Galleries in various locations, Heller Gallery in New York, and Marx-Saunders (now Ken Saunders) Gallery in Chicago. These galleries introduced us to new work, to glass artists, and other glass collectors in what was obviously a mutually beneficial relationship. We've also been involved in both the Art Alliance for Contemporary

Opposite: Martin Blank. *Winged Victory*, 1999/2005 (cat. 3).



Glass (which attracts mainly collectors) and the Glass Art Society (originally principally glass artists), both of which are wonderful organizations whose members meet to share their interests. Museums around the world are now celebrating contemporary glass, and colleges are offering courses in glass techniques; those are developments that make learning about glass easier now than it ever has been before.

GN: How has the glass world changed since you began collecting?

SW: The world of contemporary studio glass has grown exponentially in the last fifty years from a small workshop in Toledo, Ohio, in 1962 to over 150 exhibitions of glass art in museums across the United States in 2012. The techniques and equipment have been changed from very primitive to technologically advanced, safe, more efficient, more environmentally friendly ones that support a vast array of glass techniques. The audience for contemporary studio glass has grown accordingly.

Above: Linda Esterling and Steve Wake at home, surrounded by their collection.

GN: What have been your most thrilling experiences as collectors?

Our most exciting experiences tend to be related to the personal interactions we've enjoyed with artists, collectors, galleries, and museums. The pieces we acquire tend to be reminders of sharing common interests with people from a wide variety of backgrounds and locations. Among our most memorable moments was meeting Erwin Eisch, who, with Harvey Littleton, is credited with starting the contemporary glass movement. We watched Eisch in his studio at the factory in Germany where his family has been producing glass for over eight hundred years. On another occasion, we met Hiroshi Yamano at his studio in Japan, where he created incredibly beautiful, subtle pieces incorporating images of fish with gold leaf and molten glass. Glass has brought us into contact with countless friends, places, and experiences, and we've have been very lucky in that respect.

GN: This catalog, like your collection, features multiple works by individual artists. What have you learned by digging deeply in this way?

SW: There are various reasons for this: probably the most obvious is that some artists just continue to thrill our sensibilities—more does seem better. Secondly, good artists grow and change, and it is fun to have objects that, in a sense, document what was then and what is now. Finally, many of these artists are talented in several different techniques, and it is thrilling to see the range of work that they've achieved.

GN: What has it been like for you to live with your collection over time?

SW: Living with art in our home continually gives us new energy, ideas, and sensuous pleasures. Some pieces need certain settings to "do their work" in; if we are lucky enough to find that place, the piece is not likely to be moved. If we are forced to rearrange our collection, we usually find the process to be beneficial. We probably should be challenged to shift our objects more often and to get ideas from third parties on what we could do better!

GN: Glass isn't the only medium you collect. How do you think your collecting of glass relates—or compares to—your collecting in other areas?

SW: We are interested in art in general, whatever the time period or medium, and we try to be open to broadening the areas that we are knowledgeable about. We currently are most interested in contemporary glass, ceramics, and photography, which share in common the features of diversity, fragility, and economic accessibility. Trying to focus isn't easy, but in our experience, that's been the most rewarding endeavor.

As we close, I'd like to add that Linda and I want to thank and acknowledge the talented staff of the Sheldon Museum of Art for their incredible work in presenting our collection in this publication and the exhibition it accompanies. We're particularly grateful to Jorge Daniel Veneciano, Sharon Kennedy, Ashley Hussman, Ed Rumbaugh, and of course to you, Greg, for your dedication and expertise.



CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Dimensions are height by width by depth unless otherwise indicated.

