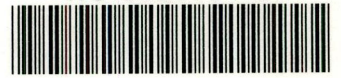


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**National College of Art & Design**

**Craft, Glass Department**

**“Glass as an architectural medium in  
the work of Dale Chihuly and the collaborative  
team Stainislav Libenský and Jaroslava Brychtová”**

**By**

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## Introduction

Visually, glass is a man-made optical material which responds to light. Unlike non-transparent materials it refracts and reflects light at the same time. This light can then be modified at different levels by varying the shape, thickness, colour, translucency and surface finishes of the glass. The effects of this process change the quality of the light, the colour and the amount of light either contained within or brought through the glass. The light, having entered the material, activates the surrounding space, amplifying the glass, that is contained in, or placed upon, a non-transparent material.

Historically, glass as a medium for artistic expression has had a long tradition, for example, ancient Egyptian paste glass or medieval stained glass. Apart from the time difference and technical innovations that have been made since this work was produced, three essential factors remain that lead to the production of glass art objects: The first, sufficient equipment and materials to produce the work; secondly, a level of technical understanding and skill to use that equipment / material; Finally the imagination to combine the making process with the ideas of the individual maker.

“Glass cannot develop from within itself, because no material can develop itself artistically, and glass is of course, nothing more than a raw material. Only an artist’s conception can raise glass to the sphere of an artistic medium”

(Petrova, Sylva, 1992, P.14)

Taking this attitude in mind, this thesis shall explore the work of three artists, all working within the medium glass: Dale Chihuly and the collaborative team, Stanislav Libenský and Jaroslava Brychtová. Chihuly works primarily with blown glass, Libenský and Brychtová specialise in glass made using casting techniques. These artists push their work beyond the process and material to illustrate their



ideas. While operating within traditional glass-making situations, the results remain untraditional. The area of their work I shall focus on will be the large scale projects, produced through industrial methods and installed in architectural / environmental spaces.

The work itself will be examined in both the aesthetic sense and the social context which has operated parallel to it. Thus, to enlarge on these aspects of their work, I will divide the chapters into these two sections.

Aesthetically, reference will be made to the artistic backgrounds of the artists within their own environments: Chihuly (America), Libenský and Brychtová (Czech Republic). I will outline the attitudes, ideas, influences and sources that inform the artists and their work, referring to work produced that leads up to their contemporary projects. Work made from glass is constantly sensitive to the change of light during the day; this has the effect of changing the feel and mood of the space it occupies. Consideration will be given to the nature of this change, and how this fluid quality forms an important element that works on the space in which it is installed. The effects of installing glass art within architectural space shall be examined, both conceptually and visually. (Does the art work look as if it has been literally 'added' to the environment or have the concepts of each been taken into consideration and a solution found that brings the two elements together?).

Architects and glass designers are all manipulators of material, which in turn, forms elements that structure an environment / artwork. All the architectural features should be viewed in relation to their neighbouring elements, working together as a single unit. Glass can function as a means of defining the dimensions of space, by catching light, and illuminating the surrounding structural space, thus creating the atmosphere that will define the role of the building.

In the social section the 'cultural space' surrounding the work and the frameworks that make the work possible will be addressed.

A feature of the work is the role played by individuals with other skills both involved

in the planning, production and installation of glass, so the technicians, engineers and architects have become part of the art - making process. This applies particularly when precision (however tight) and innovation are necessary to make the art object an essential architectural element within the fabric of the building. This joint effort creates more successful results than if the artist operates independently, doing all the tasks his/herself. This applies especially in larger projects, where different elements, involving varied processes, work together.

A theme of these artists' work is their involvement with communication, the ability to share and mix ideas rather than working in isolation. Skills and resources are pooled together and worked directly from the beginning. A sense of unity in the process of physically producing and installing work leads to unity in the final physical form.

Commercial support creates the opportunity to make art work. This patronage, particularly in relation to larger projects that involve a lot of time, human resources, materials and equipment become the framework for making the work possible.

"Support of this kind is of incalculable value, it sustains energy and optimism whereas struggling in a vacuum is soul - destroying. The prospect of having one's work enter a major collection provides both a goal and a context; it generates hope"

(Kent, 1994, P.6)

The clients can be private, commercial or public. One of the effects of patronage is that the context of the work comes to symbolise the idea and representation of the client. Patrons have the effect of creating taste, (the market) and provide the space / social framework around the art object. This factor need not take from the artistic freedom of the work, but can provide a basis / context for working out the idea. Communication and collaboration with the patron is vital if the work is to succeed.

Finally, I will discuss the effects of the educational role that the artists have had.  
(Chihuly, Pilchuck glass school, Washington state/ Libenský, academy of Applied  
Arts, Prague / Brychtová, Zelezný, Brod Glassworks)



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# Chapter 1

**Libenský & Brychtová**

<b>Aesthetic Background</b>	<b>P 7</b>
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## Aesthetic Background

This chapter will deal with the Czech collaborative team, Stanislav Libenský (B.1921) and his wife, Jaroslava Brychtová (B. 1924). Their work challenges concepts of cast glass both as an artistic medium, and its role as an architectural element. The artists have utilised the specific quantities inherent in glass, as a vehicle for altering the type of light either contained within, or given off the glass, onto the surrounding space. In the course of the chapter, I will examine their response to using glass to articulate a sense of space through controlling light and changing its characteristics. They achieve this by varying the thickness of the glass, causing a change of depth of both the light and the intensity of colour. The production of these pieces requires not only artistic vision, but also a very high level of technical skill, and knowledge of the glassmaking process.

The artists have established a working process to create their heavy glass pieces from a "detailed painting or drawing by Libenský, Brychtová creates a full size three - dimensional model form which casting moulds can be made"

(Frantz, Susanne, P.44)

From Libenský's drawings, Brychtová translates them into clay forms. She plans out the scale of the work in consideration to the nature of the supporting structure for the glass elements. These technical considerations have to be integrated into the actual glass design. The capacity of the kiln and the cost of the long cooling process have to be carefully considered.

"The post-cubist principle of overlapping layers and modelling of volume quickly evolved into more pronounced relief"

(Frantz, Susanne, P.42)



1. Gothic Chaper, Horsofsky Týn

1



Brychtová achieved this by varying the thickness of the glass. Densities of light were further created by grinding and polishing areas within the glass, which had the effect of allowing an even greater control of taking in the light. Where the surface was left unpolished (and carrying the rougher surface marks of the casting process) this opaqueness had the effect of subduing the light.

The casting process involves the melting and forming of the glass in these moulds. This is achieved by placing the chosen colour and type of glass into the negative area of the mould, (where the clay original model was previously placed) and then fusing it together, by heating the moulds, (with the glass inside) in a kiln.

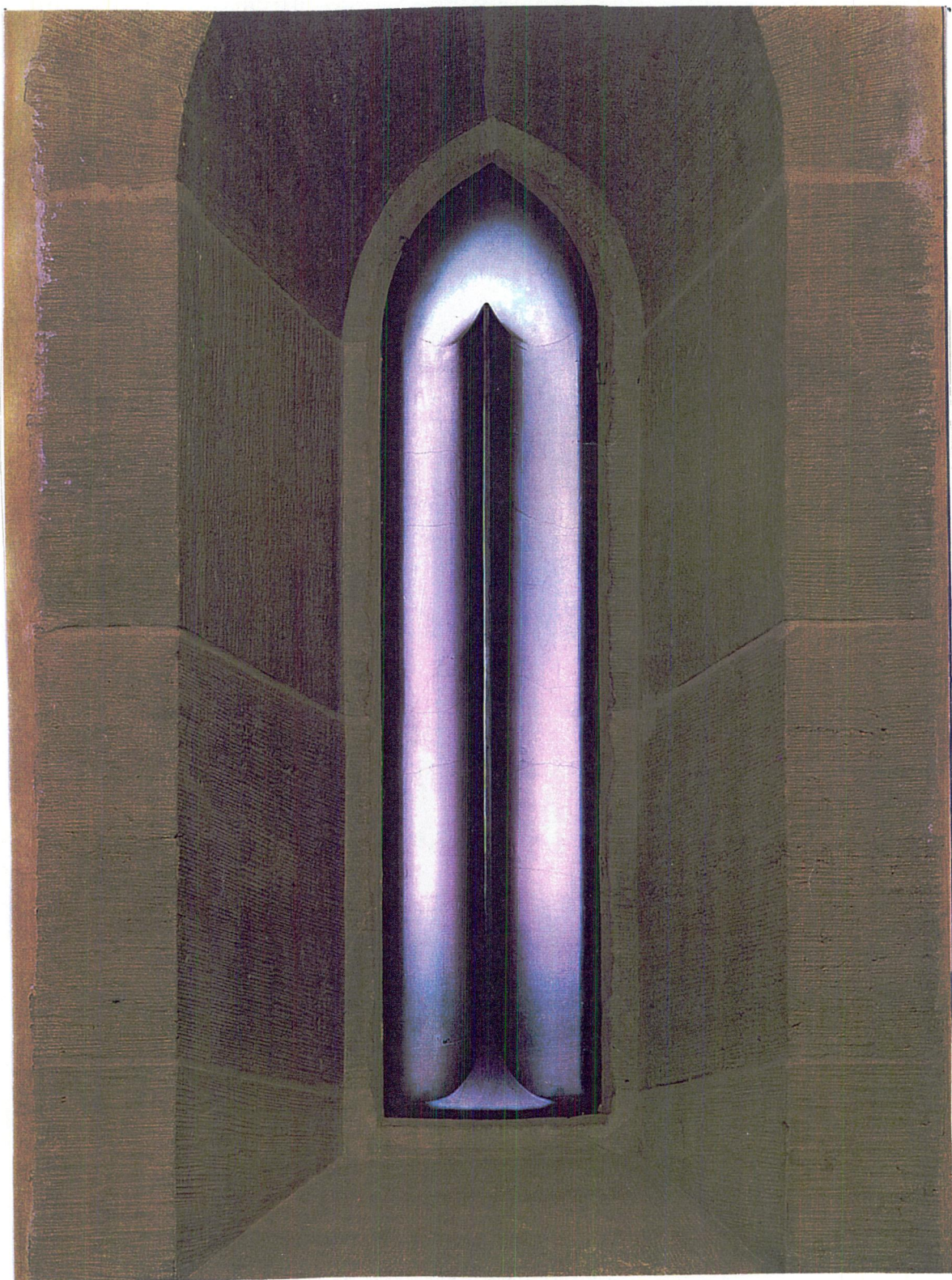
The forms they make are solutions to the formal questions of defining space through manipulating the optical properties of glass. To discuss this process and its effects, I have selected a group of windows the artists made for a Gothic chapel in Western Bohemia.

