

THE SUPREME COURT *of* OHIO
LAW LIBRARY
Information Series

15 Reading Room Art:
Chihuly Sculptures



The north end of the Supreme Court of Ohio Law Library Reading Room features two four-foot sculptures created by blown-glass artist Dale Chihuly. The sculptures are on loan for permanent display from the Ohio State Bar Association.

IKEBANA

The Ikebana pieces in the Reading Room evolved from the Venetian series, based on Venetian Art-Deco designs from the 1920s, on which Chihuly collaborated with Italian glass maestro, Lino Tagliapietra.

Ikebana originated in Japan more than 500 years ago and is an art of impressions of nature and the association of ideas as expressed through flowers and floral arrangement.



“Gilded Coral Red Ikebana with Prism”
- 2002 -

Chihuly and Tagliapietra, with the help of Ben Moore, organized teams of 12 to 18 glassblowers, primarily from Seattle, to produce the most extreme pieces they were willing to create. With each session, the teams got bigger and the pieces became more extreme.

Chihuly simply added long-stemmed glass flowers and leaves to his Venetian sculptures to create the Ikebana glass sculptures on display in the library.

CHIHULY ON GLASS MAKING

In 1982, Lois Tarlow of *Art New England* asked Chihuly if most glass artists work in teams. He replied, “Oddly enough, not now. Through the 2,000 years of the blowpipe, however, it has always



“Mottled Citron Green Ikebana with Blue and Teal Flowers”
- 2002 -

The purpose was to maintain the fires and to preserve secrets. There were 200 factories with several hundred workers each... They were not allowed to leave under penalty of death. If they managed to escape, their families were executed. If they got to England, they were knighted. It took a couple of centuries for the secrets to get out into the rest of Europe. Because of the strong tradition of secrecy, even in this day, it's very difficult to get into glass factories and then, nobody tells you how to do anything. So, it was never possible in all the centuries of glass blowing for any artist interested in working with glass to learn anything about it. You know how artists are - if they can't get to glass they'll use clay or some other material.”

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Dale Chihuly was born in Tacoma, Wash., and is considered to be the most astounding and revolutionary artist of the Studio Glass Movement. His work reflects his lifelong fascination with water and all things aquatic, including the Washington seacoast and the botanical and historical aspects of Tacoma. “No matter what I do, it seems to come from the sea,” Chihuly said.

Chihuly began working with glass while studying basket weaving for his interior design degree. When he was

been done in teams. Glass itself has been around for 4,000 years. It has a great history. The equipment is the same as that invented by the Romans. From the 12th to the 16th centuries, the Venetians developed the craft to a high degree. They put all the glassblowers on the small island of Murano in the Venetian Lagoon.

his project, he chose glass. By 1965, he had a solid knowledge of the medium.

In 1966, Chihuly began glassblowing at the University of Wisconsin. He worked with Harvey Littleton, who, along with Dominick Labino, began the Studio Glass Movement using a small, glass furnace at the Toledo Museum of Art in Ohio in 1962.

At age 23, Chihuly decided to 'hang out' with artists. "It opened my eyes to see how artists thought, worked and functioned, and even cooked," he said. "The best possible way for a young person to get an art education is to be in the presence of artists." It was with this premise, \$2,000 and 16 art students that the Pilchuck Glass School in Tacoma first developed.

"The teamwork approach is right for me," Chihuly said. "The life of an artist can be a very solitary one and I like to be around people and work with them. So the essence of my work is two things: collaboration and spontaneity. The system works for me. The people I choose have to make a lot of quick decisions. Glass is a very quick medium. My work relies on heat and gravity. It develops in the furnace. We use hardly any tools. I push my workers to eliminate steps. I like to be able to do it in one breath. Poof. There it is."

Each piece or installation of Chihuly's work is a testament to his principles and system of operations. He directs the process with detailed drawings, prepared in advance. The sculptures are fluid and vibrant, alive with color, light and depth.

Whether his works are displayed over the canals of Venice, the Franklin Park Conservatory in Columbus, Kew Gardens in London, the Bellagio Hotel in Las Vegas, the Tacoma Art Museum or the law library Reading Room, each evokes elegance, grandeur and joy.

Chihuly has established blown glass as an artistic and sculptural medium, sometimes in monumental proportions. His works have been collected and displayed all over the world.

All Chihuly commentaries and quotes were taken from the official Web site, www.chihuly.com. For more information contact Library Assistant Di Taveira at taveriad@sconet.state.oh.us.

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