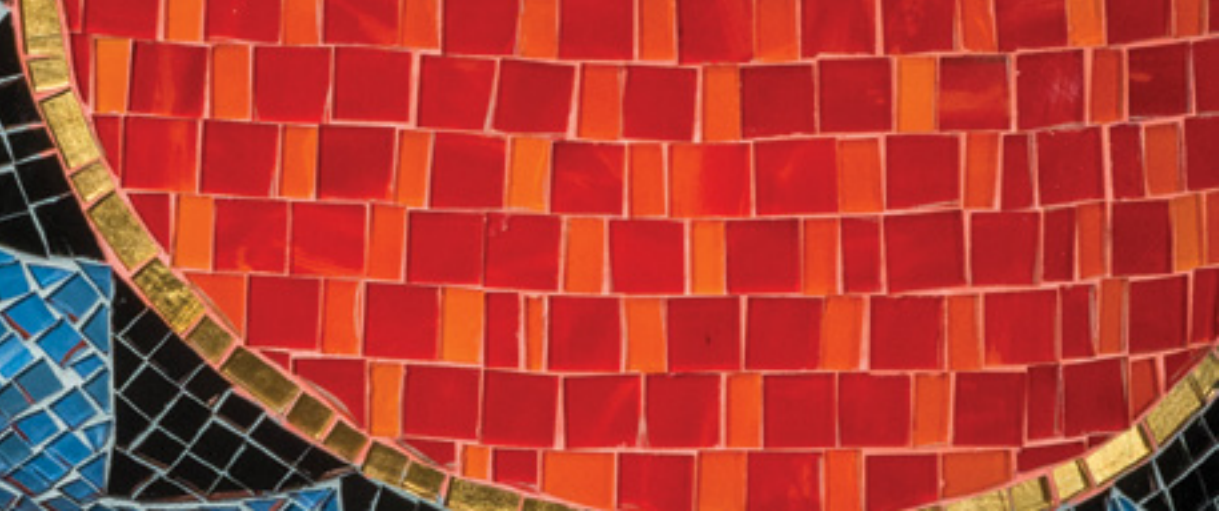
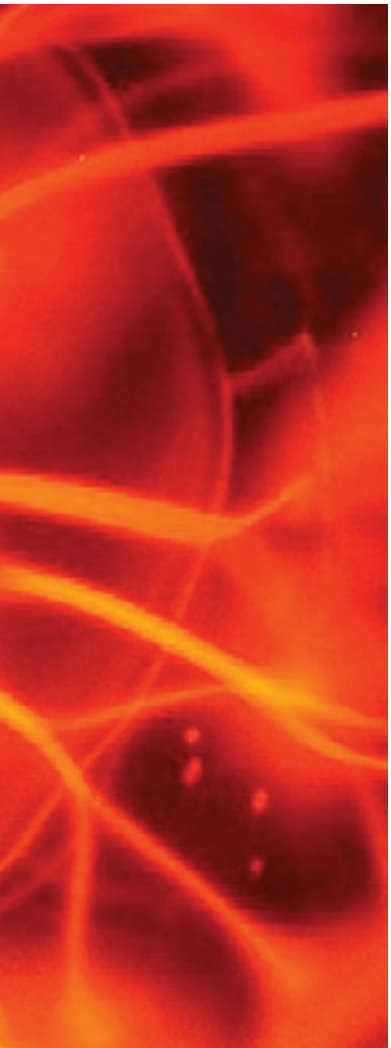
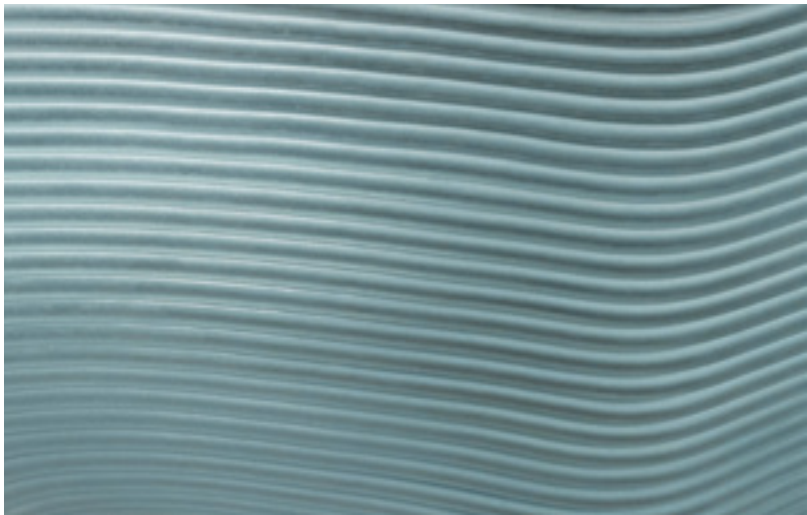