In 1987, "the architect Josef Hýzler invited Libenský and Brychtová to create seven windows for the newly restored thirteenth - century chapel in Western Bohemia. The relief compositions continued the tectonic principles of the Gothic style, evoking slender cathedral pilasters and reinforcing the mediaeval rustic and spiritual function of light ..... they based their work solely on the beautifully crafted sandstone space and its atmosphere"

(Petrová Sylva, P.211)

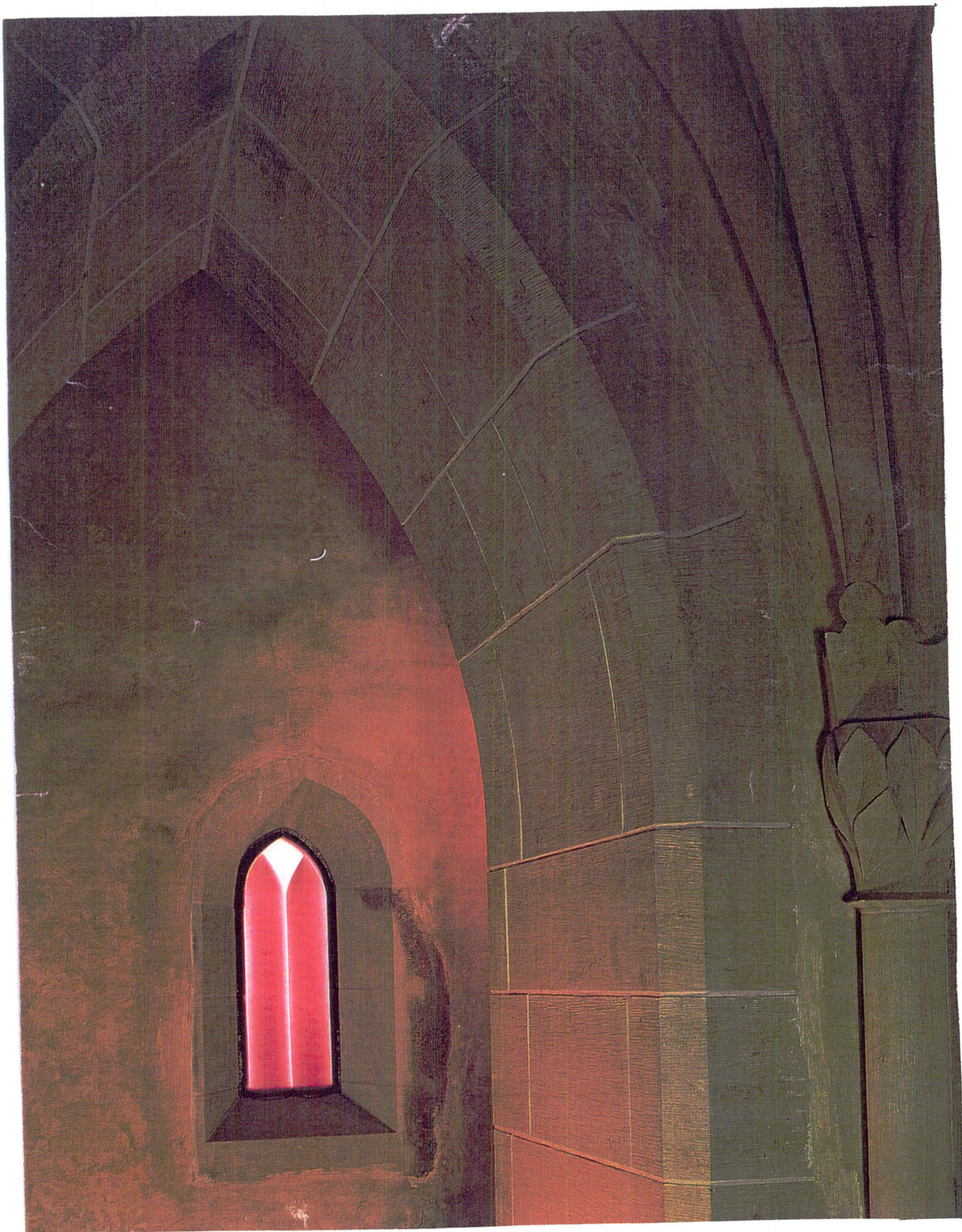
Their approach to the project was to produce windows that would compliment and enhance the Gothic structure. The Gothic scale itself, is elongated in proportion to human scale, heightening the spiritual sense of the chapel. The window spaces are small in comparison, as is a feature of Gothic architecture. Libenský and Brychtová have utilised the intimacy of these long, narrow window spaces. The artist choose to represent, rather than to reproduce, the effects of mediaeval stained glass and the response to the light that such windows radiated onto the





2. Gothic Chaper, Horsoovsky Tÿn





3. Gothic Chaper, Horsofsky Týn



surrounding interior space. The imagery in the windows echoes the shape of the Gothic arches.

“The filtration of a pastel light by varying the density of the glass now took the blade like edges glowing white to the eye”

(Frantz, Susanne, K. P.51)

The artists use the material glass as a vessel to absorb light, activating the surrounding space, balancing both the glass and the stone structure. They choose to shift the focus from representation of the object to abstracting the light and thus communicating the relationship between the interior space and the external environment. A feature of spiritual architectural glass is that a degree of the external world is blocked out, the religious space being a ‘space apart’.

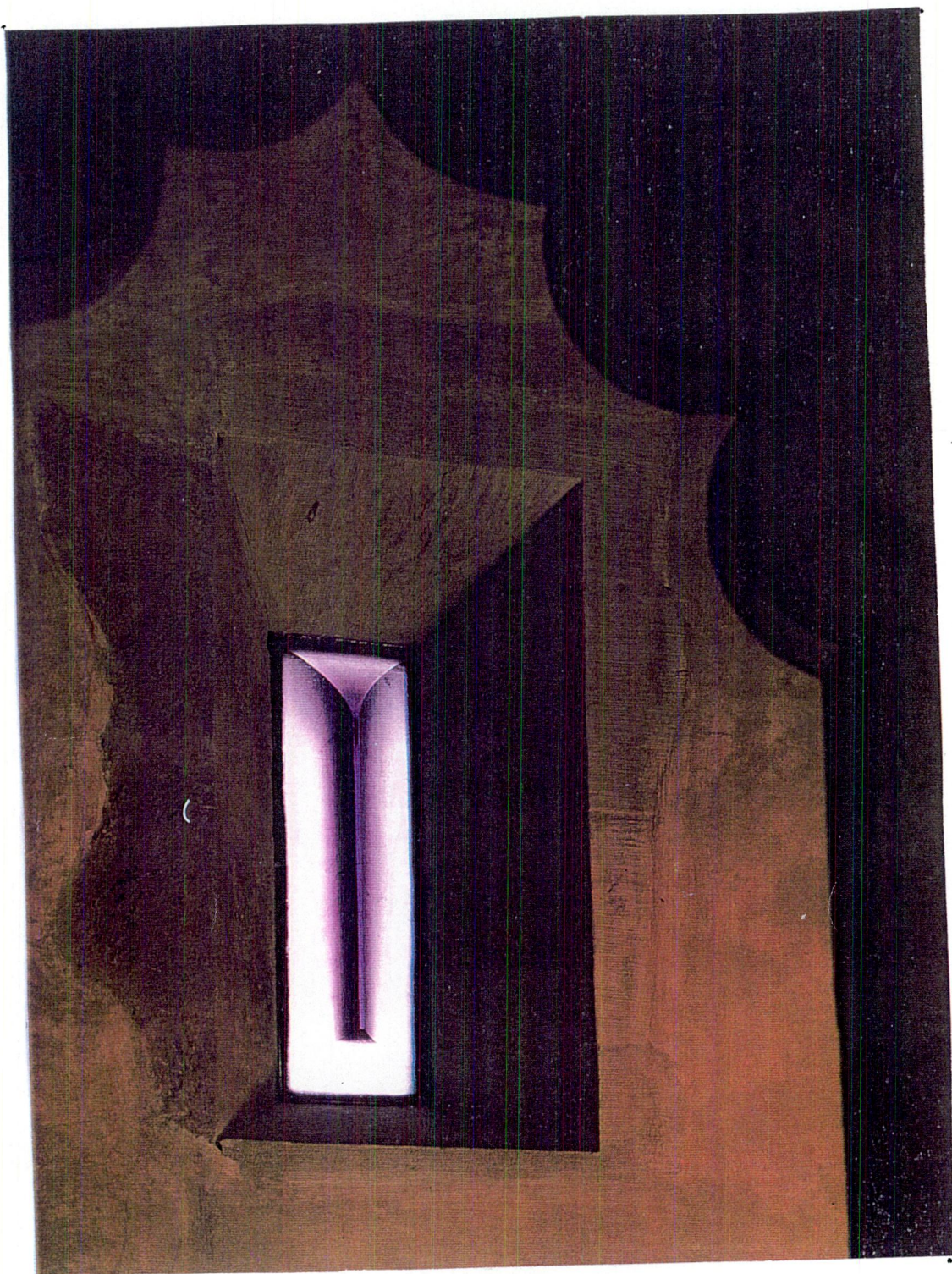
“by abandoning the objectivity of daylight and atmospheric light remains which by permeating the interior, alters the colour and the essential nature of the objects within ..... Thus, the visitor is helped toward or even into the process of self - abandonment ..... and moves into a new sphere of mental associations and relationships with his surroundings”

