

PRESS RELEASE: Art Museum Exhibit

(Note: Chihuly's staff called me directly to thank me for writing the best press release they'd seen done by an exhibition presenter to date.)

Daringly Original: Dale Chihuly

*Eiteljorg Museum presents two sides of this modern-day maestro
in three exhibitions, Feb. 15-May 11*

*Wrapped in Tradition: The Chihuly Collection of American Indian Trade Blankets,
Fire Work: The Art of Dale Chihuly and Indiana Collects the West: Chihuly*

Museum plans for crowds by offering extended hours on first Thursdays.

INDIANAPOLIS – Artists are often distinguished by an ability to see what the rest of us cannot. In the fantastic works of glass created by Dale Chihuly, one can imagine that he has the ability to see light everywhere he looks – bouncing, darting, twirling, radiantly colorful light – and that he has figured out a way to capture that light and make it permanent, so the rest of us can see it, too.

Chihuly draws inspiration from many aspects of life. Out of his love of walks along the beach grew his Seaforms. His fascination with slumped, sagging Indian baskets led to the Baskets series. The word “Persian” conjured a vision of exotic markets and led to the Persian series. He woke one morning with a sense of wanting to use all 300 colors of glass in his shop, which led to his Macchia series. His admiration for the skill and craftsmanship in American Indian trade blankets led to his Navajo Blanket Cylinders series.

“Wherever Dale Chihuly’s art is presented, the public responds overwhelmingly,” said John Vanausdall, president and CEO, Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art. “With these stunning exhibits, we expect to bring tens of thousands of people to downtown Indianapolis. We’re honored to have such an opportunity.”

It started with a weaving assignment

Chihuly began working with glass in the early 1960s in a weaving class, when his teacher assigned the problem of weaving on a loom with a non-fiber material. Chihuly chose glass, and from that moment on, he was hooked. He blew his first glass bubble in 1965.

Now, he is recognized as the world’s foremost living artist in glass and someone who has changed the face of the contemporary art world.

At the same time he was discovering glass, Chihuly began collecting Navajo trade blankets made by Pendleton and other woolen mills. Non-Native collectors like Chihuly were drawn to the history behind these blankets and their design elements.

“What’s truly fascinating to me and other collectors is how incredibly beautiful, aesthetically successful and varied the designs and colors of these blankets are,” Chihuly said.

Wrapped in Tradition: The Chihuly Collection of American Indian Trade Blankets displays 80 of his trade blankets (out of a collection of 700 different designs) alongside 15 of the Navajo Blanket Cylinders series Chihuly, inspired by the trade blankets, created.

Working with colleagues, Chihuly came up with a way to pull colored glass rods into long, thin threads in 1974. The Navajo Blanket Cylinder series was the outgrowth of this technique.

“[The technique] allowed us to make drawings out of glass that we could then pick up on the outside of a gather of glass,” he said. “We knew right away that drawing on glass was a breakthrough idea.”

Museum will spotlight Persians

Chihuly is better known for his free-flowing, bold glass forms, such as the Seaform series, and installations, such as *Chihuly In the Light of Jerusalem 2000* and *100,000 Pounds of Ice and Neon*. At the Eiteljorg Museum, *Fire Work: The Art of Dale Chihuly* will showcase Persians personally selected by Chihuly for this exhibition. Each Persian consists of more than one piece of glass: a large form that curves slightly upward to hold small funnel, flat or cylindrical pieces of glass.

“The distinguishing characteristics of a Chihuly Persian are the unique form and the spiral stripe along the body,” said Jennifer Complo McNutt, the Eiteljorg’s curator of contemporary art. “Magnificent, vibrating colors form lines and lead the viewer’s eye through and around the glass. The uplifting and celebratory nature of this work is a stirring experience for both the experienced and novice art lover.”

Indiana collectors share their Chihuly pieces

With *Indiana Collects the West: Chihuly*, the Eiteljorg will showcase Chihuly works from private collections in Indiana held by Marilyn and Gene Glick of Indianapolis, Andy and Jane Paine of Indianapolis, and from Columbus, Ind., Jim and Mary Henderson and Cummins Engine Inc. *Indiana Collects the West* is a periodic series designed to share with the public the collections of Eiteljorg Museum patrons whose art and objects reflect the museum’s mission.

“It’s an opportunity for the Eiteljorg Museum to unveil to our visitors the wealth of private holdings in Indiana, giving them a rare opportunity to experience art and objects usually available only to a limited audience,” McNutt said.

Chihuly at the Eiteljorg Museum is presented by Bank One Indiana, N.A., with additional support from American Funds Group, Chubb Group of Insurance Companies, Delta Faucet Co. and Indianapolis Power & Light Co.

[reproduced verbatim in various places online]