

Woodson Art Museum

in your classroom

Inspiration and Innovation: Sculpture in Glass and Metal
Winter 2013-14



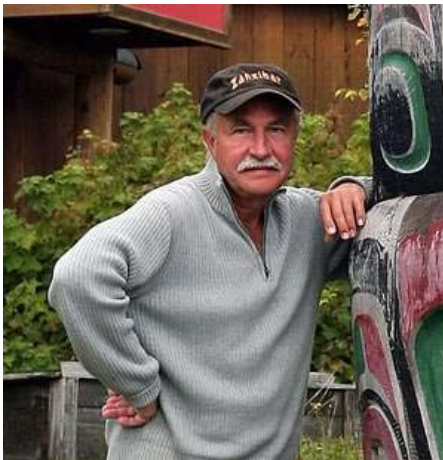
David Huchthausen, *Echo Chamber*, 1999, glass

Introduction

This winter the Woodson Art Museum galleries are filled with dramatic designs, intriguing forms, and imagined realities in two contemporary sculpture exhibitions. *Huchthausen: A Glass Retrospective* features thirty glass sculptures that document the artist's forty-year career as a pioneering American glass artist. *Transformation 8: Contemporary Works in Small Metals* showcases the work of thirty-three artists working in a range of styles to create unique metal sculpture and jewelry. *Transformation 8* and *Huchthausen: A Glass Retrospective* remain on view through January 19, 2014.

Museum collection galleries feature works by Wisconsin naturalist and painter Owen J. Gromme; an exhibition highlighting the American sporting art tradition; historic masterworks that emphasize light effects found in nature, and small-scale sculptures, prints, drawings, and paintings by previous *Birds in Art* artists. These exhibitions drawn from the Museum's collection remain on view through mid-winter.

David Huchthausen



Wisconsin native David Huchthausen hails from Wisconsin Rapids and has strong ties to the north central Wisconsin arts community. Huchthausen's early career is intertwined with the Woodson Art Museum. In 1970, while a student, he discovered and experimented with an abandoned glass furnace on the University of Wisconsin-Marathon County campus in Wausau. He later became Harvey Littleton's graduate assistant at UW-Madison and went on to become a Fulbright scholar, university professor, and museum consultant. He developed *Americans in Glass* exhibitions for the Woodson in 1978, 1981, and 1984 that documented the evolution of American studio glass.

Spheres, towers, and temple-like sculptures are dominant themes in Huchthausen's work. Attention to detail and a 360° view are key when encountering Huchthausen's striking sculptures. Stately structures of fractured glass project dramatic, colorful shadows in the galleries and offer exciting contrasts to the elusive and otherworldly perfect spheres of his more recent work. Huchthausen's artistic evolution is nearly as captivating as his collected objects that reflect his diverse interests. Huchthausen is an avid collector, and his studio loft is a treasury and repository for his many acquisitions. Classic cars, retro advertising, Bakelite, and art deco glass fill the spaces of Huchthausen's work environment and serve to fuel his imagination. To learn more about Huchthausen's collection, check out his "Obsessions" page on his website:

<http://www.huchthausen.com/mac/obsessions.htm>

Early in his career, a background in architecture led Huchthausen to create monumental mixed-media sculptures designed to prompt a viewer to engage with the work by moving

around it to fully appreciate the unusual textures and shadows. These early interests in architecture, light, and shadow greatly influenced his future glasswork.



David Huchthausen, *Ritual Figurines*, 1973-74

Enthusiasm for indigenous art and ritual is evident in Huchthausen's figurines from the 1970s, which feature stylized mask-like faces inspired by the massive stone busts of the Olmec in Mexico.



David Huchthausen, *Fantasy Vessel*, 1978



Creating a landscape vessel

The allure of hot-blown studio glass production inspired Huchthausen's fantasy and landscape vessels, which feature seven or eight layers of glass carefully composed to create imaginative, faraway scenes. By the 1980s, his focus shifted to cold glass materials and processes, and he created his trademark integral color laminations and spheres.



