

Millennial Vision

Diana Daniels, Curator

What we perceive about a work of art is immediately impactful, an orchestration of artistic intent with skill and material. Glass commands a host of associations and inspires appreciation, but also demands more explanation because its techniques are neither widely known nor understood. For artists, however, glass has emerged as a "new bronze"—increasingly regarded as a malleable, versatile sculptural medium, desired for the unique ways in which it absorbs and reflects light.

Prior to David Kaplan and Greg Ostergaard's first shared collecting experience, David acquired Nicole Chesney's *This Soul of a Breath* (2000), a four panel wall piece composed of slumped plate glass. Shimmering bubbles span its panels, suggesting, as does its title, exhalations rising from the deep. All of its luminosity, depth, and reflection result from the bounce of light on glass with meditation inspiring subtlety. Chesney's painterly approach underscores the varied directions taken in the new millennium. She is not surprisingly a member of a younger generation and her training representative of the international span of contemporary glass. Born in New Jersey and educated by art programs on both the West and East Coasts, she finished her education with a Master of Visual Arts from Australia's leading glass program, the Canberra School of Art at the Australian National University. Her path and approach to glass is individual, yet indebted to the story of the twentieth-century studio movement.

"The first time we purchased glass together was in San Francisco in 2001," relates Glenn Ostergaard. "We knew nothing about glass, but were attracted to the play of light, color, and the oppositions of positive and negative space."² By this time glass had been embraced by museums and even artists for whom it was not a primary medium. The Pacific Northwest, in particular, was synonymous with the Pilchuck School and glassblowing, although all manner of approaches — from lampworking to casting, kiln-forming, cold-working, and painting—were always central to the studio movement, and to Pilchuck's experimental milieu.

Dale Chihuly's 1971 vision of a summer workshop in the Northwest catalyzed glass's growth by bringing artists from around the world to his home state. By 1986, Pilchuck featured the world's leading glass artists, among them: Ginny Ruffner, Therman Statom, Benjamin Moore, Klaus Moje, Bertil Vallien, and Czech makers Stanislav Libens⁴ and Jaroslava Brychtova. Chihuly's desire to balance the technical with the artistic was furthered by inviting wide-ranging painters and sculptors—from his mentor Italo Scanga to Judy Pfaff and Dennis Oppenheim—as artists-in-residence so that conversations other than that of material circulated among the summer attendees.³ While this rich history continues to inform the medium's trajectory, Glenn Ostergaard is clear: "It has never been our desire to create any kind of historical archive of glass. However, it is true that after nearly a decade of collecting, artists and galleries began to tell us that we had a notable collection." As Ostergaard explains, "Each of the sculptures in our collection has a story behind it."