1. Cristiano Bianchin
[Italian, born 1963]
Urn, Thought Collector, 2005/06
Hand-blown, ground, and polished glass,
crocheted hemp, and steel
48.3 x 20.3 cm (19 x 8 in)
Esterling-Wake Collection
2. Cristiano Bianchin
The Putto Urn, 2008
Hand-blown, ground, and polished glass,
found cast alloy putto figure, and steel
48.3 x 25.4 cm (19 x 10 in)
Esterling-Wake Collection
3. Martin Blank
[American, born 1962]
Winged Victory, 1999/2005
Hot-worked glass
69.9 x 26.7 x 17.8 cm (27 ½ x 10 ½ x 7 in)
Esterling-Wake Collection
4. Dale Chihuly
[American, born 1941]
Green Venetian with Calla Lilies, c. 1983
Blown glass
73.7 x 27.9 x 27.9 cm (29 x 11 x 11 in)
Esterling-Wake Collection
5. Dale Chihuly
Blue Baskets, undated
Blown glass
Large basket: 30.5 x 22.9 cm (diam.)
(12 x 9 in)
Small basket: 10.2 x 9.5 cm (diam.)
(4 x 3 ¾ in)
Esterling-Wake Collection
6. Dan Dailey
[American, born 1947]
Woodland Woman, 1990/96
Blown glass, sandblasted and acid polished,
and vitreous enamel
43.2 x 25.4 x 25.4 cm (17 x 10 x 10 in)
Esterling-Wake Collection
7. Dan Dailey
Virtue, 2006
Blown glass, sandblasted and acid polished
68.6 x 33 x 17.8 cm (27 x 13 x 7 in)
Esterling-Wake Collection
8. Laura de Santillana
[Italian, born 1955]
Black and Orange Rectangle, 2001
Hand-blown and shaped glass
35.6 x 27.9 x 5.1 cm (14 x 11 x 2 in)
Esterling-Wake Collection
9. Laura de Santillana
Green and Yellow Rectangle, 2001
Hand-blown and shaped glass
40.6 x 40.6 x 4.5 cm (16 x 16 x 1 ¾ in)
Esterling-Wake Collection
10. Fritz Dreisbach
[American, born 1941]
Mongo Vase, 1980
Blown glass with interior caning
22.9 x 26.7 cm (diam.) (9 x 10 ½ in)
Esterling-Wake Collection
11. Erwin Eisch
[German, born 1927]
Buddha Transparency, 2003
Blown glass and enamel paint
58.4 x 20.3 x 20.3 cm (23 x 8 x 8 in)
Esterling-Wake Collection
12. Dominick Labino
[American, 1910–1987]
Ariel Vase, 1966
Free-blown glass
17.2 x 10.8 cm (diam.) (6 ¾ x 4 ¼ in)
Sheldon Museum of Art, UNL–Anna R. and
Frank M. Hall Charitable Trust, H-1266

Opposite: Tom McLaughlin. *Amanda in Her Aggressive Mode*, 2005 (cat. 17).