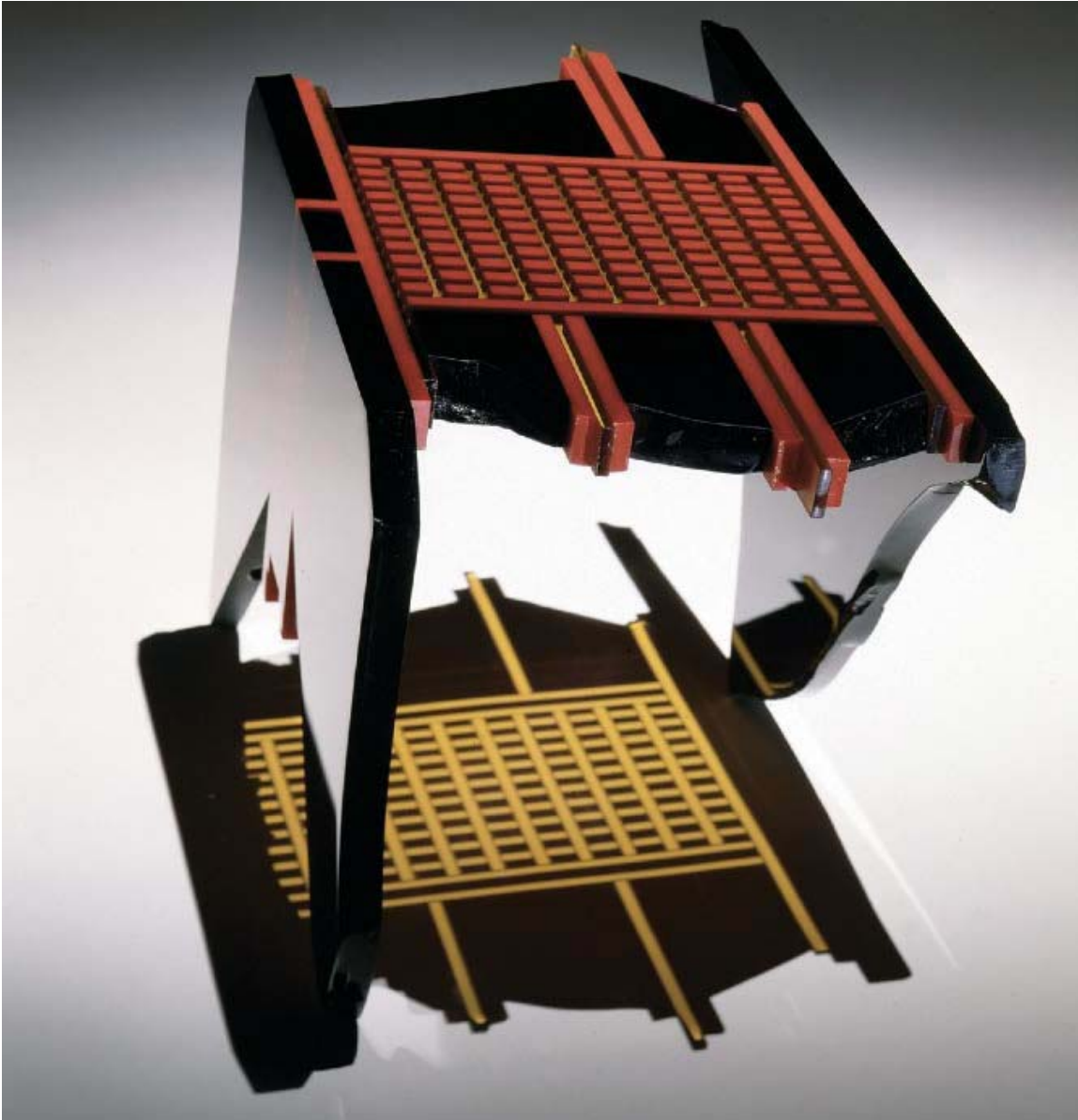
David Huchthausen, *Pylon C7*, 2006

Process

(Note: Production information comes from artist interviews in the PBS film “Huchthausen: Echo Chambers,” which will be on view in the *Huchthausen* galleries throughout the exhibition.)

To fully appreciate the complex visuals of a Huchthausen glass sculpture one must first dissect its intricate components. Huchthausen's sculptures typically consist of two main

parts: color panels and optical glass. Color panels are the mosaic-like layers of colored glass, which create kaleidoscopic illusions when viewed through the optical (or clear) glass spaces. Light moves through a Huchthausen artwork in a carefully choreographed manner – fissures and fractions in the glass allow light to pass through specific channels of glass prisms, while halting at others. These curves and alcoves of a predominately geometric glasswork also serve as keyholes into the complex infrastructure and mesmerizing color blocks lying in wait for discovery. With mathematical precision, the artist controls which colors will emerge through optical glass layers to spill color onto a wall or surface and which others remain discrete and contained.



