

# FIORI AND FLOAT BOATS

*They would get in their boats and go down and collect the glass—it looked so stunning in the rowboat—that was a whole new idea for me, and it's one that I still use today.*

*—Dale Chihuly*

This installation includes two of Chihuly's wooden rowboats, one filled with *Fiori* elements and another with *Niijima Floats*. The *Fiori Boat* features various garden glass shapes and forms inspired by Chihuly's love of gardens and conservatories. *Niijima Floats* were inspired by the artist's trip to the Japanese island of Niijima and by childhood memories of discovering Japanese fishing net floats along the beaches of Puget Sound. Chihuly first filled boats with his glass pieces in Nuutajärvi, Finland, during the *Chihuly Over Venice* project in June 1995. Wondering if the glass would float, Chihuly began tossing works into the river and let them float downstream. Local teenagers in small, wooden rowboats gathered them up.

# DRAWING WALL

*The way I paint or draw, I don't think about it very much. If I'm thinking about it, that kind of means that I don't know what to do. If I start thinking, "I want to draw, now what can I draw?" and I'm not inspired—because that can happen very easily—then they start to get mundane. On the other hand, if I start making drawings that I know how to do already, and if I can go fast enough, they start to get really good.*

*—Dale Chihuly*

After losing sight in his left eye and dislocating his shoulder, Chihuly relinquished the gaffer position and began drawing as a way to communicate his vision and designs to his team. The drawings evolved beyond a communication tool to become an important part of his expression. Chihuly's first *Drawing Wall* was presented to the public in 1992 at the Honolulu Academy of Arts.

# PERSIAN CEILING

*The Persians — that's one of the most difficult series to describe. It started off that they were geometric shapes, I think—it was a search for new forms. It was so interesting, what came out of it—we worked for a year only on doing experimental Persians — so I got to pick and choose from these parts and develop a new series. It has changed in many ways over the years.*

—Dale Chihuly

Chihuly began the *Persians* series in 1986 while experimenting with new forms. Originally, he displayed *Persians* in pedestal compositions, often with smaller shapes nested in larger pieces. The first *Persian Ceiling* was presented in his 1992 exhibition at the Seattle Art Museum. Lit from above and resting on a flat glass pane, the elements of the *Persian Ceiling* come together to provide an immersive experience in color and shape. There are over a thousand Persian pieces in this installation.

# NORTHWEST ROOM

*The Baskets turned out to be one of the best ideas I have ever had. I had seen some beautiful Indian baskets at the Washington State Historical Society, and I was struck by the grace of their slumped, sagging forms. I wanted to capture this grace in glass. The breakthrough for me was recognizing that heat was the tool to be used with gravity to make these forms.*

*—Dale Chihuly*

The *Northwest Room* presents selections from the artist's early experiments in the *Baskets*, *Cylinders*, and *Soft Cylinders* series, along with a sampling of Chihuly's personal collection of Northwest Coast Indian baskets, American Indian trade blankets, and Edward S. Curtis photogravures.

# MACCHIA FOREST

*I think it was in 1981 that I woke up one morning and said, "I'm going to use all three hundred colors in the hotshop in as many possible variations and combinations as I can." I started by making up a color chart with one color for the interior, another color for the exterior, and a contrasting color for the lip wrap, along with various jimmies and dusts of pigment between the gathers of glass. Throughout the blowing process, colors were added, layer upon layer. Each piece was another experiment. When we unloaded the ovens in the morning, there was the rush of seeing something I had never seen before. Like much of my work, the series inspired itself. The unbelievable combinations of color—that was the driving force.*

*—Dale Chihuly*

Chihuly chose the name for this series after asking his friend, artist Italo Scanga, for the Italian word for "spotted" or "stained." Initially quite small, the *Macchia* grew in size and, like earlier works, were amassed into groupings or "families." The *Macchia* here are installed together on pedestals in a group called a *Macchia Forest*.

# NEON TUMBLEWEED

*Talk about a form of light—neon is light itself.  
But, of course, neon couldn't exist without glass.*

*—Dale Chihuly*

# REEDS ON LOGS

*In Finland we started making these long, cylindrical pieces, which looked like spears. This was an exciting new form. It was the first time we ever made anything like that. They can be taken anywhere—they can go outside. They are very strong pieces, and they are very dramatic.*

—Dale Chihuly

Installations of *Reeds*, or *Spears* as they were first named, began when Chihuly was working in Finland in 1995. The first time Chihuly combined *Reeds* and logs was for an installation at the Marlborough Gallery in New York. Since then, he has continued to create these works in various colors, installing the series both outdoors and indoors. For VMFA, Chihuly has created two reed installations: *Reeds on Logs* with salvaged Western Red Cedar sourced from Washington state, installed in this gallery, and *Red Reeds*, in the Anne Cobb Gottwald Reflecting Pool outside Best Café.

# LAGUNA TORCELLO

*The piece here is called Laguna Torcello, and Torcello is my favorite island in the Venetian Lagoon—it is an homage to Venice.*

*—Dale Chihuly*

With the *Mille Fiori* installations—Italian for “a thousand flowers”—Chihuly assembles gardens of glass that include many of his series of works. First exhibited in 2003 at the Tacoma Art Museum, the techniques used to create the *Fiori* rely less on tools and more on the use of fire, gravity, and centrifugal force. The artist has said that memories of his mother’s garden serve as inspiration for these “gardens of glass.”

The *Mille Fiori* installation created for VMFA is a new work titled *Laguna Torcello*, and it is the largest platform installation ever assembled by Chihuly.

## ***Blue Ridge Chandelier, 2012***

Dale Chihuly

### **BLUE RIDGE CHANDELIER**

*The Blue Ridge Chandelier is really the centerpiece for my exhibition. The piece is made up of turquoise, clear, and gold elements — it has more than a thousand parts, it is eighteen feet high, and it was inspired by the Tiffany windows.*

*—Dale Chihuly*

Chihuly has always had an interest in architectural settings and how art interacts in spaces. In 1992, during his exhibition at the Seattle Art Museum, inspiration and circumstance merged. Challenged by one installation in a room that didn't feel resolved, he created a new type of installation before the opening and presented his first *Chandelier*.