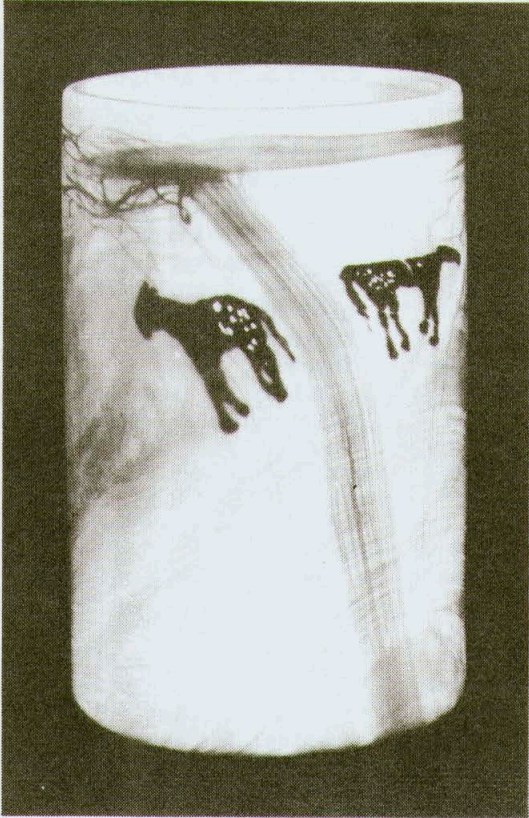


Saddle Blanket, 1976



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A noteworthy development in the contemporary visual arts is the emergence of the studio glass movement over the past fifteen years. Its origin can be traced to a verbal mandate that preceded any actual studio experimentation. In 1959 at a meeting of the American Craftsmen's Council Harvey Littleton, at the time a ceramics instructor at the University of Wisconsin and son of an important glass scientist at Corning Laboratories, suggested that the medium of glass ought to be explored by individual artists. What Littleton proposed was almost without precedent as visitors to the Atheneum's Six Centuries of Glass (in Austin Gallery through November 7) will notice. Most objects in the Atheneum show are identified by workshop, factory or national school; signed pieces are rare. Furthermore, few of the artists known by name actually handled the material itself. Most, such as Louis Comfort Tiffany, functioned as designers. One notable exception is Maurice Marinot (1882-1960) who, because he worked with glass in his own studio and was one of the first to approach glass from a non-commercial viewpoint, is a significant figure to today's glass artists.

In 1962 the Toledo Museum of Art, located in a city with a number of major glass companies, invited Littleton to hold a small workshop on glass. Like Littleton, most of the eight original students were ceramicists. From the beginning their inability to solve technical problems with the unfamiliar medium threatened to impede success. They called on Dominick Labino, then research vice-president for Johns-Manville Fiber Glass Corporation, who designed a furnace appropriate for studio work and instructed them in basic techniques and formulas. That first seminar was productive only in terms of problem-solving and confronting the strenuous demands of working with glass. Several months later Littleton held a

second workshop at the museum.

Most of the leading artists in the movement today can be traced to either participation in those early Littleton seminars or, most often, a period of study with one of the original participants. Following the second workshop in 1962 Littleton returned to Wisconsin and set up this country's first art department glass program.

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Perhaps as much as any artist working today, Dale Chihuly has fulfilled the promise of glass as a medium for serious artistic exploration. Chihuly addresses the medium with an ingenuity and a breadth of vision that have earned him the wide respect of his colleagues. He has used glass to make functional ware, architectural commissions and large-scale sculpture. On several occasions his quest for new design and form has led to the discovery of new techniques.

Chihuly is also well-known as a gifted educator. Convinced that students learn best by assisting established artists Chihuly has always included his students in each step of his creative process. He values this kind of cooperative effort and freely credits his co-workers. Out of just such an apprenticeship came his close collaboration with James Carpenter. For five years they worked as a team. Their joint efforts include a magical installation at the Museum of Contemporary Crafts made of over one hundred large glass sculptures which, through the expert use of argon and neon gases, emanated light in a variety of colors.

Together Chihuly and Carpenter were commissioned by Steuben to make the prototypes on exhibition in MATRIX. Those familiar with the medium will quickly recognize what a distinguished achievement these works represent. In these classical but contemporary pieces Chihuly and Carpenter far exceed the skill of most professional glassblowers working today.



Chihuly and Carpenter have also made a number of glass doors. The one in MATRIX hints at Chihuly's admiration for Frank Lloyd Wright.

