

JAMES R. WILBAT

EDUCATION

Master of Fine Arts in Design, 1980
University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas

Bachelor of Science in Fine Arts, 1977
Illinois State University, Normal, Illinois

RECENT AWARDS

Coconut Grove Arts Festival, Coconut Grove, FL, 2011 & 2008
Port Clinton Art Festival, Highland Park, IL, 2010 & 2007
River ArtsFest, Memphis, TN 2009
Boston Mills Art Festival, Cleveland, 2008, 2006, 2005, & 2004
Melbourne Art Festival, Melbourne, FL, 2008
Brookside Art Annual, Kansas City, MO, 2008 & 2007
Lincolnshire Art Festival, Lincolnshire, IL 2008, 2007 & 2006
Lakefront Festival of Arts, Milwaukee, WI, 2005
Art at the Glen, Glenview, IL Merit Award, 2005
Art Fest Fort Myers, FL, Award of Excellence, 2005
Art on the Square, Belleville, IL, 2005 & 2003
North Shore Art League, Northbrook, IL, 2005 & 2002

SELECTED EXHIBITS & COLLECTIONS

Deerpath Art League Whimsical Show, 2011
SOFA New York, 2011, 2009
SOFA Chicago, 2010, 2009, 2008
Hot Glass Toledo, 2010, 2009
Knoxville Museum of Art, Artscapes 2009
Hocking College, Nelsonville, OH, 2008
Rockford Art Museum, IL, Spiezer Permanent Collection
Noyes Museum of Art, Oceanville, NJ, Permanent Collection
Amoco Oil Company, Chicago, IL, Collection
McDonald's Corporation, Oakbrook, IL, Collection

BIO NOTES

James Wilbat studied water color and drawing as a youngster - as early as the 5th grade. He continued his love of the arts at Illinois State University where he received a B.S. in Fine Arts in 1977. Although he had majored in ceramics in undergraduate school, he encountered glass blowing in his senior year, and he knew he had to learn this unusual craft. In 1980 he completed a Master of Fine Art degree in Design from the University of Kansas.

Wilbat was fortunate to be able to study under numerous well-known glass blowers, including Joel Myers, Dan Dailey, William Carlson and Vernon Brejcha. Yet his own unique style, which he describes as a combination of Old World Glass and contemporary

design, reflects his love of Abstract Expressionist painting.

Wilbat creates his colorful art works in a series of steps. He first produces a palette to choose from by blowing large thin plates of individual colors consisting of a layer of colored glass, a layer of white glass, and two surrounding layers of clear glass. These plates must be cooled overnight before they can become part of the actual piece he is making. He next prepares the details for his pieces, which may include hollow cane, thin lines of colored glass and his signature twisty shapes, formed by fusing and twisting two strands of hot colored glass.

Now that his color and detail pieces are ready, Wilbat can begin to blow a piece of his work. He selects several colors from the plates he has already made, and cuts them into the desired shapes and sizes. These shards are then placed into an oven and heated to 1000 degrees so that they will not shatter when picked up. With a 5-ft. stainless-steel hollow rod, called a blow-pipe, he gathers clear glass from a 150 pound tank of molten crystal, heated at a constant 2200 degrees. Gradually he builds up the layers on the end of the pipe, shaping the hot glass with specially carved cherrywood molds or folded wet newspaper, or by rolling it on a steel marver table. The rod must be turned continually to prevent the glass from losing its shape. When the glass on the rod is the desired size and shape, James picks up the pre-cut heated shards of color from the annealing oven and fuses them one at a time into the surface of the clear glass.

He keeps the piece he is working on at a constant temperature by frequently warming it in a reheat chamber. Next he fuses in the detail pieces by picking them up from the steel table. The glass is then blown and shaped, knocked off the blow-pipe, and placed into an annealing oven which is approximately 900 degrees, where it will cool slowly overnight. Once the piece is cooled, it is ground and polished on several different grinding stones to smooth the bottom. Some are sandblasted, acid-etched or cut and polished further. Wilbat signs and dates each piece. His work is available through numerous prestigious art galleries and juried art festivals across the country.