

ARTISTS AS INFLUENCERS: PATHWAYS IN GLASS

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In the 1960s, glassblowing moved from the factory floor of industry into the artist's studio via the Studio Glass movement. This revolution shifted perceptions of the medium and birthed generations of artists working and innovating in glass.



Kait Rhoads, *Molecule*. Mentor to Brianna Barron.

Brianna Barron, *Conscious Breath* (detail). Mentored by Kait Rhoads.



Artists as Influencers: Pathways in Glass features a personally selected roster of artists by guest curator and founder of Water Street Glassworks, Jerry Catania. Catania's impact on education and the arts in this region was immense. It was his desire to demonstrate the value of mentorship within the glass community and its significance to the evolution of studio glass art through this exhibit.

Featured Artists

Herb Babcock, Brianna Barron, Tim Belliveau, Raghvi Bhatia, Percy Echols, Mundy Hepburn, Wesley Justin Hunting, Wes Hunting, David King, Charles Manion, Theresa Pierzchala, Kait Rhoads, Edgar Valentine, Eli Zilke; plus an honorary selection of artworks by curator Jerry Catania.

Additional Thanks

Krasl Art Center wholeheartedly thanks Lynne Clayton, Executive Director of Water Street Glassworks, and Kathy Catania, co-founder of Water Street Glassworks and Jerry's beloved wife, for their incredible support in the realization of this exhibition.



In 1972, glass artist Jerry Catania was accepted to study under the direction of Dale Chihuly and Fritz Dreisbach at the esteemed Pilchuck Glass School in Washington state. Afterward, Jerry returned to Southwest Michigan to set up his first studio, *Organic Glass*, followed by a second home studio called *Fiasco Glass*. In 1989, Jerry moved *Fiasco Glass* north along the shore of Lake Michigan, to Glenn, where he and his wife Kathy transformed a 19th century barn and farmhouse into their studio and gallery called *Vesuvius*.

Jerry was an outstanding glass artist and devoted art educator. His lifelong teaching career started in the Peace Corps in 1969 and included positions in elementary schools, community colleges, and at Michigan State University (MSU).

Jerry was always doing glass - nights, weekends, and summers, often taking a portable studio on the back of his Jeep truck. In 1985, one such portable furnace launched the glass program at the Ox-Bow School of Art and Artist's Residency in Saugatuck, Michigan. There he taught for 30 years, on the edge of Ox-Bow's Lagoon, the place he felt was the most beautiful location for a studio outside of Murano, Italy.

Jerry's local impact as the founder of Water Street Glassworks in 2004 in Benton Harbor was immense. It was his "big city idea in your hometown," a place where individuals and families could learn the joy and skills of the glass and metal arts.

Dale Chihuly's *Beacon Gold Chandelier*, the magnificent glass sculpture that greets guests when they enter Krasl Art Center, was acquired with the help of Jerry. As Committee Chair, his expertise and advocacy were critical to the acquisition of this beautiful, site specific sculpture.

KAC is honored to have worked alongside Jerry to develop the exhibition *Artists as Influencers: Pathways in Glass*. Always humble, Jerry simply wanted others to see the great work of these artists, the critical impact of arts education and mentorship, and the continued evolution of glass as an exciting and innovative medium in contemporary art. With Jerry's recent passing, this exhibition takes on even greater significance to his legacy.

Image: Jerry Catania in the Water Street Glassworks studio in Benton Harbor, MI.