2017

Bergstrom • Mahler
MUSEUM
OF GLASS

Annual Report





All About the Experience

In today's America, we place a high priority on athletics in schools, and then maybe academics. Student achievement lags behind that of their peers in many other advanced industrial nations. The Arts are often dismissed or forgotten altogether. Yet everything we wear, everything of comfort in our homes, every building we admire came from the mind and talent of an artist.

In the 21st century, museums are often the classroom – educating and encouraging and promoting the Arts to people of all ages, income levels and demographics. Bergstrom-Mahler Museum of Glass, like other world-class institutions of learning, stimulates a culture of creativity, and in so doing serves as a valued platform for new ideas and innovation.

To all of our supporters – staff, volunteers, board, donors and members – thank you. Together we are accomplishing great things.

With deep gratitude,

Mike Van Asten

Mike Van Asten
President

Mike Van Asten and Jan Mirenda Smith, *Life Imitates Art,* 2017.

This annual report offers a time for reflection and anticipation. Leading change is a delicate balance between honoring tradition and staying relevant. It is not easy. People aren't involved because of ease. People are driven by passion: a passion for a cause, a conviction, their community or their work.

Bergstrom-Mahler Museum of Glass (BMMOG) is driven by passion with a commitment to serve our visitors and members by providing access to knowledge, dynamic objects, and an excellent experience.

This year, the BMMOG team was challenged to be more responsive to trends and visitor engagement to build new audiences. The results were outstanding: a series of excellent exhibitions such as *Bending Brilliance: Neon and Plasma Sculpture*, that increased audiences, an exceptional studio experience for high school students resulting in over 300 works on view for the *Fox Valley Area High School Glass Exhibition*; and then, we took a *Quantum* leap with an extrasensory installation by Jon Clark, Angus Powers and Jesse Daniels.

The permanent collection expanded through significant gifts. Digital access to the collection on Google Arts and Culture expanded to 1,000 objects. The Museum Shop also followed the on-line trend, successfully providing greater reach. Educational outreach offered experiences for learning and social engagement, Art After Dark lit up the galleries at night with imaginative events that appealed to Millennials.

Passion, growth, relevance and a commitment to innovative partnerships forms the basis of our coming year that is helped by the support of loyal members and our community. One planned partnership will support the art education needs of Appleton Montessori School where BMMOG will be the location for creative education. We are committed to continuing extraordinary programs that support the challenges of the community, such as Fortified by Fire and programs for families of domestic violence. We look forward to continued collection, program and audience growth as we carefully plan the future sustainability of this museum's integrative role to enrich our community.

Jan Mirenda Smith
Executive Director

Exhibitions

Bending Brilliance: Neon and Plasma Sculpture

September 10, 2016 – February 19, 2017

During the *Bending Brilliance: Neon and Plasma Sculpture* exhibition, light from more than 40 objects illuminated every floor of the museum and even the front lawn. Exhibiting artists included John E. Bannon, Sarah Blood, Bradley Corso, Jacob Fishman, Roy Tom Galbraith, Petrie Fishman, Ed Kirshner, Mitch LaPlante, Bruce Nauman, Jed Schleisner, Wayne Strattman, Monica Wulfers and Michael Young.