David Huchthausen, *Leitungs Scherbe*, 1983

The creation of a Huchthausen work is neither simple nor is it done solo. Starting with large blocks of glass weighing thirty-five to eighty pounds, the production process begins

by fracturing. Using a range of tungsten carbonite chisels, the artist applies a chisel to the surface and with one careful blow of the hammer removes sections of glass from the block. Diamond saws are used to cut away large sections of the block that serves as the foundation for a sculpture. The artist uses colored glass called Vitrolite, which was originally used in the mid-twentieth century for architectural facades as a substitute for marble or stone. Large sheets of Vitrolite are cut into strips using traditional glasscutters by the artist or an assistant. A single Huchthausen glasswork may include twelve to fifteen types of glass in the sculpture and may take three to four months to assemble. Cut layers and strips of colored glass are meticulously laid out on the foundation piece of clear glass block to prepare for the lamination process. Glass components are continuously grinded on large machines and altered throughout the design process before final lamination. Optical polishing machines create bright, smooth surfaces on the final work. The assembly of one work, according to the artist takes about 200 – 300 hours.

Transformation 8: Contemporary Works in Small Metals

“Transformation 8” artworks reflect fresh experimentation with metal – from an airy, coiling necklace to a hefty, gothic-architecture-inspired brooch. Taking inspiration from twilight and soaring cathedral arches, artists explore the concept of transformation by fashioning precious metals and stones into necklaces, brooches, vessels, and trays.



Robert Ebdendorf, *King of the Road*, 2011, mixed media

Jewelry artist Robert Ebdendorf probes the concept of value by repositioning familiar found objects, exploring how these items – discarded after they fulfill a role – can take on new meaning and be transformed through juxtaposition.

Artist Linda Kindler Priest creates wearable pieces that express the life cycle by using gems, minerals, and images that are hammered into metal.



Linda Kindler Priest, *From Egg to Water*, 2011, 14k gold, pearl, diamonds, aquamarine crystal, oxidized silver

Organized by Pittsburgh's Society for Contemporary Craft, *Transformation 8* is the most recent edition of the Elizabeth R. Raphael Founder's Prize series, which recognizes excellence in the field of contemporary craft.

Jewelry Terms

- An *alloy* is a combination of two or more metals. For example, bronze is an alloy made of copper and tin.
- *Abrasives* are grits, usually of silicon carbide or diamond, which are used to shape gemstones.
- *Appliqué* refers to the layering of one metal atop another.
- An *anvil* is a metal stake used for forming or raising metal.
- *Etching* is a process in which a corrosive acid is used on stone or metal to produce a design.
- *Enamel* is a glass frit applied to metal and fired to color the metal and produce a design.
- *Engraving* is a technique in which metal is cut away with a tool known as a “graver” to form a design, done by either hand or machine.
- *Fabrication* refers to the art of manipulating metal through bending, cutting, and shaping.
- *Gemstones* are precious minerals such as diamonds, sapphires, and rubies that are cut and polished and used in jewelry.
- *Gilded* refers to covering a metal surface with "gild," a mixture of gold and mercury or with gold leaf.
- *Inlay* refers to stones, gems, wood, and metal that are inserted and cemented into the top layer of another material and ground down to create a smooth surface.
- *Intaglio* refers to a design carved into a gemstone; unlike a cameo, which is raised from its background, in relief.
- *Pearls* are a natural gemstone formed when an oyster is irritated by a substance, like a grain of sand, that gets into its shell.

Before Your Visit



Seung-Hea Lee, *Neck-Lace*, 2012, oxidized silver, pearls

Discuss

Compare these *Transformation 8* artists' works to some of the images and experiences that inspired them. Can you find the connections between the images and finished metal sculptures?

Concept photos: Pile of bowls and stone texture for *Neck-Lace*



Concept photo for *Perceptions*



Cappy Counard, *Perceptions*, 2011, 14k gold, sterling silver, meerschaum stone, pearl



