



Dania Beach, FL · October 2019

Paul J. Stankard · The Art of the Flame

Fifty years ago, Paul Stankard gave up his career in scientific glass blowing to make glass art. To mark this anniversary, the Wiener Museum of Decorative Arts in Dania Beach, FL is exhibiting 68 of Stankard's works from the collection created by Arthur Wiener.

The exhibit features floral paperweights from the 1970s representing Stankard's accolade as the "father of modern glass paperweights". Having rivaled the skills of the 19th century French paperweight masters, Stankard turned his attention to unique glass sculptures, which encapsulated his mystical visions of nature. By the 1980s, he was considered a pioneer of flameworking in the studio glass movement.

During his career, Stankard has experimented continually with new forms. His columns, cubes and orbs give viewers different perspectives on his intricate flameworked flowers and enabled the artist to expand his metaphysical views on the life force above and below the earth. In his *Botanical* series, Stankard suspended his interpretations of nature in crystal blocks with many viewing angles.

In Stankard's words, *"I think of my work as referential. These are not literal flowers, though it is important to make them believable. The point of my work is not to make specimens but to evoke the experience of nature."*

Stankard melts thin rods of colored glass with a flame-worker's gas-fueled torch. Perfect petals, pistils, stamens and stems are created with a blue flame and arranged into complex clusters with carbon tools and tweezers. Occasionally honeybees and other insects hover above Stankard's floral bouquets, which developed intricate root systems. His root people or earth spirits evolved from medieval herbals with woodcuts of mandrake roots resembling humans.

The poetry of Walt Whitman has been a huge influence on Stankard's work, and on occasion he has been inspired to put pen to paper with his own poems about nature's continuum. Stankard has also written a book about his personal odyssey as a glass artist *No Green Berries or Leaves*. Stankard is an inspirational teacher of flameworking and he founded the innovative glass program at his alma mater, Salem Community College. Stankard's glass art is in many private collections and in more than 50 museums around the world. He has won countless accolades, honorary degrees, and more recently lifetime achievement awards from the glass community, an incredible achievement for a dyslexic who struggled through high school to find his vocation in glass art.

You are invited to preview this exhibition, curated by Louise Irvine, during *The Birds and the Bees* weekend November 9 & 10 at the Wiener Museum of Decorative Arts. The exhibition runs until April 30.

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