At the exhibit opening and through its duration, artists Jacob Fishman, Tom Galbraith and Jed Schleisner demonstrated glass tube blowing, bending and electrification, and led classes in the studio.

Left: Bradley Corso, *Mr. SluggyFuss*, 2013.

Right: Tom Galbraith giving a ray gun making demonstration

Below: a still of the *Quantum* installation

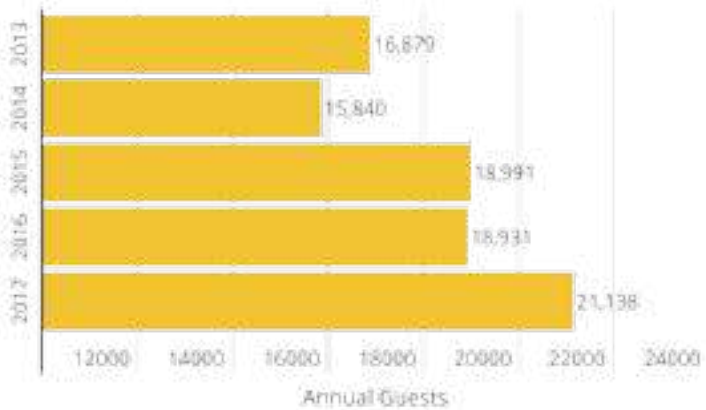
Quantum: an Exhibition of Glass, Light and Sound

April 23 – August 20, 2017

Imagine your sense of wonder as a child looking through the glistening dew on the grass in the morning light. *Quantum* plunged guests into such a scene that roused the senses with glass surfaces, flickering video, atmospheric sounds, and a live floor-to-ceiling evergreen. The work of Jon Clark, Angus Powers and Jesse Daniels marked the first showing of installation art at the museum.

Quantum is now part of the permanent collection thanks to the generosity of the artists.

Five-year Attendance Trends



Collection Digitization Google Arts & Culture Project

Curate a digital exhibit at google.com/culturalinstitute

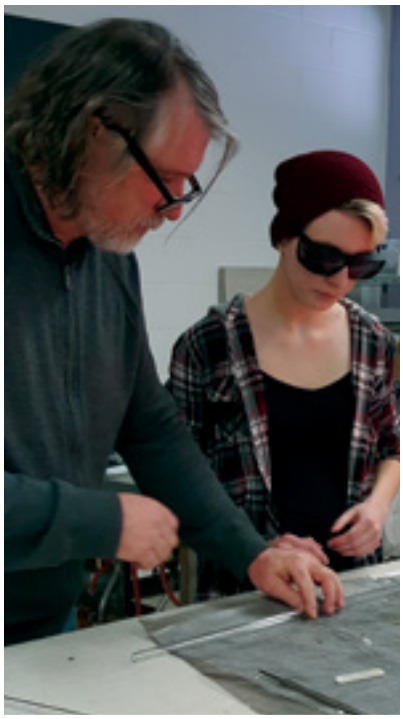
Education

Fox Valley Area High School Glass Exhibition

242 students from 16 schools learn glass, exhibit work

For the past 17 years, an exhibit during the month of March has been dedicated to showing work from area high school students. The 2017 exhibit included glass objects from Appleton West, Berlin, Chilton, Freedom, Menasha, Neenah, New London, Omro, Oshkosh North, Oshkosh West, Renaissance, St. Mary Catholic, Seymour, Stockbridge, Valders, and Xavier high schools.

Students worked with glass artists Sara Rezin, Beth Wenger Johnstone, Jed Schleisner and Tom Galbraith learning glass fusing, flameworking, and neon tube-making techniques in the studio.



Right: Jed Schleisner and a Neenah student prepare to cut tubes for a neon sculpture.

Left: Shattuck Middle School students pose in the gallery.

Fortified by Fire

Middle school students and families artfully empowered

The museum staff continued with the Fortified by Fire program with the goal of reaching under-served populations in the area. In partnership with Rotary Club of Neenah, Shattuck Middle School students who need extra attention in their personal development, visited and worked in the studio on projects for themselves and their families.