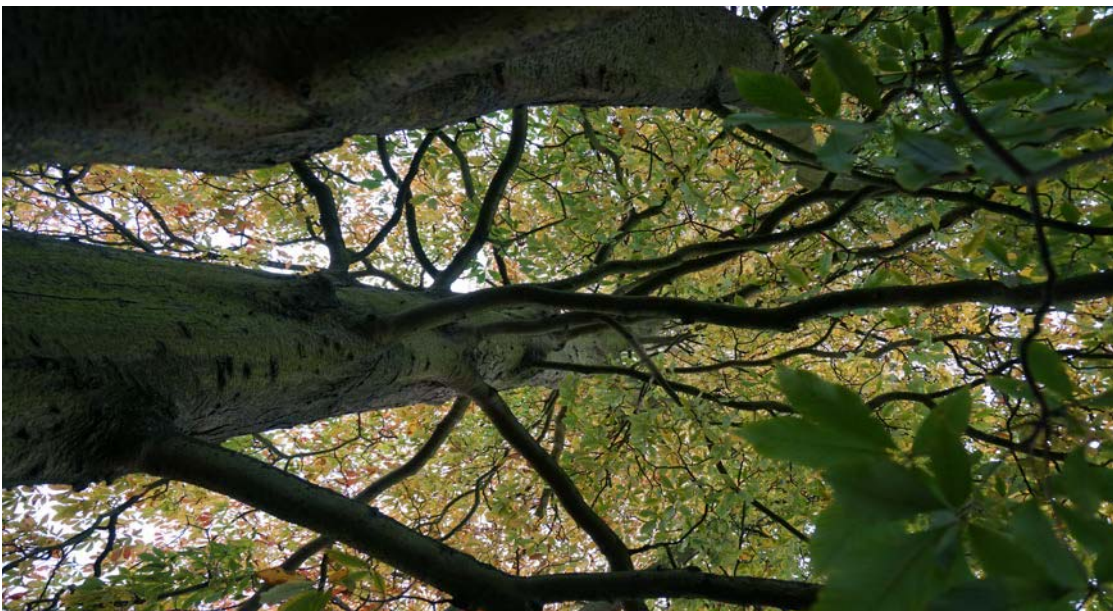
Concept sketch for *Aura # 10*

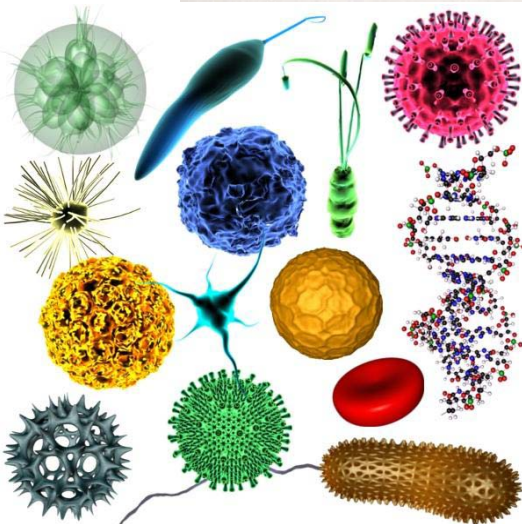


Talya Baharal, *Aura # 10*, 2012, sterling silver, stainless steel, bronze

Design

Invite students to take a page from the *Transformation 8* artists “playbook” – design a small sculpture or wearable artwork based on a visual reference or inspiration. Bring in magazines or ask students to take original photographs of spaces and places they connect with to get the creative juices flowing. Or share the sample images below and others and ask students to connect visual elements – pattern, shape, line, form, texture, etc. . . – from their “inspiration image” to their final design. Share these designs in group discussion, prompting students to articulate where and how the inspiration began and when and how their own designs took over. Treetops, microbiology, architecture, textiles . . . the possibilities are endless.





Create

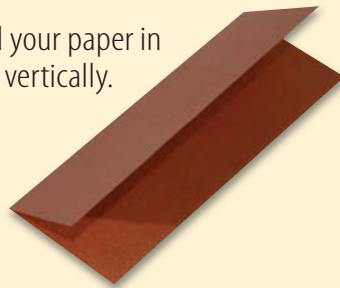
Younger students will enjoy this hands-on activity, which also is available to Museum visitors in Art Park. Art Park, the Museum's interactive family gallery, is in the lower level.

Paper Chains

Without Staples, Tape, or Glue!

Make the Links

Fold your paper in half vertically.



Then fold it in half horizontally.



Place the pattern along the folded left side and trace it.



Cut along the lines and unfold to make a finished link.



Connect the Links to Make a Chain

Vertically fold one link and feed it through a second horizontally folded link; repeat this process to complete your chain.



@ The Woodson

During your visit to the Woodson Art Museum, a docent will lead your group through the galleries, offering insights and encouraging thoughtful dialogue inspired by the artworks. All docent-led Art Museum Experiences involve opportunities for hands-on artmaking inspired by an artwork or idea discussed. Students will work in the Museum's classroom to create their own color block collage to design a layered pattern that replicates the visual effects of Huchthausen's glasswork.



David Huchthausen, *Disc Three*, 2003



David Huchthausen, *Sphere Three*, 2004

Activity Guides

Each student receives an Activity Guide to extend learning in the classroom and at home. When students leave the Museum with an Activity Guide in hand, they are able to share their Museum visit with friends and family outside the gallery walls, along with their newfound expertise and enthusiasm.

Woodson Art Museum Information

Please encourage your students to visit the Museum with their families and share what they've learned. Admission is ALWAYS FREE! The Museum is open 9 am – 4 pm, Tuesday – Friday, and Noon – 5 pm on Saturday and Sunday. On the first Thursday of every month – Night Out @ the Woodson – the Museum offers hands-on art for all ages from 5:30 – 7 pm. Call the Museum or visit the website for more information:

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