

The Magnificent Andersons

TWO PIONEER COLLECTORS
OF CONTEMPORARY GLASS
DISCUSS THEIR APPROACH
TO THE FIELD

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DEALERS, CURATORS, ARTISTS, FOUNDATIONS, COLLECTORS, AND EDUCATORS all love Dale and Doug Anderson. To the Andersons, collecting is much more than buying objects and living with them; it is an intellectual process, an expression of their vision and taste, which, Doug Anderson quickly points out, is actually "Dale's vision and taste." Theirs is an integrated and passionate lifestyle that includes friendships with artists, research, and philanthropy. In the last thirty-five years they have established collectors groups, organized educational trips, and been in the forefront of collecting contemporary glass. The Ander-

sons have followed the journey of the studio glass movement pretty much from the beginning. Together they have assembled one of the most superb collections of contemporary glass of our time.

The Andersons make their permanent home in Palm Beach, in a sunny duplex apartment filled with their collections, which range from glass and ceramic sculpture to contemporary photography as well as one of Wendell Castle's prototype chairs and furniture by Josef Hoffmann. The apartment was designed by architect John Colamarino and has cast glass walls by Paul Marioni and Ann Trautner. Most notably, it features a large-

scale installation by Dale Chihuly in the stairwell—a cascade of oversized luminous and colorful glass flowers. The renowned artist actually stayed in the apartment overnight for inspiration.

I met Dale and Doug Anderson at their pied-à-terre in New York for a conversation on collecting.

Detail of the Dale Chihuly installation in the stairwell of the Andersons' home in Palm Beach. The organic form, coined "Persian" by Chihuly, is found in a number of his other installations, including the *Fiori di Como* chandelier at the Bellagio Hotel in Las Vegas and a ceiling displayed at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 2001.

Glass is magical. It has captured the imagination ever since it was invented in Mesopotamia in ancient times. You just need to think of the Portland vase or the golden age of Venetian glass to understand its glory. What about glass initially captured your love and attention?

Dale Anderson: The simple answer is Doug Heller [of Heller Gallery in New York]. It all began in the 1970s, when I would be on my way from the beauty parlor to my mother's home on Fifth Avenue and would look in the windows of the gallery, which was then on Madison Avenue. Pretty soon, I started stopping in and buying there. The Hellers focused exclusively on glass long before other galleries. In the first few years they carried work by American artists but later expanded their scope and began to represent international artists as well. It was here that I first fell in love with glass. But if I have to point to the moment, the turning point, it was at a dinner for the American Craft Museum to which Doug Heller had invited us. At the table were Dale Chihuly and Dorothy and George Saxe, collectors from San Francisco. It was the beginning of a lifelong friendship with the three of them, as well as the moment when we entered the world of art made from glass.



What was the first glass object you acquired?

Dale: I had been buying small things but Doug actually bought the first "important" object. It was a teapot by Dick Marquis. He bought it for me as a gift.

Can you define your collection of contemporary glass?

Dale: Over the years we've owned the work of most of the artists working in glass, and we have given more than a thousand pieces to museums. Our collection today is comprised of objects close to our hearts—the ones we want to live with.

What do you mean by "most of the artists"?

Dale: You have to remember that art made from glass is a newly rediscovered discipline, and it was not seriously practiced before the 1970s. Until then, glass was used to make industrial products. As a craft, glass was first taught in this country by Harvey Littleton in a program he set up at the University of Wisconsin in 1951. The major glass artists of that generation studied with him including Dale Chihuly. We were introduced to a world-in-the-making, in process, when the discipline of crafting hot glass was first explored and practiced, and we were right there, meeting young artists, traveling to Pilchuck [Pilchuck Glass School in Seattle, established by Chihuly], and following the development of individual artists as well as the evolution of the contemporary glass movement itself. At that time we made many acquisitions.

Top: Two complementary works by Chihuly.

Center: Shelves in the living room showcase the Andersons' immense collection of contemporary glass with numerous pieces by Ah Leon, Toots Zynsky, Dale Chihuly, Therman Statom, Paul Marioni, Steven Weinberg, Toshiko Takaezu, and Marta Klonowska. An installation by Dafna Kaffeman is cleverly situated under the staircase.

Bottom: On the table is *Roemer Table Setting* by Sally Prasch, 2001. The chairs were designed by Silas Kopf.



Tell me about your relationship with Dale Chihuly.

Dale: We admire his extraordinary art. We have watched him develop his vocabulary from individual works to grand installations in a natural sequence. We particularly love his installations, which fully express the essence of his visionary vocabulary.

Tell me about the type of connoisseurship the two of you have developed in your collecting.

Doug Anderson: Dale and I have very different ways in which we perceive and collect art. I have a degree in art history and therefore look at glass through that filter. For Dale, each individual work of art is seen in terms of juxtapositions, the relationships between individual works of art. It is both an aesthetic and an intellectual process...though she'd be horrified to hear me use that latter adjective.

What I have found most striking about your collection is that it was born from the partnership between the two of you, that you do all of it together. This is unusual. Do you have different roles in the collecting process?

Doug: I have nothing to do with the collecting process. That's



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Top: Whopper vase by
Dante Marioni with glass
painting by Richard Marquis.