(Schreier, Johannes)

(lee, Lawrence, P.23)

Libenskÿ and Brychtovà have approached the conception of the religious space as a place for worship and contemplation, visually exposing the factors that contribute to this in a contemporary form. The Horsovkÿ Týn windows retain a strong spiritual element, even though the imagery used does not symbolise anything specifically religious. What they represent is people’s associations with Gothic structures to religious purpose. Mediaeval glass had a narrative function with it’s emphasis on





4. Gothic Chaper, Horsovsky Týn



content and representation of biblical stories.

"The process of framing is fundamental to human experience. All that we perceive, all that we do is filtered through 'frames' ..... the ability and the need to organise, to direct attention, are at the heart of both our command of our external world and our everyday enjoyment of it. The frame and what is framed are fundamental to both the mental process and visual process"

(Willmott, Elizabeth)

(Stonyer, Andrew, P.28)

Windows themselves are passages that connect the exterior natural environment and the interior, enclosed man - made architectural space. Windows can be divided up and the space inside ordered. The connection with the outside space in this relationship with the man - made structure can be further changed by altering the transparency of the light entering within. In the windows in the Horšovský Týn chapel, Libenský and Brychtová have ordered and arranged the framework of the space, excluding normal natural light to create intimate spaces within the building. What they have achieved is the creation of areas to think, worship or unthink, by manipulating and structuring the space in such a way as to exclude the external world.

"Order, certainty, plastic form, when we introduce markers of specific kind and in specific relationships to each other, the structure and scale of the group of markers give the space a specific tension, by changing the markers, we alter the tension of the space ....."

(Lissitzky, Sophie)

(Butterfield, Jan, P.10)

In the windows in Horšovský Týn, this process if inclusion and exclusion of natural



light by filtering it in different levels of intensity, define the space, and the separate area of focus, both the glass piece and the architectural features create this composition. The artists have, through creating these pieces, combined the different times and styles (Gothic to applied cubism) and in the process formed new ways of looking at old structures.

The environment reassembles itself as light is brought through into the interior space - the wall spaces change position as some are highlighted and other spaces are pulled away.

This type of ordering of light by the use of geometric shapes into a spatial context, can be compared to other artists working in light, as their material such as the American artist James Turrell.

"These artists draw on formal purity and a matter of fact use of materials to achieve a simple and profound spirituality"

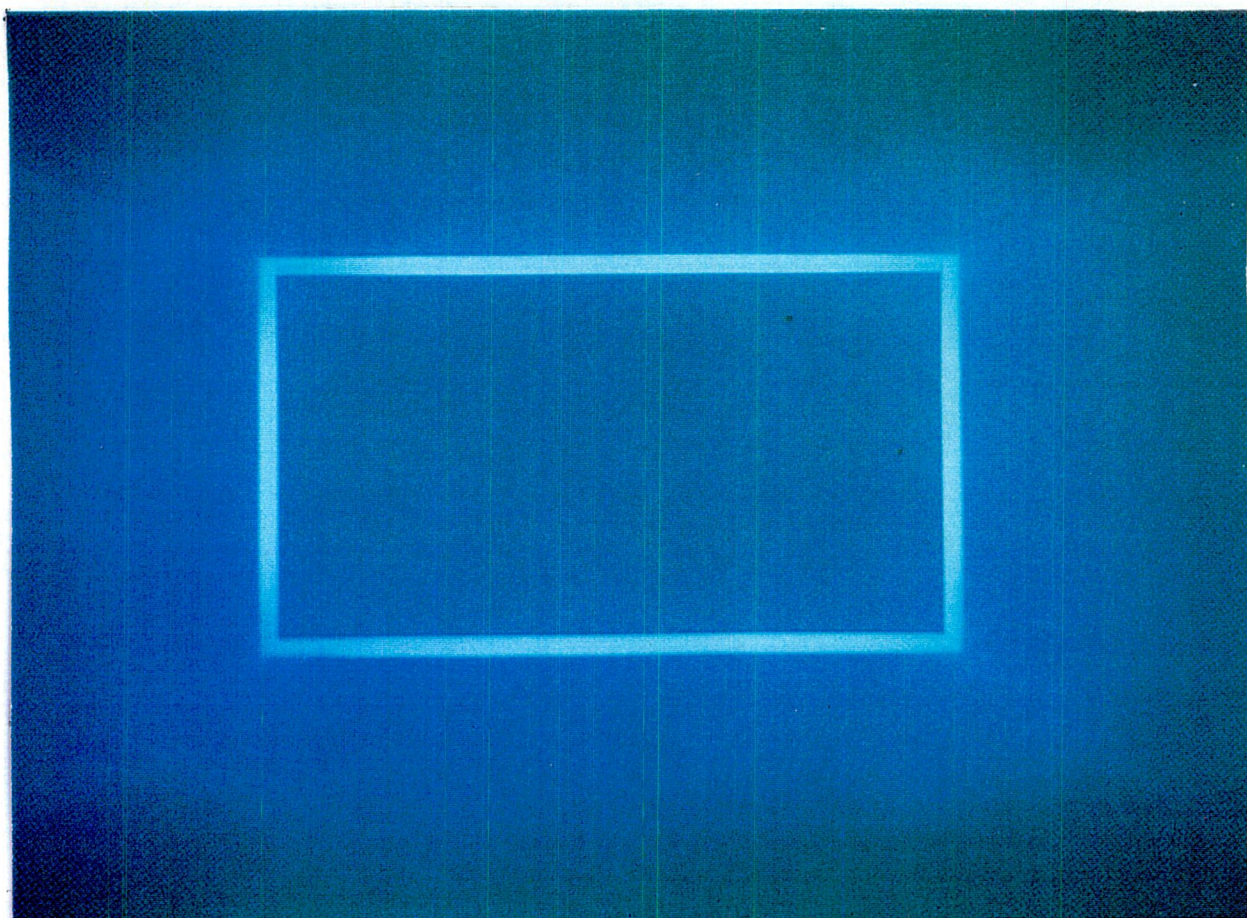
(Arts Council, P.2)

The rooms at the Whitney Museum of American art, as pictured overleaf demonstrates how space can be defined in a room and altered, by blocking out areas of light. The wall is arranged so as to allow a gap around the perimeter of a section of wall, that lets light through, thus altering the sense of the space no longer defined by the wall space.

"Light is not so much something that reveals as it is itself the revaluation to make the light manifest"

(James Turrell)

(Butterfield, Jan, P.87)



5. James Turrell 'Raemar' 1968 as installed at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1980.



Colour is used as a compositional element. The balance between the colour of the glass, (the density of which is controlled by the thickness and the surface of the glass) and the stonework that catches the filtered light reflects its own characteristics. As light changes during the day, this will have the effect of changing the time, colour and depth of the light in both the glass and the stone, thus changing the mood of both the work and the surrounding architectural space. The warm colours mute the effect of the proportions of the stone. By changing the thickness of the glass the intensities of the colours change with the changing light.

### **Cultural background**

"Czech art has consistently drawn not only from its foreign contemporaries , but also to and equal degree, from local historical and folk traditions"

(Frantz, Susanne, K. P.33)

Libenský and Brychtová artistic background, is influenced by Czech interpretations of the early 20th century movements of modern art, cubism, in particular. To an equal degree, the work expresses their position within the Czech glass making system at a particular period of transition.