Throughout the year, staff welcomed families affected by domestic violence who are sheltering at Christine Ann for supper, a story and a family art-making activity. The goal of the evening was to let kids be kids and build positive family experiences.

Women from Harbor House and Christine Ann Domestic Abuse Services spent a Saturday afternoon creating a glass representation of the home they want to build. Counselors worked with the women to identify images and words that empowered them. Staff created screens and the women screened the images onto glass sheets in the shape of a house. The sheets were layered to form the home and kiln fused.

Above: The hope for her future home

Glass Studio Participation Growth

Community

Art After Dark

In September 2016 with the opening of the *Bending Brilliance* exhibition, the museum staff launched "Art After Dark," an event held third Thursdays from 5-7pm. With the aim of attracting the 40-and-under crowd, staff turned down the gallery lights and amped up the techno tunes. Costumed actors staged in the galleries played up the exhibit to the many young families, students and young adults who dropped in.

Electrified neon and plasma sculpture lit up the galleries for new audiences at the premier of Art After Dark.

During the holidays, spending a hour in the studio making glass ornaments is a family tradition for these boys.

Art Activity Days

Since monthly Art Activity Days began in 2010, families and friends have gathered to create memories and art together. Evolving from simple paper-based activities in the beginning to substantial fused-glass projects today, the community-favorite event continued last year with more than 700 glass projects being fired in the kilns.

Thank you, Volunteers

Connecting in The Museum Shop

Jenny Breining walked into the gift shop nearly two years ago, chatted with the manager, and now volunteers 12 hours a month in The Museum Shop. Having lived in Neenah with her husband, Mike, for the past 29 years, she was aware of the museum from field trips with her children. That, coupled with museum volunteer experience in her past, made volunteering at the a museum natural fit.

From Jenny's perspective, the museum is changing constantly and appeals to a wide demographic. Having encountered guests from South America to visitors from a local hospital rehabilitation program, she appreciates the diverse audiences she meets in The Museum Shop.

What surprises her most about her volunteer experience is the frequent contact she has with other volunteers through monthly training or social gatherings.

"You start to know the people and they start to become friends. There is a caring community here," said Jenny.

Select Acquisitions

Select 2017 Acquisitions Clockwise from Left:

Jacob Fishman, *Girl with Big Hair*, 1993. Gift of Jacob and Molly Fishman

William Morris, *Raven Series Vessel*, 1999. Gift from the collection of Jane Humzy and Peter D. Debreceny

Harvey Littleton, *Optic Wave*, 1978. Gift of the Littleton Family

Rick Ayotte, *American Beauty Red Rose Bouquet,* 1999. Gift of Gordon Park, in memory of Leo and Ruth Kaplan

Alex Bernstein, *Wisdom*, 2003. Gift of Gerald Silverstein and Robert Zimmerman

The Collector Marx

Bonnie Marx began her relationship with Bergstrom-Mahler Museum of Glass because of a desire to share her passion with others.

Her upbringing in Yorkville, a rural Illinois community, shaped her passion to explore a variety of educational and business experiences. Since 1975, she has had an interest in collecting regional art, an interest she shared with her late husband, Sidney J. Marx. They were collecting a variety of art mediums until they discovered glass in the 1980s. Marx's passion led to opening Marx Gallery of Chicago in 1990, featuring contemporary studio glass.

She was introduced to the museum in 1990 when glass collectors, Don and Carol Wiiken of Oak Park, IL, recommended Bonnie visit. Shortly thereafter then-curator, Jan Smith, visited Bonnie's Chicago glass gallery.

"I recognized on my first visit to Bergstrom-Mahler Museum, the extraordinary quality of the museum's glass collections and exhibits. This institution continues to be unparalleled in the Midwest. As a glass collector, I wanted to be affiliated with a local museum that always offers thoughtful glass exhibits and carefully conserves the aesthetics and the history of glass art," Bonnie gives as a reason for her support.

