



# GLASS ACTS

MEET THE TRAILBLAZERS WHO'VE REDEFINED GLASS ARTISTRY.

by PAUL RUBIO

**T**he heated manipulation of a single, versatile, silica-based solid—glass—dates to millennia before Christ, evidenced by discovery of the first glass-blown bottles in present-day Iran. Through human invention, innovation, and trade, glass has since impacted history, economics, culture, science, technology, and art through multiple identities, most recently catching global attention as a highly specialized decorative art form.

Glass art has always been and will always be a hands-on, labor-intensive affair and a technique-driven medium, from traditional furnace glassblowing to lampworking to

hot sculpting and cold-glass sculpting. Craftsmanship comes into play at all levels: the conceptualization, the execution under heat, the realization of a larger artistic story. It's the most imaginative narratives that fetch the highest market price, reflecting novelty, design, intricacy, size, and, of course, demand for an artist's signature style. Technological improvements in tools and torches and access to new colors palettes (thanks to increased manufacturing of colored glass) have simply raised the stakes of the trade.

Here, we present seven artisans, past and present, whose distinctive glasswork reveals the most complicated and riveting stories, and who embody the grand evolution of the modern glass art movement.



## LINO TAGLIAPIETRA

**Born** August 10, 1934, in Murano, Venice, Italy.

**Legacy** It was destiny for Lingo Tagliapietra to become glass art royalty. Born and raised on the historic glass-making island of Murano and apprentice by the age of 11 under glass artist Archimede Seguso, the path was set. By age 21 he was an official glass maestro, who ultimately became famous for his impeccable cane working (the highly complicated technique of adding patterns and stripes to glass-blown objects). His iconic *Dinosaur and Angel Tear* series is a rewarding journey down the glass-blown rabbit hole, as are his myriad other glass vessel collections.

**Buy/See** Tagliapietra's works are on permanent display at 25 museums throughout the United States, and the most up-to-date information on his traveling exhibitions is found on his website, [linotagliapietra.com](http://linotagliapietra.com). It is possible to visit his two studios—one in Murano and the other in Seattle, Washington—by appointment only, and to purchase his work at nine fine art galleries throughout North America (also detailed on the site), including Heller Gallery in New York City and Traver Gallery in Seattle. ▶



## RENÉ LALIQUE

**Born** April 6, 1860, in Ay-en-Champagne, Marne, France.  
**Died** May 1, 1945, in Paris, France.

**Legacy** The name behind today's famed French glassmaker, René Lalique rose to eminence in the late 19th century designing jewelry for top-name jewelry brands, in part defining the art nouveau style of the time. Lalique then expanded his artistic portfolio, homing in on his talents as a decorative glassmaker, employing

techniques of press molding and lost-wax casting to form highly three-dimensional works now synonymous with the art deco style. His most iconic works range the decorative gamut, from the emblematic *Bacchantes* and *Tourbillons* vases to car mascot *Spirit of the Wind* to the original design of the l'Effleur perfume bottle.

**Buy/See** Most original René Lalique glasswork is obtained from art auctions or through antique dealers.

His inspirations are clearly woven through crystal items in today's Lalique shops ([lalique.com](http://lalique.com)). Prestigious Lalique collections are on display all around the world, from the Gulbenkian Museum in Lisbon to the Museum of Decorative Arts in Paris, but true Lalique devotees should visit the Musée Lalique, with a comprehensive collection of 650 pieces and located in the village where René Lalique set up his glasswork atelier in 1921.

Original vases by René Lalique (including Bacchantes) at Musée Lalique/courtesy of Musée Lalique. Opposite: The Ware Collection of Blaschka Glass Models of Plants/courtesy of Harvard Museum of Natural History.



## LEOPOLD AND RUDOLF BLASCHKA

**Born** May 27, 1822 (Leopold); June 17, 1857 (Rudolf) in Dresden, Germany.  
**Died** July 3, 1895 (Leopold); May 1, 1939 (Rudolf) in Dresden, Germany.

**Legacy** Though completed in the name of art, the Blaschkas' contributions to science and natural history are immeasurable. The father-and-son glass artisans solved a binding conundrum in the scientific community: the ability to preserve botanical and marine specimens for future study. While typical preservation methods had failed science, the hyper-talented artists were able to create exact replicas of nature from glass, using a combination of lampworking and glassblowing and assembling models that perfectly imitated life.