Early developments within the Czech glass industry at the beginning of the 20th century, changed the outlook of Czech glass.

"A new 'modern' concept of glass design was developed in Bohemia shortly after 1900 outside the glass making industry ..... Prague was then the centre of patriotic efforts to revive state sovereignty and at the centre where the ideals of a new Czech culture was been formulated"

(Adlerová, Alena, P.42)

The artists at the time were trying to define a Czech style that symbolised this new mood. The style was a reworking of national folk styles at the time, in particular cubism. Glass itself had a long history in Czechoslovakia, it was being used as a medium to symbolise this national pride. Jan K<sup>o</sup>tera, a professor of architecture at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague was a prominent figure in echoing this new feeling.

"His synthesis of what he considered to be the fundamentals of Bohemian glass (Principally drawn from Baroque cut glass) was modern and farsighted. He stressed the architectural quality of the glass shapes, their function, and the optical quality of the material"

(Adlerová, Alena, P.42)

Jan K<sup>o</sup>tera had a significant influence on a collective of designers, architects and artists who in 1908, formed Artel. The result of this influence was the creation of a new Czech style, based on traditional Czech glass, seen in a new way. Elements of traditional glass forms were simplified, and techniques such as engraving and enamelling provided the surface decoration.

"In this early phase (1910 -1914) the Art<sup>el</sup> group espoused the tenets of expressive cubism ..... Despite the fact that Artel products had no wider audience than a narrow circle of the Prague intellectual elite, this group was important fundamentally in furthering modern glass design"

(Adlerová, Alena, P.42)

It was in this community that Jaroslava Brychtová was born, her early work reflected the spirit of the time and its style. Since 1940, she had been making small sculptural work using the *pate de verre* (glass paste) technique, which involved



melting crushed glass placed in moulds. her father was an artist and he collaborated with her at this stage. In 1945, she attended the Prague School of Applied Arts, where she learnt the traditional techniques of cutting and engraving glass, and she was able to expand on her skills using the casting process.

Stanislav Libenský entered the Nový Bor school in 1937, where he learnt the traditional techniques in commercial glass production. In 1939 he entered the Department of Applied Painting at the School of Applied Arts in Prague.

In 1945 "Libenský joined his classmates and their former professor Dr. Jaromír Špacíček to form a group called the Czech Glass Bloc. One of their goals was to educate students who would set up a new technical artistic direction for the newly consolidated glass industry ..... In 1945 Libenský returned to the Nový Bor school to head the department of painted and stained glass"

(Frantz, Susanne, K. P. 36)

In 1954 the two artists "began to collaborate on cast sculptures made at the Želzný Brod glassworks architectural glass facility. From the beginning, their projects aimed at translating the illusionism of paint into light and space"

(Frantz, Susanne, K. P. 39)

The first piece they made together was a bowl of 'miska'. The bowl represented a human face. In the piece they made use of their 'trademark' process, modelling light through varying the thickness of the glass.

"Soon after 1945 ..... Czechoslovakian glassmaking was consolidated by the state. The glass industry underwent a profound organisational change connected with the political shift to a socialist state. Industrial production and factories were gradually nationalised; small enterprises were concentrated into larger groupings"

(Adlerová, Alena. P.45)

Along with this consolidation came the opportunity for artists working with glass, to work within these factories in a design capacity.

### **Artist / State relationship**

“Suitable conditions were created for the systematical co - operation with the artists in the field of glass - making . To this purpose new organisational structures were established, such as designing departments in individual establishments and central development institutes in Prague, which devote their attention to maintaining the good standard of glass design in connection with the development of contemporary interior design”

(Frantz, Susanne, P.42)

The combination of a unique glass - making education system, its involvement with industry and commercial support created a healthy climate for the production of innovative glass work, in Czechoslovakia. The position of Libenský and Brychtová within that system contributed to the high level of technical expertise they had with the medium. The large scale architectural work, was made possible by working closely with the state's glass making industry. The artists has access to industrial glassmaking equipment and technical support through skilled glass workers. The state promoted this interaction between glass artists and industry. The state was keen to push glass as a symbol of national, economic and artistic pride.

“Their lives and artistic development have been virtually the reverse of their contemporaries and younger colleagues in the West, where the history of post - war art is identified by its conscious escape from, and rejection of industry”

(Opie, Jennifer, P.45)



The artists working within the Czech glass industry were able to push the limits of the traditional skills such as engraving, cutting and glass painting, which have had a long history in traditional Czech glass. The result was a radical change in how the purpose of the medium was seen. The possibilities of the glass in new forms and processes combined with new ways of approaching traditional techniques.

"The artistic level of products was not left to spontaneous development; artistic studios were set up within the glass works"

(Adlerová, Alena. P. 45)

Libenský was one of these artists working within the factory system. He worked at the Nový Bor glassworks. While working there, he stretched the possibilities of glass painting and engraving. In 1945, Libenský began a series of engraved and enamelled bowls based on a religious theme.

"His regard for Czech Gothic painting, as well as for Italian painters of the Gothic and Renaissance periods.... encouraged him to blend the styles for a new interpretation of biblical stories. Through their delicate application to the glass, the designs achieved their true success as beautiful and spiritual objects ..... In 1948, when the religious series was completed, such imagery was on its way to being completely prohibited in Czechoslovakia, while a few of the enamelled works entered museums collections, the religious pieces were packed and never exhibited"

(Frantz, Susanne, K. P. 37)





6. Libensky, Bowl. 1945.



In the late 1950's the state started to withdraw some of their support for the artists collaboration in the factories.

"After these creative efforts achieved success at home and abroad, there were efforts to bring these ideas to industrial production. Unfortunately, the industry was not able to utilise more than a fraction of the designs by almost a hundred professional glass artists"

(Adlerová, Alena, P.46/47)

This overflow of artists working as designers within the industry left glass artists searching for a new role in the glassmaking system. This change created a new movement in glass.

"The large pool of professionally trained glass artists, and the reservoir of masterglassmakers were the foundation of the Czech studio movement"

(Adlerová, Alena, P.47)

Artists in Czechoslovakia started to see glass, in a new context. They started to work with glass out of its purpose as a purely serviceable object. This brought the material glass into new territories.

"Artists started doing it themselves, using the factory as a material source, and as a skilled labour force, which they had to pay for, and they marketed their own stuff abroad,..... they went into production sculpture....."

(Michael Robinson)

(Mc Gettrick, Gerard, P.6)

The state in Czechoslovakia provided the infrastructure around the creation of large work, such as that made by Libenský and Brychtová. They provided the facilities to produce their work, in factories, giving the artist technical support, both

in the form of skilled labour and the equipment to produce the work. The state also provided a context for the work.

“Sculptural commissions resulted from a law requiring that two percent of the construction budget be spent on art”

(Frantz, Susanne, K. P.33)

The effect of this state policy was the creation of a framework that allowed the work to be achieved. Without this support, the extent not the scale of Libenský and Brychtová's monumental work wouldn't exist.

“This support also came with restrictions, certain views were censored, if they didn't conform to state ideas. So Libenský and Brychtová were in a position of both privilege and scrutiny. Their work can be seen as a part of this system, although on occasion they have chosen to stand against it”

In 1970 Libenský and Brychtová made a large architectural work called the river of life for Expo '70 in Osaka, Japan. It was made at the Zelezný Brod glassworks out of clear glass.

“An enormous crystal river (height 4.2M, Length 22M, weight 12 tons) cutting through the entire pavilion”

(Frantz, Susanne, K. P44)

The imagery represented the despair the artists felt about the repressive restrictions on freedom, in their country. Following a brief period of eased social restrictions, known as the Prague spring.

"The Soviets soon regained control with their August 1968 invasion of the country  
..... The communist party entered a period of increased repression"

(Frantz, Susanne, K. P44)

"The river of life was a turbulent formation of jagged sections evoking the passage from happiness to hope and then despair. Converging streams containing two female dancers, gradually descended and ended as a river of mud and ice. The footprints of the dancers were crushed by heavy boots"

(Frantz, Susanne, K. P44)

The authorities didn't realise what these images represented until just before the opening of the exposition. They ordered that the "the offensive images of the boots be removed,..... the disputed sections were ground and polished out of the glass..... Participation by the Libenskys in international expositions ended"

(Frantz, Susanne, K. P44)

The results of this protest made life more difficult for Libenský and Brychtová.

"Both artists were repeatedly threatened with the loss of their jobs and access to the factory, and thus the ability to make their sculptures..... they managed to remain in the same positions and were steadily assigned work that brought them international acclaim. The glass industry was one of the few areas in the Eastern Bloc countries could excel internationally and earn hard currency"

(Frantz, Susanne, K. P45)



The remainder of their work from the seventies up until 1984 (when they set up their own studio) the artists concentrated on more formal work, which looked at glass as an optical material, in geometric forms. The work from this period can be looked at in both a negative and a positive way, although the political expression had been suppressed in their work, they were still able, through looking at the material in a purely aesthetic and technical way able to stretch their own artistic skills. Their abilities as architectural artists of international reputation allowed them to remain working for the state, and they continued to work of architectural commissions for the state.