Concerning the recent growth of the museum, she has noticed a substantial increase of interest and support for the museum, especially from Midwest collectors of contemporary studio glass art and glass collectors coast to coast. She feels the recognition from artists, critics and other museums will lead to future museum expansion.

"This museum consistently provides not only an extraordinary venue and staff that mounts important exhibits but also careful conservation of their collections. Leaving an art legacy is a rewarding and exciting experience," Bonnie concluded.

Acquisitions

We are grateful for the generosity of the donors and artists who added to the depth and breadth of the collection. The following 27 objects were added during the past year:

Nontas Kontes (American, b.1921) *Fruit Paperweight*, c.1980s. Flameworked colored glass components encased in clear glass. Gift of Joe and Sharon Robertson

James Kontes (American, 1919-2014) and Nontas Kontes (American, b.1921) *Flower Piedouche* paperweight, c.1990s. Flameworked colored glass components encased in clear glass. Gift of Joe and Sharon Robertson

Ray Banford (American, 1918-2003), *Floral Bouquet* paperweight (undated). Flameworked colored glass components encased in clear glass. Gift of Gerald Silverstein and Robert Zimmerman

Paul Stankard (American, b.1943), *Honeybee and Apple Blossoms* paperweight, 2004. Flameworked colored glass components encased in clear glass. Gift of Gerald Silverstein and Robert Zimmerman

Kéké Cribbs (American, b.1951), *Wanda*, 2006. Reverse fired enamels on glass mosaics, stoneware, gold luster. Gift of Bruce and Judy Bendoff

Keith Clayton (American, b.1964), *Powder Flask*, (undated). Pâte-de-verre cast glass with electroplated copper. Gift of Bruce and Judy Bendoff

Harvey Littleton (American, 1922-2013), *Optic Wave*, 1978. Hot worked and polished optical glass. Gift of the Littleton Family

Michael Cohn (American, b. 1949), *Space Cup No. 31*, 1976. Blown glass and plate glass, cut and bonded. Gift of David Huchthausen

Val St. Lambert, Belgium, *Seurat Vase*, 1989. cut crystal, based on a design c.1930. Gift of Mike and Carol Pruett

Rick Ayotte (b.1944), New Hampshire, USA. *Delightful* paperweight, 2011. Flameworked colored glass components encased in clear glass. Gift of Gordon Park, in memory of Leo and Ruth Kaplan

Rick Ayotte (b.1944), New Hampshire, USA. *American Beauty Red Rose Bouquet* paperweight from the Illusion Series, 1999. Flameworked colored glass components encased in clear glass. Gift of Gordon Park, in memory of Leo and Ruth Kaplan

Rick Ayotte (b.1944), New Hampshire, USA. *Goldfinch Pendant*, 1996. Flameworked colored glass components encased in clear glass. Gift of Gordon Park, in memory of Leo and Ruth Kaplan

Thomas Scoon (American, b.1961), *White Lives #4*, 1996. Cast glass and quartz stone. Gift from the collection of Jane Humzy and Peter D. Debreceny

Thomas Scoon (American, b. 1961), *Mate #2*, 1997. Cast glass and quartz stone. Gift from the collection of Jane Humzy and Peter D. Debreceny

William Morris (American, b.1957), *Raven Series Vessel*, 1999. Cold-worked blown glass, steel stand. Gift from the collection of Jane Humzy and Peter D. Debreceny

William Carlson (American, b.1950), *Littera Scripta Manet*, c.2000. Cast glass, pigment, metal. Gift from the collection of Jane Humzy and Peter D. Debreceny

Janusz Walentynowicz (Polish/Danish, b.1956), *Blue*, c.2000. Reverse-painted cast glass, painted steel. Gift from the collection of Jane Humzy and Peter D. Debreceny

Kéké Cribbs (American, b.1951), *Guillaume*, 2001. Reverse fired enamels on glass mosaics, stoneware, copper. Gift from the collection of Jane Humzy and Peter D. Debreceny