**Buy/See** In December 2016, the Harvard Museum of Natural History debuted the upgraded exhibition *Glass Flowers: The Ware Collection of Blaschka Glass Models of Plants*, a collection of over 4,000 life-sized glass models of more than 830 botanical species, commissioned in 1886 by professor George Lincoln Goodale, the first director of Harvard's botanical museum ([hmn.harvard.edu](http://hmn.harvard.edu)). The Blaschkas' glass invertebrates are on display at select top-tier universities, namely Cornell University, where Dr. Drew Harvell of the department of ecology and evolutionary biology has painstakingly worked to fully restore this historic link to our oceanic biological heritage. ▶



## DALE CHIHULY

**Born** September 20, 1941, in Tacoma, Washington, USA.

**Legacy** Arguably the most famous American glass sculptor of our time, Chihuly broke glass-blowing boundaries by eliminating limits of scale and size in his work. Indeed, his colorful, larger-than-life creations are just about everywhere these days, from his famed, ribbon-like 27 x 12 x 12-foot V&A Rotunda Chandelier at the entrance of London's Victoria and Albert Museum to the expansive *Chihuly Garden and Glass* architectural exhibition at Seattle Center. Chihuly's preferred technique involves the use of centrifugal force, gravity, and flames to shape hot glass at a rapid-fire pace.

**Buy/See** The most up-to-date and exhaustive list of Chihuly's traveling and permanent exhibitions are clearly marked on his website, [chihuly.com](http://chihuly.com). Those interested in purchasing his work can contact the Chihuly Studio via the same website or visit the some dozen galleries displaying his work for sale, including Marlborough Gallery in New York City.



## ROBERT MICKELSEN

**Born** December 12, 1951, in Ft. Belvoir, Virginia, USA.

**Legacy** An innovator and nonconformist in lampworking (glasswork in which a flame is used to melt glass, which is then shaped), Mickelsen pushes the envelope of glass art ingenuity with his signature gossamer creations. Iconic works include *Wahine*, a life-sized female figure; his *Weapons of Peace* collection including the original *Japanese 7.7mm "Type99" Light Machine Gun*; and *Network Parasol*, what Mickelsen calls his "best work," all completed in lampworked borosilicate glass.

**Buy/See** Public collections are found at some 10 museums, including the Corning Museum of Glass and the Renwick Gallery at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C. Browse through past works virtually on [mickelsenstudios.com](http://mickelsenstudios.com) and shop for art directly on sister site [mickelsenglass.com](http://mickelsenglass.com) (where *Weapons of Peace* items begin at \$18,000 and smaller ship-in-a-bottle works start at \$900). ▷

Top, Russell Johnson; bottom, Wahine by Robert Mickelsen/courtesy of Mickelsen Studios. Opposite, Terry Rishel.