"Their concepts became the centrepieces of the Czechoslovak embassies, consulates and missions in Stockholm, Geneva, Brasilia, New Delhi, Bonn, Berlin and Tokyo"

(Frantz, Susanne, K. P46)

"Their vocabulary of non-representational forms,..... provided them with an expressive means of transcending the troubled political atmosphere they experienced through most of their lives"

(Kehlmann, Robert. P.44)

The repression of images, by the state can be found in the Oaska piece and in Libenský's religious series of bowls, (made before their collaboration). It is interesting that the content of their work after 1989, has still remained non - figurative and abstract. Libenský and Brychtová were very much a part of their environment, and their work can be seen as a reflection of that environment. The work reflects artist expression in a system that supported them technically and commercially within certain boundaries.

"It seems a pragmatic balance was struck between artists and state, even during the most repressive periods"

(Opie, Jennifer, P.45)

Although Czechoslovakia was a communist country, when the artists sold their work abroad they were able to attain foreign currency. Although this money was gained illegally, the state turned a blind eye to this as they were allowed a certain amount of leeway, as the artists were gaining prestige for the country abroad. This loophole in the system enabled Libenský and Brychtová to finance a private studio in Liberec. As they were now running the studio themselves, it gave them total control on the work they produced, away from state control.

In the production of larger works, the artists had to pay for factory time and labour. After the Velvet Revolution in 1989, the infrastructure that for many years, supported glass artists through prominent commissions declined. Presently, the nature of the work that is coming out of Czechoslovakia at the moment relies less on heavy industrial process.

"The Bohemian tradition of glassmaking .... is inherent in these works, whether it is expressed in the conscious or subconscious acceptance of it or revolt against it, it has established artistic and technological standards which stimulate individual glassmakers and the industry in general to maintain and expand this tradition"

(Opie, Jennifer, P.47)

## Education

Stainislav Libenský became director of the Prague Academy of Applied Arts , in 1962. He was greatly influenced by this predecessor, Josef Kaplický, who through his teachings widened the creative limits of glass in Czechoslovakia, both as an artistic medium and the importance of a broad - based approach in the production of objects made in glass.

“Artistic conceptions break through barriers. The processes of fantasy and free intellectual thinking are contradictory to the purely technical procedures of glassmaking. It would therefore not make any sense to separate the creation of glass from other creative activities”

(Petrova, Sylva, P.14)

Libenský continued this vision of emphasising the importance of taking in outside interests and other skills such as painting into the creative process, complimenting the particular qualities and skills associated with the production of glass objects.

“Hands - on glass working experience was generally limited to cutting, engraving and painting. As part of their advanced training, students worked at commercial glassworks where they completed school assignments in hot - glass techniques”

(Frantz, Susanne, K. P.42)

Libenský stressed the importance of using these traditional glass - making techniques in new ways, to push the boundaries within these processes.



"Before 1989, with few exceptions, only graduates of such a rigorous system could aspire to join the government - sanctioned Czech or Slovak Union of fine artists and to exhibit their work"

(Frantz, Susanne, K. P.42)

Jaroslava Brychtová was a major influence in pushing the limits of architectural glass in Czechoslovakia.

"..... actively involved in the restoration of the glass industry in Zelezný Brod. In 1950, she joined some of her former School of Applied Arts colleagues to investigate the possibilities of commercial production of architectural and artistic glass"

(Frantz, Susanne, K. P.36)

Brychtová had a vast knowledge of the glass making process and its relation with architectural space.

"She established a small department in her family home as part of the Zelezný Brod glassworks. Ultimately, this centre for architectural glass would move and be equipped to create monumental glass in all stages - form mould making to casting, assembly and installation"

(Frantz, Susanne, K. P.36)

Until her retirement in 1984, she and an eight person team developed the artistic and technological processes to create architectural glass.

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# Chapter 2

## Chihuly

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## **Cultural Background**

Dale Chihuly (B. 1941) is an American glass artist of huge international standing. he is both a product and a contributor of the American studio glass movement. Chihuly demonstrates the strength of working on collaboration with individuals who have various skills , to produce his art. His role is as orchestrator, co-ordinating other peoples skills and talents in both the making and commercial process. He is the catalyst that enables the group of artists working with him, to explore and develop the possibilities of the medium. The people, artists, technicians and administrators that work with him are central to his working method. His participation in the making process is to organise skilled craftspeople, that he has brought together to physically make the glass, they work from his drawings and concepts. Chihuly's work deals with freely - blown glass forms, rather than using these objects individually, the process of arranging these forms has dominated, he organises a large team of skilled glass - blowers to make the glass elements, often the glass making team includes some of the best known glass artists in the world, such as William Morris and Italo Scanga, they work in the traditional structure of the glass team. A certain amount of the process is left to chance, Chihuly utilises these differences as elements rather than mistakes.

This formula can be compared to Andy Warhol's factory, using talent and pooling it together to produce dazzling saleable art. The high profile name attached to the work can be seen as a brand name, making the art saleable. This money funds the opportunity to work on larger and more expensive projects. For the people who work with him, the existence of this system provides jobs and an outlet for their talents. Chihuly has become his own art system, which he has total control over,





8. Dale Chihuly making a drawing for the Lismore Castle installation.

the process necessary to produce and sell his work. he has his own dealers, skilled workers and system of production / promotion, making him into a type of glass 'popstar'. He is a master of public relations.

"The great post modern celebrities are a part of their publicity machines"

(Amis, martin, P. viii)

Chihuly's media manner gives his work a high profile. Coverage in newspapers, gossip columns, art magazines and television have produced his fame and notoriety. Through the media, he has gained public and commercial support for his work, in America and abroad. His position is as a commercial artist, in a commercial environment, Chihuly chooses to work within this system rather than challenge it. The objective of Chihuly's work is to design saleable glass art objects, of a very high quality.

"Critics often savage his extravagance. A recent account of an exhibit at a Seattle gallery described it as so overwrought it borders on the obscene; much of the influential New York art press dismisses him as a 'craftsperson' competitors deplore the carnival - like atmosphere of his entourage and his obsessive concern with coverage by the media"

(Sullivan, Scott, P.53)

Taste and value are obsolete systems, labels like these are often used in looking at art. The medium glass itself is often labelled as 'applied art' as being distinct from 'high art' which is associated with other mediums. If the process of making art can be redefined as the formation of ideas and the expression of these ideas, then Chihuly must be considered an artist, and an artist with flair.



"In any event the argument is hollow, Chihuly's work is what it magnificently is, 'gaudy, personal, celebratory'....."

(Sullivan, Scott, P.53)

Making and selling art is what Dale Chihuly is about. A major part of his work is promoting and marketing his art. The work has been used to represent the purpose of a particular type of environment.

"He and his team have produced tens of thousands of glass artifacts that sell for prices ranging from \$2,500 to \$250,000. His clients include more than 60 museums (Including the Louvre and New York's Metropolitan), the Bill Clinton's, most of the Boston Kennedy's and virtually every millionaire in the Pacific Northeast"

(Sullivan, Scott, P.52)

Patrons fund the work. In the 'Chihuly over Venice' Project, the Waterford glass factory paid for the privilege and prestige attached to having these artists over. The high cost of his work represents the cost of its production both in its physical making and in the generation of the image that sells the work.

"He employs 85 people at his headquarters on North Lake Union and at his shipping centre in Tacoma, two individuals spend virtually all their time scheduling museum and gallery shows throughout the U.S. and Asia. he runs a busy vanity press that publishes lavish coffee table books on his art. His hot shop cranks out commissioned glass art on a weekly basis. So vast is his empire that it costs \$500,000 a month just to cover the expenses of Chihuly Inc."

(Updike, Robin, P16)

## **Aesthetic Background**

"The accelerating tempo of the U.S. economy in the 1980's can be charted in Chihuly's corporate and institutional commissions"

(Sims, Patterson, P.57)

In 1986 Dale Chihuly completed an installation in the Seattle Sheraton Hotel. The work contains a grouping of 'Venetian' floral forms massed and displayed in a glass case.

"A large free standing case built as a columnar architectural element in the lobby to contain a rare group of Chihuly's white floral forms"

(Sims, Patterson, P.57)

This piece demonstrates Dale Chihuly's style which had been influenced by both his position at the beginning of the American studio glass movement, and the art nouveau style he admired in Venetian glass.