13. Dominick Labino
Vase, 1980
 Blown glass with inclusions
 15.2 x 10.2 cm (diam.) [6 x 4 in]
 Esterling-Wake Collection
14. Harvey Littleton
 (American, born 1922)
Grey Vase, 1965
 Blown glass
 13.3 x 9.5 x 8.9 cm [5 ¼ x 3 ¾ x 3 ½ in]
 Sheldon Museum of Art, UNL–Anna R. and
 Frank M. Hall Charitable Trust, H-992
15. Harvey Littleton
Blue Sliced Descending Form, 1986
 Blown glass, cut and polished
 34.9 x 24.1 x 8.9 cm [13 ¾ x 9 ½ x 3 ½ in] and
 15.2 x 7.6 x 7.6 cm [6 x 3 x 3 in]
 Esterling-Wake Collection
16. Tom McGlauchlin
 (American, 1934–2011)
Blown Glass Vase #6, 1969
 Blown glass
 22.2 x 14 cm [8 ¾ x 5 ½ in]
 Sheldon Museum of Art, UNL–Anna R. and
 Frank M. Hall Charitable Trust, H-1364
17. Tom McGlauchlin
Amanda in Her Aggressive Mode, 2005
 Blown glass, under-fired enamels, pastel,
 and pencil
 35.6 x 30.5 x 15.2 cm [14 x 12 x 6 in]
 Esterling-Wake Collection
18. Klaus Moje
 (German, born 1936)
Song Lines, 1995
 Mosaic glass, fused, kiln-formed, and wheel
 cut, with painted copper stand
 64.8 x 48.3 x 21.6 cm [25 ½ x 19 x 8 ½ in]
 Esterling-Wake Collection
19. Klaus Moje
Untitled 11, 2006
 Sheet glass, stripped, kiln-formed, and
 wheel cut
 44.5 x 44.5 x 5.4 cm [17 ½ x 17 ½ x 2 ¼ in]
 Esterling-Wake Collection
20. William Morris
 (American, born 1957)
Burial Urn, c. 1991
 Blown glass and steel
 76.2 x 35.6 x 15.2 cm [30 x 14 x 6 in]
 Esterling-Wake Collection
21. William Morris
Cazo (from the *Mazorca* series), 2004
 Blown glass and steel
 48.3 x 27.9 x 30.5 cm [19 x 11 x 12 in]
 Esterling-Wake Collection
22. Joel Philip Myers
 (American, born 1934)
Red and Orange Sphere, 1989
 Blown glass with applied elements
 38.1 x 40.6 x 10.2 cm [15 x 16 x 4 in]
 Esterling-Wake Collection
23. Joel Philip Myers
Arctic Summer I, 1990
 Blown glass with applied elements
 39.1 x 38.1 x 10.2 cm [15 ¾ x 15 x 4 in]
 Esterling-Wake Collection
24. Joel Philip Myers
Arctic Landscape V, 1991
 Blown glass with applied elements
 42.9 x 41 x 10.5 cm [16 ¾ x 16 ½ x 4 ¼ in]
 Esterling-Wake Collection
25. Yoichi Ohira
 (Japanese, born 1946)
Notturmo Vase, 2003
 Hand-blown glass canes with *murrine*
 and powder inserts, *battuto*, *inciso*, and
ghiaccio surface
 26.4 x 17.8 cm (diam.) [10 ¾ x 7 in]
 Esterling-Wake Collection
26. Yoichi Ohira
Cristallo Sommerso N. 28—Scolpito Vase, 2008
 Hand-blown, cut, and polished glass with
 partial *inciso* surface
 29.2 x 17.5 cm [11 ½ x 6 7/8 in]
 Esterling-Wake Collection
27. Therman Statom
 (American, born 1953)
Moon Portrait, 1993
 Glass and mixed media
 54 x 41.9 x 7.6 cm [21 ¼ x 16 ½ x 3 in]
 Esterling-Wake Collection
28. Therman Statom
Two Crows, 2000
 Glass and mixed media
 45.7 x 27.9 x 27.9 cm [18 x 11 x 11 in]
 Sheldon Museum of Art, UNL–Gift of Carl and
 Jane Rohman, U-5083
29. Therman Statom
Shadow, undated
 Glass and mixed media
 38.1 x 27.3 x 22.9 cm [15 x 10 ¾ x 9 in]
 Esterling-Wake Collection
30. Lino Tagliapietra
 (Italian, born 1934)
Carved Vase, 1997
 Blown and carved glass
 50.8 x 33 x 12.7 cm [20 x 13 x 5 in]
 Esterling-Wake Collection
31. Lino Tagliapietra
Stromboli, c. 2004
 Blown and cut glass
 38.1 x 24.1 x 12.7 cm [15 x 9 ½ x 5 in]
 Esterling-Wake Collection
32. Janusz Walentynowicz
 (Polish, born 1956)
Tove, 2006
 Amber cast glass
 116.8 x 20.3 x 16.5 cm [46 x 8 x 6 ½ in]
 Esterling-Wake Collection

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NOTES

Dale Chihuly, 16–17

1. Dale Chihuly, *Venetians* (Altadena, CA: Twin Palms Publishers, 1989).
2. Quoted in Rock Hushka, *Dale Chihuly: A Celebration*, exh. cat. (Tacoma: Tacoma Art Museum/New York: Abrams, 2011), 40.

Klaus Moje, 18–19

1. Edwards 1995, 14.

Yoichi Ohira, 20–21

1. Jean Luc Olivié, in Friedman 2002, 59.
2. Friedman 2009, 43.

Joel Philip Myers, 22–23

1. Quoted in Klein 1988, n.p.
2. Ibid.

Lino Tagliapietra, 24–25

1. Rosa Barovier Mentasti and Sandro Pezzoli, eds. *Lino Tagliapietra: From Murano to Studio Glass; Works, 1954–2011*, exh. cat. (Venice: Marsilio, 2011), 34.