Since early 1975 Chihuly has worked intensively and consistently on a series of "Glass Cylinders". Often he uses motifs from American Indian blankets. Chihuly was intrigued with the way in which the original Indian designs were intended to etherealize the human form and likes to think of these cylinders as similarly veiled by the drawings.

In these new pieces Chihuly once again insists on taking full advantage of the nature of glass. The drawings, made of thin glass threads pulled from Kugler rods, are prepared prior to the blowing process. The molten glass is dropped directly onto the drawings. The glass is then blown into the cylinder shape. This new technique is sometimes referred to as "the Chihuly process".

Dale Chihuly was born in Tacoma, Washington in 1941. He received a B.A. in Interior Design from the University of Washington, an M.S. in Glass from the University of Wisconsin and an M.F.A. in Glass from the Rhode Island School of Design. In 1968 Chihuly worked at the Venini glass factory in Venice on a Fulbright Fellowship. In 1971 he founded Pilchuck Glass Center in Washington state; Pilchuck is now considered this country's leading summer glass workshop. Currently Chihuly lives in Providence, Rhode Island where he is chairman of the sculpture department at the Rhode Island School of Design.

AMK

This exhibition was planned with the assistance of Phillip Johnston, Curator of Decorative Arts.

Works in MATRIX:

1850-1865, 1975, blown clear glass with ruby rim, 12 3/4" high, 6 3/4 pounds. Lent by the artist.

First Phase Chief Pattern Blanket, 1975, blown peach glass with green and yellow blanket, 8 7/8" high, 7 pounds. Lent by Daphne and Peter Farago, Providence, Rhode Island.

Second Phase Chief Blanket, 1976, blown and fumed clear glass with red, white and green blanket, 10 7/8" high, 9 1/2 pounds. Lent by the artist.

Wedge-Weave, 1976, blown clear glass with manganese rim, 10 1/2" high, 10 pounds. Lent by the artist.

Travelling Zig Zag, 1975, blown peach glass with red, green and white on lustre ground, 8 1/2" high, 8 1/2 pounds. Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.

Red and Yellow Bayeta, 1975, blown peach glass with folded rim, 12 3/8" high, 7 1/2 pounds. Lent by Peter Voulkos, Berkeley, California.

Saddle Blanket, 1976, blown peach glass fumed with blue and brown blanket, 11 1/4" high, 12 1/2 pounds. Lent by Elizabeth and Heinz Wolf, Willoughby Hills, Ohio.

The following works in MATRIX were made by Dale Chihuly and James Carpenter working together and all are lent by the artists:

Prototype for Steuben #6, 1974, blown clear glass functional ware, 8 1/2" high, 6 pounds.

Prototype for Steuben #14, 1974, blown clear glass functional ware (fumed), 7 1/2" high, 2 1/2 pounds.

Prototype to Steuben #17, 1974, blown clear glass functional ware (fumed), 8 3/4" high, 6 pounds.

Prototype for Steuben #18, 1974, blown clear glass functional ware (fumed), 7 1/4" high, 4 1/2 pounds.

Untitled, 1974, blown clear glass door (fumed), with steel and lead, 75 1/2" x 37 1/2".

Selected one-man exhibitions: Univeristy of Wisconsin, Madison '67 (first); Attica Gallery, Seattle '67; Benson Gallery, Bridgehampton, NY '70, '76; Museum of Contemporary Crafts, NYC '71 (in collaboration with James Carpenter); Brockton Art Center, Brockton, MA '72 (in collaboration with James Carpenter); Museum of American Indian Art, Santa Fe '75; Utah Museum of Fine Arts, Salt Lake City '75; Bell Gallery, Brown University, Providence, RI '76.

Selected group exhibitions: S.C. Johnson Company, Objects: U.S.A. '69 (travelled extensively); Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo Glass National III '70; The Brooklyn Museum, Attitudes '71; Toledo Museum of Art, American Glass Now '72 (travelled extensively); Kunsthaus Museum, Köln '73; Museum of Contemporary Crafts, NYC, Baroque '74 '74; Newcastle City Art Gallery, Australia, The Glass

Exhibition '75 (travelling extensively); Farmington Valley Arts Center, Avon, Blown Glass Today '75; The Huntington Galleries, Huntington, W.Va., New American Glass: Focus West Virginia '76; Museum Für Kunsthandwerk, Frankfurt, Modernes Glas '76 (travelling extensively).

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