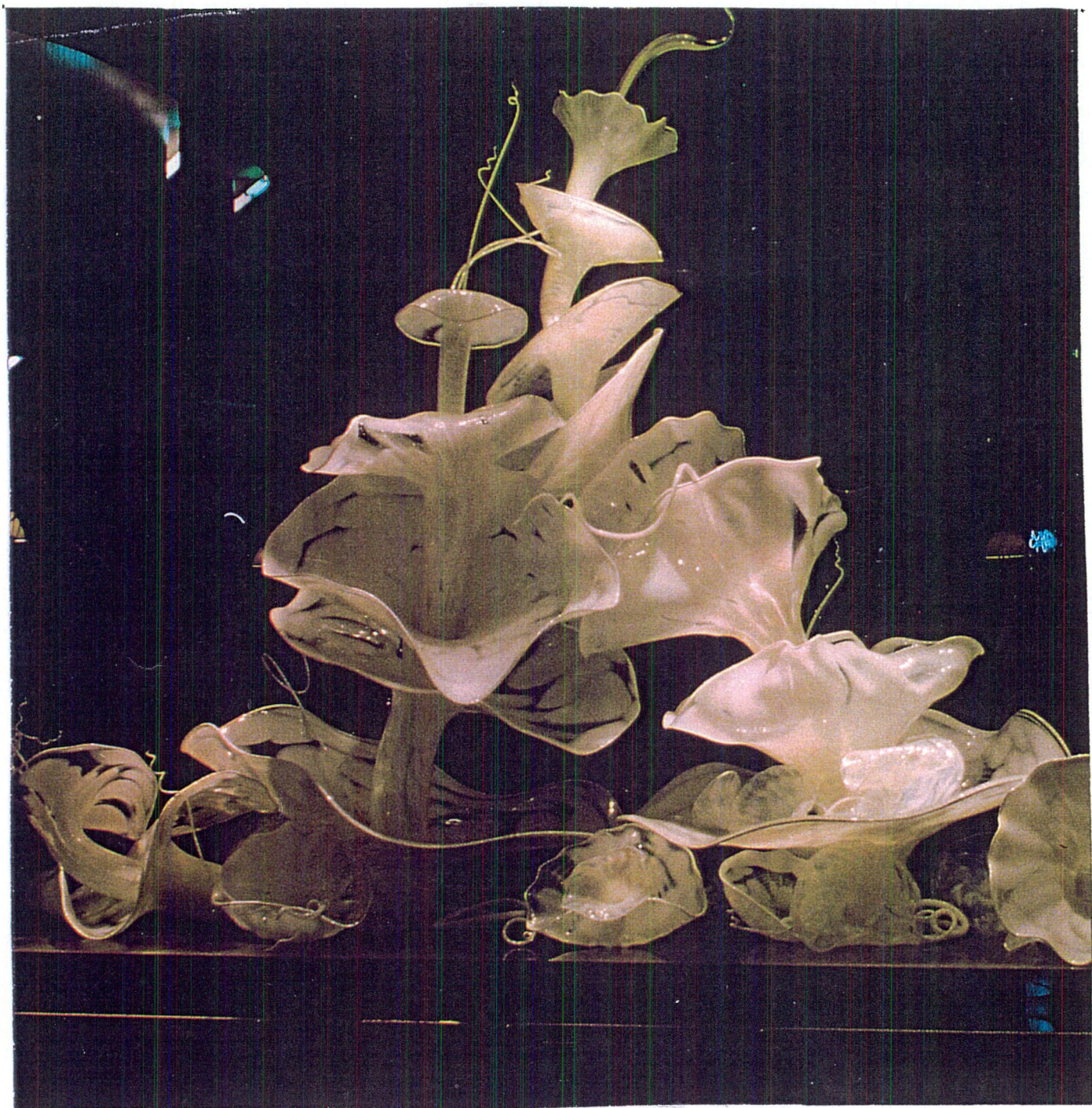
"In his early 20's ..... he won a Fulbright fellowship that changed the course of his life..... At Murano, he watched Italian artisans blow glass in disciplined teams, and he admired the colourful art nouveau style that is the hallmark of Venetian glass. He went back to his native Washington determined to absorb both lessons"

(Sullivan, Scott, P.52)

The 'Chihuly over Venice' project is a development on Chihuly's work at massing his glass pieces to form environments. The project is a progression on his installation work such as the Seattle Sheraton Hotel.

The project is an extension of "his current preoccupation with scale and the limits of scale in the glass itself"





9. Sheraton Hotel.



(Norden, Linda, P.25)

The blown forms he make are exaggerations of the art nouveau style. A feature of his glass is its large scale, the floral forms are stretched as large as they can possibly be made. Dale Chihuly is constantly pushing the size of his forms. In the 'Chihuly over Venice' project, 12 ft ladders were in place so as to allow the blowers the space to stretch the glass.

"His aesthetic debt to Art Nouveau manifests itself as an eccentrically organic style"

(Norden, Linda, p.14)

"American glass artist, Dale Chihuly became artist in residence at the Waterford crystal company recently, when he embarked on the second phase of 'Chihuly over Venice', a collaborative international effort involving public art, industry, film and television and the artist working within the national glassmaking traditions of Finland, Czech Republic, France, Italy and Ireland. At each location Chihuly and his team produce a huge 'chandelier' measuring 5 metres across, incorporating over 2000 parts, and weighing as much as 2 tons. These will ultimately be hung over the canals in Venice in 1996. In 'homage to the centuries old Venetian tradition of glass and Chandelier making"

(Jordan, Peter, P.6)

In the second leg of the 'Chihuly over Venice' project which took place in Ireland, the blowing commenced in the Waterford crystal factory in October 1995. It took 5/7 people in a team to blow each piece. The teams themselves were divided into blowers from Seattle and local blowers in the Waterford Crystal factory. The output was high, three teams simultaneously produced 200 pieces of glass a day. (They





7. Glass team blowing, at Waterford Crystal.



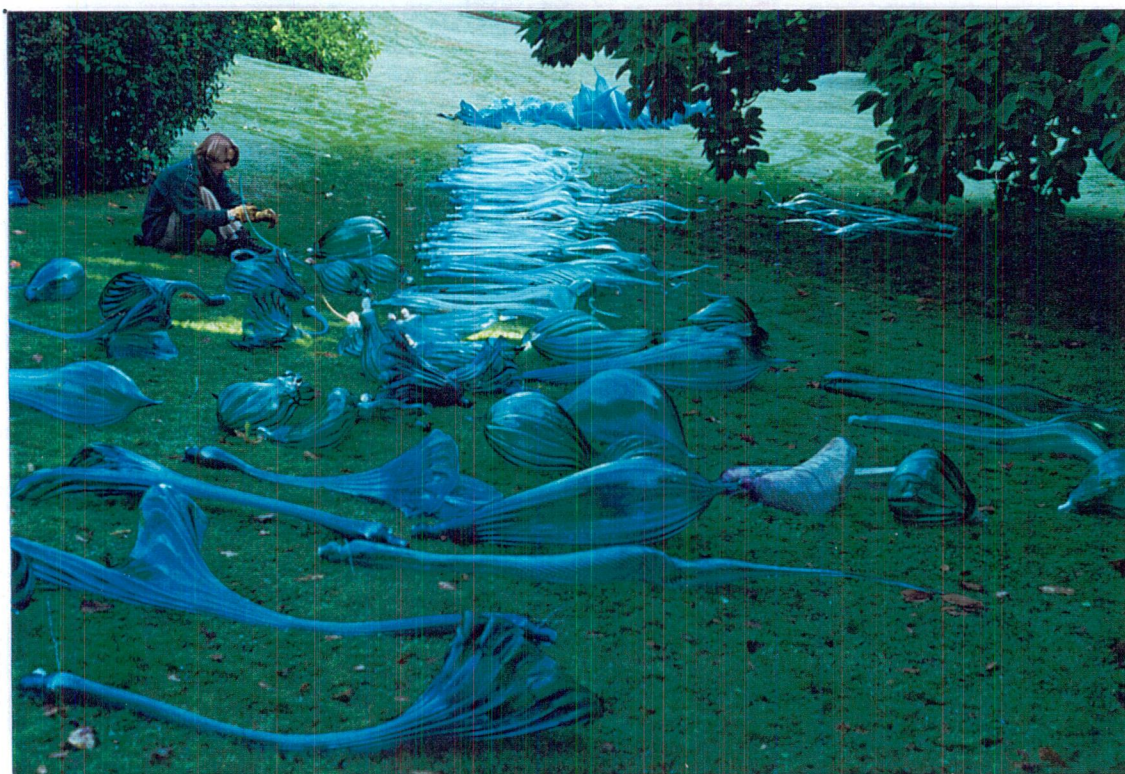
had to make this many pieces as the money that underwrote the project had to be covered). Some of the glassworkers were not too keen on the lack of geometry in the forms, yet they all agreed that they had never seen anything like this work before.

The glassworkers from the Waterford Crystal factory genuinely seemed to be enjoying working in these looser working methods. The level of excitement and enthusiasm while producing the work came out in the final pieces. Each team worked on a particular type of piece for a day, the individual pieces themselves are of varied thickness, and some of the larger pieces of glass are quite fragile. They were making the same piece over and over again as the chandeliers required a large number of components, because of the repetition of the process, the way they were making them loosened up, allowing for subtle differences. The glassmaking they did was very free, yet this was carefully controlled and coordinated by Dale Chihuly. The organic fluid forms expressed in the glass, varied in size, shape and colour. These components are then, bunched together around a metal frame and hung in various environments.

Metalworkers and engineers were on hand to construct the structures to form a core that held the glass elements together as a chandelier. The result of arranging the glass together in the form of chandeliers is very full forms, that contain a great density and weight. In some of the more slender chandeliers the shape, quality and colour are changed to produce a different effect, they are further changed by their position within different environments.

