



I have also created collectors cruise programs where travelers can meet fellow enthusiasts and learn more about their special interests. I have been a regular guest speaker at conferences, art and design show in the USA, Australia, and South Africa. While lecturing in South Africa ten years ago, I was introduced to the work of the Ardmore Studio in KwaZulu Natal where a deprived rural community has been uplifted by producing unique ceramic art. I have been involved in promoting this extraordinary ceramic art to a new American audience, most notably at the Wiener Museum of Decorative Arts.

It was my work with Royal Doulton that led to my introduction to Arthur Wiener, the founder of the Wiener Museum of Decorative Arts. When we first met, he was quietly amassing the largest collection of Royal Doulton antiques in the world. His first purchase was a Royal Doulton character jug of Merlin and the magician certainly cast a spell on him. His collection expanded to include all the major British pottery brands, as well as many famous European porcelain companies such as Goldscheider and Lladro. About ten years ago, Arthur also began collecting contemporary American studio glass, most notably the work of Dale Chihuly. With his homes overflowing with his treasures, Arthur decided to start a museum in order to share his passion for pottery, porcelain and glass art with a wider audience. The Wiener Museum of Decorative Arts was established five years ago inside the Gallery of Amazing Things with the help of his gallery owner and friend, Arron Rimpley. I was asked to come on board to curate and direct this new 501c3 not-for-profit enterprise with a mission to create awareness, appreciation, and understanding of these art forms in our cultural history.

#### Has it been a smooth road?

WMODA has been acclaimed as the hidden gem of Dania Beach and it has been a challenge to become more visible with a very limited advertising budget. Our location is an unlikely one for a world-class museum of fired arts and visitors are often surprised to discover us. Fortunately, our reputation has been growing organically by word-of-mouth and we have become a destination for enthusiasts of art and culture. Our 5-star reviews on TripAdvisor have led recently to our recognition as the number one museum in Broward County. We also beat the beach to become the number one of 'Things to Do' in Dania Beach.

#### We'd love to hear more about your work.

For the last five years, I have been directing the Wiener Museum of Decorative Arts. In addition to all the administrative tasks required for this fledgling museum, I specialize in managing the diverse collections, curating the exhibits and producing the public programs. We like to celebrate the art of having fun at WMODA with exhibitions such as 'Carnival & Cabaret' and 'Fantastique' which explores the enchanted world of ceramic art. As well as presenting our historical collections, we seek out innovative contemporary designs, such as wearable glass art by Chelsea Rouso. Chelsea also runs workshops at WMODA where students can make their own work of art. We have regular art demonstrations, such as traditional mask making by a Balocoloc artisan during our recent 'Venetian Fantasy' event.

Our latest 'Sensational Saturday' program 'Chihuly & Chocolate' drew crowds of almost 500 guests to learn more about the work of Dale Chihuly (and indulge in some delicious chocolate tasting!). Our spectacular Chihuly collection is one of the major draws at WMODA and I have enjoyed presenting his work along with his collaborators in our current exhibition 'Art on Fire - The Chihuly Connection.' My goal is to entertain as well as educate a wider audience about the beauty of the fired arts and the role of ceramics and glass in our cultural, social and design history. I spend a lot of time researching and cataloging the diverse collections so that I can share my love of the decorative arts with others in exhibits, lectures, and articles. I write a monthly e-newsletter featuring the Highlights of WMODA and contribute articles to specialist publications to increase awareness of the museum and its treasures.

I want the museum to appeal to all age groups and am equally thrilled when young children engage with the Ardmore ceramic animals or art students are inspired by historical design trends such as art nouveau. I believe in life-long learning and we present week-day tours and programs for seniors and cultural arts groups in South Florida. We also love to host afternoon tea parties where we present the etiquette and art of tea. Recently PBS South Florida previewed the popular TV series 'Victoria' during an afternoon tea at WMODA. I am very proud that in a relatively short period of time WMODA is being acclaimed as a world-class museum. The importance of the Wiener collection of ceramics and glass is being acknowledged nationally and internationally. Two years ago, we loaned a collection of Chihuly's Macchia designs to the Smithsonian when the glass artist was being honored at the annual craft show. We have also loaned ceramic art to other museums and galleries in Florida for special exhibits.

#### Any shoutouts? Who else deserves credit in this story - who has played a meaningful role?

I am very grateful to our founder, Arthur Wiener, for donating his incredible collection to WMODA and for making it financially possible to sustain a vital new museum to benefit the South Florida community. I am indebted to my small, loyal team. Together, we have presented the history of ceramics and glass art in an engaging way and we are getting a very positive response from our community. Throughout the Florida season, bus tours have been arriving regularly for docent tours of the collection by Kimberly Sheridan, our Visitor Services Manager. We have a thriving museum shop, managed by Tom Joule and Joel Torres, where we represent the work of local artists along with lots of artsy gifts. Behind the scenes, Doris Werner takes care of our book-keeping needs and Lori Brown has developed our collections management database. Lori is also our graphics designer and webmaster, and Kathryn Crawford works on our social media and visitor reception. Our small team could not manage without the help of our dedicated volunteers, interns, and students fulfilling their community service hours. My husband, George Hawthorn, is our longest serving volunteer, so much so that he has been dubbed the museum's 'voluntold' by the WMODA staff!