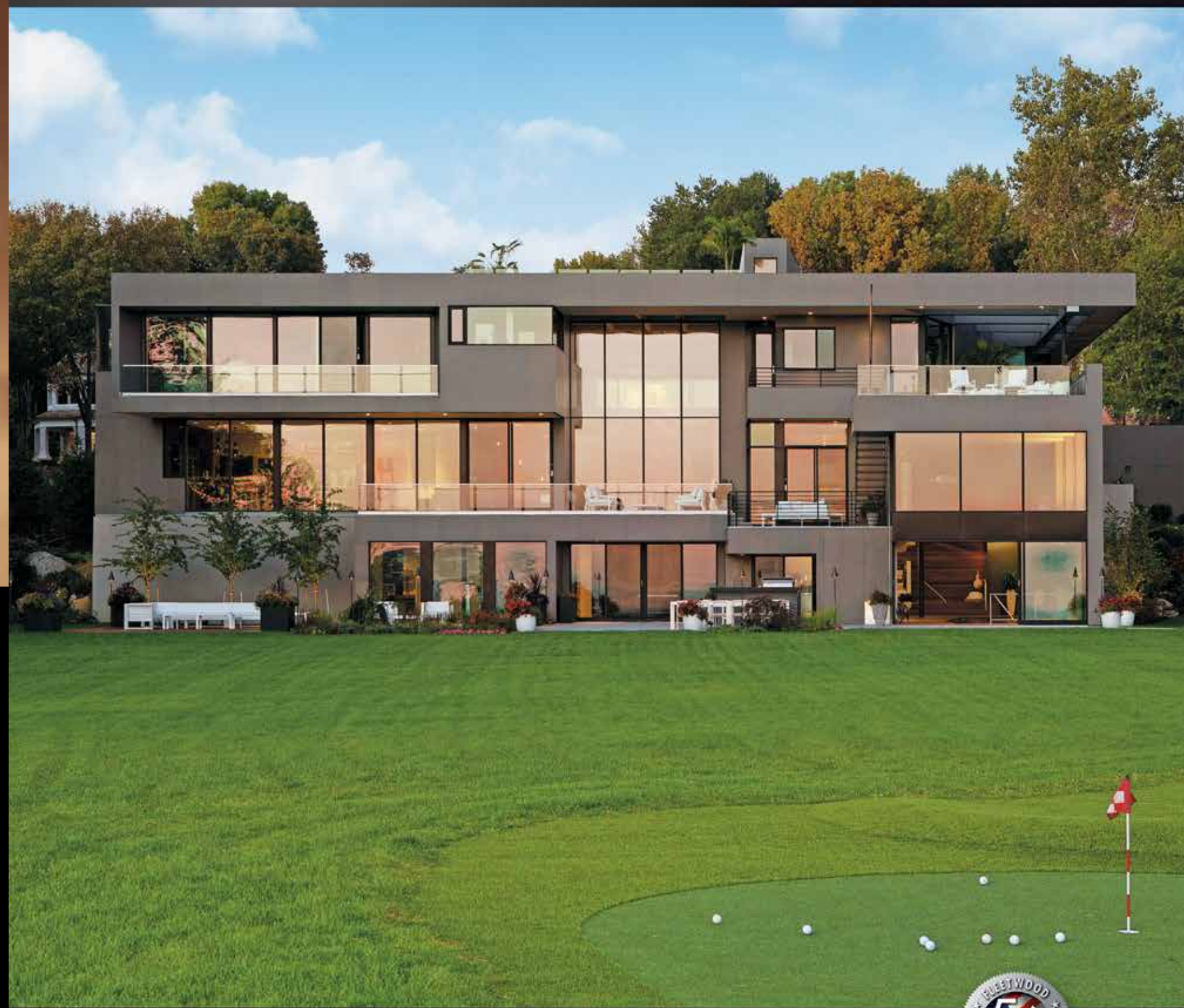
## JACK STORMS

**Born** September 25, 1970, in Exeter, New Hampshire, USA.

**Legacy** Storms is credited with the invention of a cold-working lathe for cold-glass sculpting. His precise use of the mathematical golden ratio is evident through his delicately layered cold-glass creations, which play off the properties of reflection and refraction, and lend to stunning rainbow effects. Iconic works include: the 8,000-piece, 500-pound optic crystal *Fireman's Bell* for the Firehouse Arts Center in the City of Pleasanton, California; and the 3,000 *Hits Baseball Bat*, a 3,000-piece optic crystal sculpture awarded to Derek Jeter of the New York Yankees to honor his milestone 3,000th hit.



**Buy/See** Jack Storms' art is available for sale through his gallery in Valencia, California; Storms Fine Art Gallery; and select fine art galleries throughout the world (prices range from \$6,000 to more than \$150,000). His website, [jackstorms.com](http://jackstorms.com), showcases his previous and current work and provides information on special custom sculptures (starting at \$30,000).



## Through the Tiffany Looking Glass

Glass art enthusiasts should consider visiting The Corning Museum of Glass (CMoG, [cmog.org](http://cmog.org)), which is dedicated entirely to the history and artistry of glass. The museum permanently houses almost 50,000 objects spanning 3,500 years of glass and glassmaking from ancient Egypt to 20th-century America. And from May 20, 2017, to January 7, 2018, CMoG will present a leading-edge exhibition on a lesser-known element of American artist and designer Louis C. Tiffany's

craftsmanship: glass mosaics. Already renowned for his design role in family business Tiffany & Co., his stained-glass Tiffany lamps and windows, as well as his trademark Favrite glassmaking process and production (where iridescence is absorbed into the glass itself), *Tiffany's Glass Mosaics* explores the artist's foray into this alternative canvas with nearly 50 glass-layered works dating from the 1890s to the 1920s. ♦

Top: Blue Spectrum by Jack Storms/courtesy of Storms Fine Art; bottom: Tiffany Studios/courtesy of Corning Museum of Glass.



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