The 'Chihuly over Venice' project is an international effort. What is special about installing the work in different countries, is the different types of light that exist in these places. This light will range from direct Mediterranean sunlight (In Venice), to the more subdued, dramatic light such as found in Northern Europe (Ireland and Finland). The variation in the type of light will change the nature and depth of the colour and luminosity of the glass in the chandeliers. There is also a significance in





10. Glass been prepared for installation in Lismore Castle.



the nature of the places, that these works will be installed, form indoor spaces such as those found in galleries, factories and architectural structures, to outdoor settings such as the installations found in the grounds of Lismore castle, and the chandeliers hung over rivers in Nuutajarvi, Finland. The work emphasises the purpose of its surrounding spatial situation. In this way the work can be seen as an environmental piece.

Lismore castle was the backdrop of the 'Chihuly over Venice' date in Ireland. In this space, Chihuly constructed a showcase of glass of his clients.

"Chihuly rented it for his art happening at a cost of \$20,000 for three weeks"

(Updike, Robin, P.19)

Glass was installed both in the interior of the castle and in the castle grounds.

"Installations ranged from gigantic 'chandeliers' 15 - foot deep assemblages that can weigh up to 1,000 pounds to more modest undertakings that amount to appealing arranged piles of glass"

(Updike, Robin, P.19)

The glass was moved to different parts of the castle grounds and arranged in different types of locations. The process of arranging and photographing can be seen as a working method to define the work.

"Artists are frequently unaware of the issues that concern them until they have emerged in the physical form"

(Kent, Sarah, P.7/8)





11. Glass installation, grounds of Lismore Castle.



This process of arranging glass took in several different environments. The sense of the work altered as it moved to locations both natural and man - made.

"There is a degree of stagework or performance even in the production of static objects. A large part of what I do prior to, during, and after making a piece is bring in as many outside references as possible - constructing a 3 -D network of ideas around the object that holds it up to scrutiny from as many viewpoints as possible, and detaches it from the purely personal"

(Piggott, Hadrian)

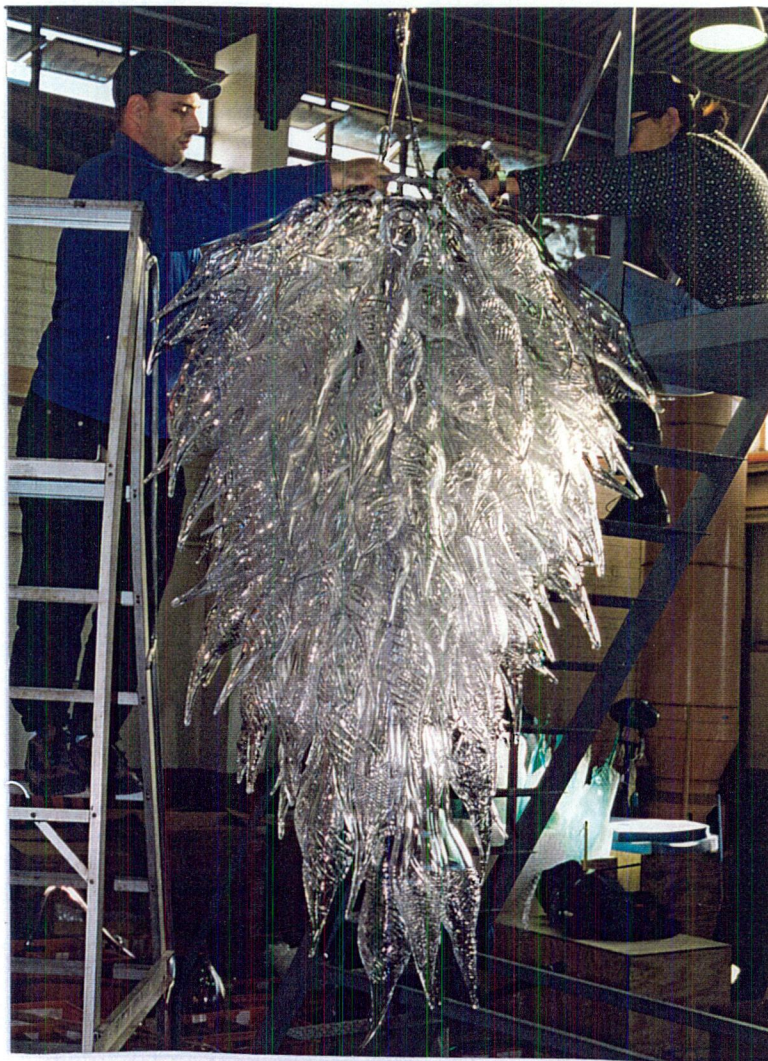
(Kent, Sarah, P.7)

The environment was an important element in creating the context of the glass. A part of the installation went up to the Soloman gallery in Dublin. The pieces were displayed as separate elements in the show. The pieces were individually presented on metal spike supports and the gallery was spotlit, yet the glass lacked the energy it had when the elements were bunched together and hung giving the glass a tremendous volume and weight.

The pieces themselves varied in size, shape and colour. The pieces varied from long green spheres to bulbous forms with long swilling tails. This organic quality complemented the natural environment, yet when the pieces were placed in interior structures such as in the Waterford Crystal factory, and in a room at Lismore Castle they had a different quality. They looked delicate, and unusual as the space they were situated, had social functions.

The particular way that Chihuly exhibits the work as displayed 'showcases' lit by elaborate lighting, in a carefully considered environment, tells us much about the





12. Installation of chandelier at Waterford crystal.



content of his work. By exhibiting the glass in such a way, he provides a clear context for the work. The presentation of the finished pieces is an important element in the process. Chihuly generates an image of his work as an attractive designer package, Chihuly has produced, "a powerful form - idea used to generate a scheme for a structure or site" (Norden, Linda, P.15)

The image states the potential of the works as decorative elements in architectural / environmental situations.

"Part of what interests Chihuly these days is to photograph such temporary 'installations' for later publication in books and portfolios, and to videotape the whole process. In practice this means that he and his crew scout out sites on the castle grounds ..... and 'installed' based on Chihuly's directions or the suggestions of some of his chief crew members. If he likes the result, it gets photographed"

(Updike, Robin, P.19)

The work is enhanced by lighting and positioning the glass in different environments to produce the maximum image, enlarging and making prominent glass that, initially itself is huge.

"The control Chihuly exerts over both his creative project and its perception, by continually finding new ways to dominate not just the conditions of production but the contexts for reception that he creates for his artistic output ....."

(Norden, Linda, P15)

Chihuly has produced art objects, that can be used to represent the purpose of that environment. The price and reputation of the maker represents and symbolises prestige. In installations such as at the Seattle Sheraton Hotel and the 'Pacific First', they have the appearance of being token artworks in these commercial



environments. I believe that instead of being elements outside this environment, they are in fact very much a part of these spaces. Chihuly's work symbolises these institutions' optimism.

"Buildings that seemed phenomenally indiscreet in their scale, and their glazing, their massive film set atria, with marble and waterfalls, tropical plants and contemporary art. Buildings that owe nothing to the symbolism of the old city, stone and wood became steel and glass"

(York, Peter, BBC2)

They are used as elements to enhance and frame certain ideas and purposes that are socially contained in these architectural structures.

Traditionally in religious buildings stained glass was used to define and dictate the purpose of the structure, while also having a decorative function. They enhance the prestige of these commercial institutions. They break up the symmetry of these modern buildings, providing areas that soften the harshness of the structure. Chihuly makes glass to fit into such post - modern structures.

"They indicate a clear consumer recognition of the hotel's intended symbolism, and suggest a range of associations and fantasies ..... both conceal function and invite speculative fantasy about the interior"

(Bell , Keith, P.78)

### **Educational**

Dale Chihuly has been a major influence on the studio glass movement in America, both through helping to set up the Pilchuck Glass School in 1971, and through his influence on those whom assist him in his work.

"He founded the Pilchuck Glass School in 1971 .... and remained its guiding artist spirit for years. Pilchuck is now the premier studio - glass programme in world"

(Updike, Robin, P.21)

The basis for the education in Pilchuck was the idea that students interested in glass - making in all its forms could learn new ways of developing their material, through working with prominent glass artists, who visited the college for summer courses. This interaction of artists helped form a communication of ideas and skills.

"The school took hold of a movement barely out of its infancy and propelled it to increasingly higher levels of artistic sophistication and technical innovation. In the short span of twenty years, Pilchuck has become synonymous with the growth of the studio glass movement in the United States and abroad"

(Olbrantz, John)

(Herman, Lloyd, E, P. 4)

There is an educational dimension in Dale Chihuly's working process, in the large scale commissions, such as the the 'Chihuly over Venice' project. The project itself required a large number of people from different professional backgrounds. The interaction of different people's mediums (Photography, lighting, glass blowing etc.) and different ideals (both artistic and technical) has expanded the way glass can be seen. The students, who acted as general helpers and the glassworkers who assisted in the blowing gained from this project's visit to Ireland, as we saw a totally new approach to glass - making first hand, in relation to our own ideas and skills. For his own blowers who worked on the project, they were provided both with an outlet for their talents and an opportunity to work and travel in different countries, thus enabling them to absorb the artist attitudes of their host countries and to reflect on their own skills and ideas.