Lene Bødker (Danish, b.1958), *Seeking the Grail*, 2002. Cast glass and gold leaf. Gift from the collection of Jane Humzy and Peter D. Debreceny

Lene Bødker (Danish, b.1958), *Opus*, 2000. Gift from the collection of Jane Humzy and Peter D. Debreceny

Ben Edols (Australian, b.1967) and Kathy Elliott (Australian, b.1964), *Small Yellow in Colbalt Seed*, 2002. Blown glass. Gift from the collection of Jane Humzy and Peter D. Debreceny

Mark Peiser (American, b.1938), *Satin Tourmaline Single Line Basket*, c.2006. Cold stream cast glass. Gift from the collection of Jane Humzy and Peter D. Debreceny

Ed Kirshner (American, b.1940) and Mitch LaPlante, *Cherry*, 2012. Glass vessel with gas plasma. Museum Purchase

Wayne Strattman, *L'esprit Jazz*, 2016. Glass, chemical phosphor, silver deposit, electronics. Museum Purchase

Jacob Fishman, *Girl with Big Hair*, 1993. Neon tubing on glass suspension frame, based on original drawing by the artist's daughter Molly at age 6. Gift of Jacob and Molly Fishman

Alex Bernstein (American, b.1972), *Wisdom*, 2003. Cast, cut, and polished glass, fused steel. Gift of Gerald Silverstein and Robert Zimmerman

Jon Clark, Angus Powers, and Jesse Daniels. *Quantum (an installation of glass, light, and sound)*, originally created and installed 2005. Blown glass, video, sound. Gift of Jon Clark Studios, Jesse Daniels, and Angus M. Powers

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Family Ties with Community Pride

A shared name links John Bergstrom with a museum founded by his Great-Uncle John and Great-Aunt Evangeline, and yet his appreciation for the historical position of the museum in our community motivates him as a member and donor.

John and Bergstrom Automotive have been long-time sponsors of the annual Arts Festival in July. Recently, recognizing that Neenah's world-class museum should have an exterior reflecting that reputation, he has provided for exterior upgrades to the museum grounds with landscaping, signs and painting. John is also a solid customer in The Museum Shop, which he describes as "my #1 place for a special gift, especially at Christmas."

When he visits, John is often surprised at the vitality and enthusiasm of the groups using the museum. He wishes more people would take the opportunity to learn about the collection of paperweights that mirrors the history of the paper industry. He also finds the artistry "almost unbelievable."

John expresses his gratitude to the volunteers and staff for raising the museum to "a whole new level as an important part of the community."

We are grateful for his acknowledgment and support of the work we do.

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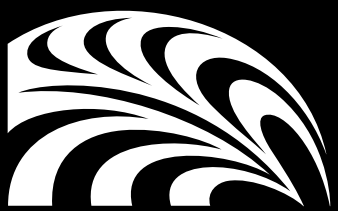
A Sculptor, a Financial Wiz, and Anything But a Bane

Bill Bane believes the Arts thrive only with an engaged arts community. He has put that belief into action by serving two terms on the museum board of directors. As Treasurer for all of his board service, he has overseen accounting software upgrades, the revision of internal controls, and chaired the endowment and audit committees. For the staff , he has been their Wizard guiding museum growth.

Bill grew up in the Boston area and attended Brandeis University where he majored in Sculpture. He later enrolled at UW-Madison and earned an MBA in Finance. For the past 18 years he has been with Kimberly-Clark Corporation (KC) and is currently the Director of Business Analysis.

Bill first heard about the museum at KC and subsequently visited with his children in 1991. Today, his boys are grown and live in New York and Indiana, pursuing careers in science, business, and music, and yet Bill still is intrigued with the museum. Over his six years of service, how the museum has focused its mission and raised its local and national profile has impressed Bill the most. Bill's advocacy, patronage and volunteerism contributed to that growth.

We are sad to see him leave the board. His personal and professional commitment to Bergstrom-Mahler Museum of Glass has been invaluable. We are truly grateful for his service.



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