William Morris, 26–27

1. Quoted in Allende and Yood 2004, n.p.
2. Quoted in Gary Blonston, *William Morris Artifacts/Glass* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1996).
3. Ibid.

Laura de Santillana, 28–29

1. Quoted in Friedman 2009, 69.
2. Ibid. *Incalmo* is a traditional Venetian technique in which horizontal bands of different-colored glass are fused together to create the impression of a single piece.

Cristiano Bianchin, 30–31

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Dan Dailey, 32–33

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2. Ibid., 29.

CONTRIBUTORS

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Gregory Nosan is Director of Education and Publications at the Sheldon Museum of Art. Before coming to the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, Nosan served as Associate Director of Publications at the Art Institute of Chicago, managing the journal *Museum Studies* and editing major exhibition catalogs including *Matisse: Radical Invention, 1913–1917* and *John Marin's Watercolors: A Medium for Modernism*. He has published on subjects as diverse as landscape history and the history of museum education, and has taught at the University of Chicago and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He holds a PhD from the University of Chicago.

Therman Statom—sculptor, glass artist, and painter—was educated at the Pratt Institute, the Rhode Island School of Design, and the Pilchuck Glass School. He is probably best known for his life-size glass ladders, chairs, tables, miniature houses, and box-like paintings, all created through the technique of gluing window glass together. He paints portions of these sculptures in vibrant colors with an air of spontaneity and often attaches found objects to them. Sometimes he fashions his own blown- or cast-glass objects for inclusion with these sculptures. Statom thrives on the creation of daring, often playful site-specific installations, having produced over a dozen for museums and galleries across the United States since 1980. His work is included in numerous collections, among them the Afro-American Museum, Los Angeles, the Detroit Institute of Fine Arts, the Toledo Museum of Art, the Oakland Museum, the High Museum of Art, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

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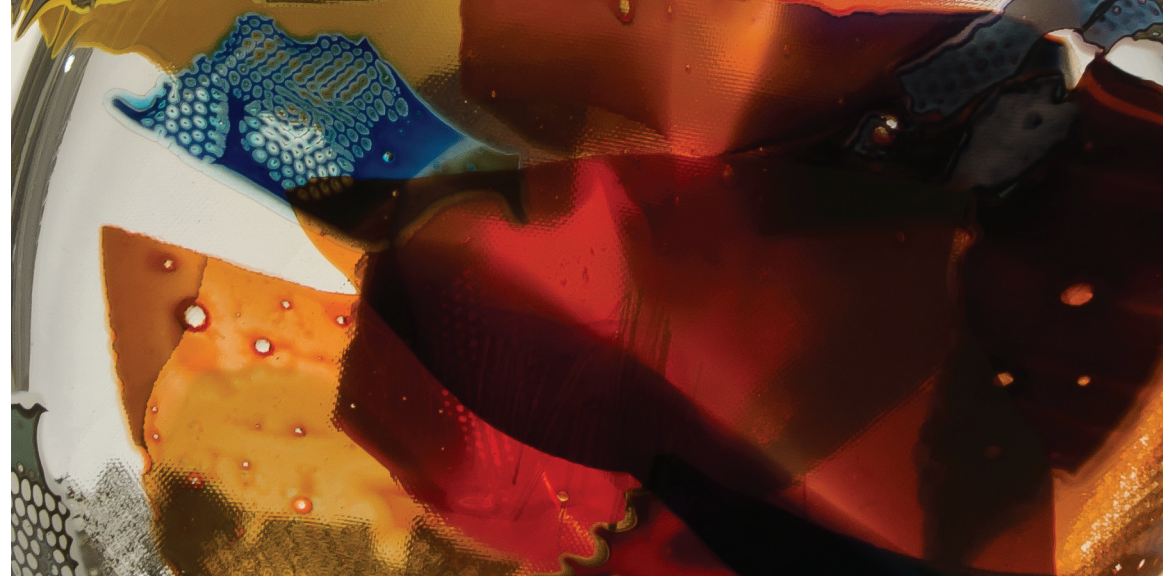
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THE STUDIO GLASS MOVEMENT

Selections from the
Esterling-Wake Collection

SHELDON MUSEUM OF ART