Bottom: Spanning nearly the
length of the room is a cast
glass wall by Dante Marioni's
father, Paul Marioni.

all Dale's thing and the process is natural and spontaneous. She looks at everything and has a huge body of visual knowledge. She simply buys what she loves, and she has an unbelievable eye. She likes nothing better than to be ahead of other collectors, museum curators, and even art dealers.

As pioneer collectors of contemporary studio glass, you started collecting in the 1970s. How was it different then?

Doug: It was very different, and mainly because that was when glass artists were beginning to learn their craft. Nobody knew how to manipulate glass and we were there when they were learning and bought directly from those pioneer artists and their dealers. It was a time of experimentation and investigation, a time of new beginnings—a process that ended in the early 1990s. Our collection pretty much spans that period, and while Dale will always buy objects and sculptures she loves, for the past dozen years we have been concentrating on collecting large format contemporary color photography, mostly from China.

What does it mean to you to live with art?

Doug: It is essential. Let me tell you a story. When we moved into our New York apartment a couple of years ago, when it was our “new apartment,” it was completely empty. I remember going back to



our home in Palm Beach, where we keep most of our collection, after living in that empty apartment. It was a revelation. I started to experience the art very differently and with a new appreciation. I looked at every piece of glass and ceramic sculpture and every photograph as if it were the first time I had seen it and started seeing the connections that Dale had seen long before. A collection assembled through one pair of eyes can be quite extraordinary.

When collecting contemporary glass, how important is it for a collector to meet with the artists, to observe the process of making, to understand how things are made, versus just buying in galleries?

Doug: It is more important to me than to Dale. We have become friends with many of the artists whose work we collect. They are sophisticated, well-traveled, interesting people with



Top: A colorful and whimsical objet d'art by Ginny Ruffner.

Center: Five goblets comprise an installation by Jay Musler.

Bottom: These shelves contain, from top to bottom, a ceramic teapot by Ah Leon, an installation by Tom Patti, another Chihuly vessel, and a reverse painting on glass by Gregory Grenon.

whom we enjoy socializing. Dale treasures our relationships, but does her best to avoid having that intrude on her decision-making process.

You have worked with no fewer than fourteen museums across the country, giving gifts, loaning objects, advancing education, catalogues, and exhibitions. Do you have a museum that is close to your heart?

Doug: Today we are closest to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the Corning Museum of Glass, the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Norton Museum of Art, and the Racine Art Museum. That said, we're kind of museum freaks and love curators, who are the intellectual backbone of the art world, the often unsung heroes.

It looks from the outside that there is something powerful and social in collecting glass, that it is almost like a private club comprised of a community of collectors, where everyone knows each other, and they all collaborate on various projects. Organizations like the Art Alliance for Contemporary Glass, the Creative Glass Center of America, Urbanglass, and the





Left: Dale Anderson sits on her bed with pieces by (left to right along the wall): Gregory Grenon, Catherine Chalmers, glass window by Paul Marioni, and sculpture by George Jeanclos.

Right: The Chihuly staircase installation in the foreground, Doug Anderson sits on a Wendell Castle prototype chair.

Pilchuck Glass School have been known for attracting high profile donors and for ultra-successful fund-raising events.

Doug: You are right. And there are regional glass groups all over the country. Pilchuck's annual auction is one of the favorite charity events for the Seattle philanthropic community and they also draw art collectors from across the country. We became involved with the school a very long time ago and we were board members for fifteen years. Dale spent years organizing trips for curators and collectors.

What is the role of the dealer in advancing glass artists?

Doug: Obviously, the best dealers work with their artists to build their careers by positioning them properly, giving them gallery shows, investing in catalogues, introducing their work to collectors and museum curators. Selling work is just part of it. In the glass world there are several dealers of this kind, and I am thinking of the Hellers and Barry Friedman in New York City and Leisa and David Austin from Imago Gallery in Palm Desert, California.

Tell me about the Association of Israel's Decorative Arts (AIDA), which you founded with Andrea and Charles Bronfman with a mission to introduce artists from Israel to dealers, collectors, schools, and other institutions in the United States.

Doug: It began when Dale and I were invited by Charles and Andy Bronfman to attend the ceremony awarding them Honorary Citizenship of Jerusalem

in 2002. At that time we had not yet been to Israel, but during that two-week visit we began exploring the "craft world" there and got very excited. When we returned home, we organized a trip for forty friends to go to Israel and see what we had seen. This was the time of the intifada and traveling to Israel was unsafe, so most of our friends cancelled the trip at the last moment. Andy suggested that we bring the artists to the U.S. We arranged a booth at SOFA [Sculpture Objects & Functional Art fair] Chicago, where we showed the work of Israeli artists working in glass, ceramics, jewelry, and fiber. That's how AIDA was born. Currently, with the help of a strong board of trustees and financial support from many, the activity of AIDA focuses on introducing Israeli crafts to museums, providing scholarships, arranging workshops in Israel by world-class artists from North America, and creating cultural alliances between Israel and North America.

What do you advise to those new to the world of art glass? Which museums should they visit?

Doug: There is no easy or quick answer to this question but for a good starting point I would visit the Corning Museum of Glass and get to know Tina Oldknow [curator of contemporary glass at the Corning Museum], who is most knowledgeable about collecting and the whole world of glass. In addition to its collection, the Corning Museum has a great library and produces a wonderful magazine. That said, many major and regional museums have built terrific collections and have curators who are knowledgeable and accessible. That's the best place to start. Don't be shy.