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# Conclusion



## Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to examine the way Dale Chihuly and the collaborative team of Libenský and Brychtová used the medium glass as components in their architectural installation work. Their work demonstrates the use of glass as a medium, that represents the social and aesthetic functions of the space, by complimenting the space and to a degree challenging those functions.

The artists have used glass as their medium to express their ideas, producing imaginative work and through this work proved that glass was a limitless artistic medium.

"In order to understand that the greatest human discovery does not lie in technical perfection of things, but in man's ability to enter the world of dreams which in spite of its mystic and irrational form is the inner motor of all positive movements of human existence"

(Karel, Marian, P. 12)

They are high profile artists in their respective glass processes and are key figures in the development of glass in their politically different environments. Their work represents the different glass movements in Czechoslovakia and America. These two separate movements have influenced the development in art glass. The movements themselves to a certain degree, with the Americans promotion of artists working in individual private studios, while Czech glass, from its early development has had artists working in collaboration within the factory system. The artists have provided through the methods, work and education a significant role in these separate movements.

The commercial success of their work is integral to supporting their development as artists. They have achieved this through state, corporate and private commissions. Chihuly has achieved this through attracting media attention and thus commercial support. Libenský and Brychtová operated within a system that was controlled and closed, to a certain degree due to the socialist political environment. They were still able to push their work through support from the state's 'glass friendly' system. They are similar in that their work brings great crafts people and artists together. Both have created environments for this to happen.



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Neves - Glas , No. 4, 1992, P.12.

Transcript of an interview, by Gerard Mc Gettrick with Michael Robinson, at the National College of Art and Design. (Following a lecture on Czechoslovakian glass given by Mr. Robinson)

Date: 7/2/96

**Mc Gettrick:** To what extent do Libensky and Brychtova reflect the Czech glass - making system?

**Robinson:** They did reflect the system, they worked in a communist system, they had to stay within certain parameters, they weren't allowed out of them, but at the same time as long as they did that, as long as they continued to make a lot of money for the state, the state was quite happy to see them push the limits as far as the limits would go. But Libensky had to remember that he was a professor of a university, or an academy, in a communist country so all the time he had to be careful.

**Mc Gettrick:** Was there a system which had a pool of artists working with glass?

**Robinson:** Yes, there were a few.

**Mc Gettrick:** And training facilities within the factories, such as in Nový Bor, for instance?



**Robinson:**

Yes, that was earlier, that would have been from forty - eight on. It took the state a while to draw what would have been a whole lot of little factories into a nationalised concern, but, by the early fifties, the artist, was working, and encouraged to work, and encouraged to experiment, to exploit what was there, and that went right through the fifties, by the end of the fifties, Czech glass was winning prizes, in international competitions all over the world, so, the state had achieved an industry that was selling material abroad, and that was establishing national prestige, in Czechoslovakia itself. So, the artists were then working in factories with factory workers. What happens?, sometime during the sixties the state became quite happy with what is was selling as, we'll deal with Waterford Glass, with selling a domestic product to an international market. The artist was losing out, there was too much art as design, the factories had more artist designs than they could cope with, so artists started doing it themselves, using the factory as a material source, and as a skilled labour force, which they had to pay for, and they marketed their own stuff abroad, which then, you know, they went into production sculpture, Libenský produced sculpture, in factories and at home, Pavel Hlava did. Occasionally, the state would move in and commission the artist to do something for the state. Libenský, Pavel Hlava, René Roubíček, Václav Cigler. All these people have all produced orders for the state abroad. Like that mural in

the Swedish Embassy, the Czech Embassy in Stockholm, that was made by Libenský using a Czech factory, and the state said, we pay for it, your doing it, this is a job that we're commissioning you to do. The fact it was so big meant that Libenský was able to push the limits further and further. In Pavel Hlava's case, it meant that he was acquiring more and more skills himself, so that they used the system to further their own ends. they took advantage of the system, the system took advantage of them. It was a reciprocal arrangement. They did well out of it.

**Mc Gettrick:**

What about the symbolism in their work?, as a state symbol. A lot of the commissions were embassies and Expo's and things like that. Would they be considered a national face of glass?

**Robinson:**

Yes, but I mean, Czechoslovakia has such a long history of glass, that this was seen as the latest, in a whole historical string of successes. Here were Czech glass artists, Czech glass factories, again proving to the world that they were the best. They had done it before, and here they were doing it again.

**Mc Gettrick:**

There is now a less restrictive political system in the Czech Republic, since the velvet revolution in 1989. Has it made any significant change in their work?



**Robinson:**

It's not as yet made any significant change in their work, we're still dealing with the generation that Libenský, Cigler, people like that, trained. So, when you go to Czechoslovakia now, you still see the same sort of glass being made, the problem is, that it doesn't have the state encouragement.

**Mc Gettrick:**

No, but they had a collaboration with the state, and with the state's designers and business people to promote their work.

**Robinson:**

Yes, but you asked whether there is a significant change in their work, I think we're going to have to wait to see that. The artist is going to have to find cheaper ways of doing things, and I think this is where the change is going to come. Are we going to see, Czechs moving more and more into things like surface decoration, engraving, enamelling, where they do have enormous traditional skills?' are we going to see Czechs working more and more with sheet glass, which are cheaper and are already there, because I think that the casting of glass, such as we've see Libenský and Ivan Mares do, is in danger.

**Mc Gettrick:**

Does that mean that, without the facilities to make that big glass, and without the support for big commissions, maybe, some loss of support, some of the work is becoming now, more plinth based, smaller scale, more saleable and cheaper?

**Robinson:** Libensky's glass is very cheap, still, and a very good piece of Libensky glass, will cost, what, £20,000, now you think that a good Dale Chihuly will cost?

**Mc Gettrick:** A similar price?

**Robinson:** No, for a Dale Chihuly you can pay up to \$80,000, to \$800,000.

**Mc Gettrick:** For one of his chandeliers down in Waterford, I asked a dealer how much would it sell for, he said a quarter of a million pounds.

**Robinson:** A quarter of a million pounds, sterling, now, that Dale Chihuly is nothing compared to Stanslav Libensky, the thing is, can Stanislav Libensky sell his work at that sort of price. A lot of Americans are buying it, and have been doing so over the years, knowing that it is going to go up in value, but there's going to come a time when it's going to cost Stanislav himself, maybe £10,000 to make a piece, then he's going to have to move it.

**Mc Gettrick:** What sort of a market is his work for now, that he's lost some of the state support and has gone more or less international?

**Robinson:** The last piece that I came across was a big piece that he made for an airport in Japan, it was twenty - seven



foot long, now he's going to need a commission to do that, isn't he?, you're talking about a piece that took ten Czechs to put up, in a Japanese airport.

**Mc Gettrick:**

Did he make it there or over in Czechoslovakia?

**Robinson:**

No he made it in Czechoslovakia, Stanislav had to pay a fellow called Peter Chulka to be incharge of a team, that took this glass from Czechoslovakia to Japan, to put up in this airport. There was about a weeks work putting it up. Now, who pays for that? if Stanislav is having to pay for that, you can see what's happened is that he is now faced with western prices.

**Mc Gettrick:**

And western systems as well, like Dale Chihuly, has mastered that corporate selling, to hotels and things like that, he is able to order an organise people and facilities and skills to actually get something up.

**Robinson:**

Dale chihuly brought fifty people to Ireland, didn't he?

**Mc Gettrick:**

Yes.

**Robinson:**

Fifty people included in which were two film crews.

**Mc Gettrick:**

And then local workers.

**Robinson:**

Yes, now you think of the cost of doing all that, he

has to sell his stuff for \$800,000, a go , to pay for all that.

**Mc Gettrick:**

And the guys blowing everyday and all that.

**Robinson:**

He's running a factory, Dale Chihuly is the head of a factory, isn't he, he's Dale Chihuly Inc., basically, isn't he?

**Mc Gettrick:**

Does Libensky have a similar sort of brand name?

**Robinson:**

No Libensky has a studio in <sup>Libertok</sup> ~~Jablonec~~, he's got a house, studio, factory there, That's where he makes most of his stuff, that's what you might call the domestic size stuff that goes up to a metre in any one dimension. If he is going to make a wall piece 27 foot long, 7 foot high, then he's need a factory to do that, that comes by commission, that's a collaboration job, so, but what he's not into is a Dale Chihuly, wham, wham, wham, you know, there's none of that.

**Mc Gettrick:**

He is still pushing his knowledge and his work.

**Robinson:**

He's fortunately in the position where he doesn't have to, other people are there to push it for him, he's coming up on eighty, and for him and



Brychtová to turn up in Japan, to this thing of theirs that is opening he's great, but if the week after you've got to be in Los Angeles, because he's a new one there, I mean, I think of the strains. Now. Dale Chihuly lives off that, he thrives off that, I don't think Stanislav does.

**Mc Gettrick:**

He is not into that type of lifestyle?

**Robinson:**

He'd sooner stay at home in the studio, that's where he lives, that's where he belongs, that's where he should be.

**Mc Gettrick:**

His wife Brychtová, there is a collaborative partnership. I don't have very much information other than the paste jewellery that she was making with her father.

**Robinson:**

That's basically the background, she worked with her father, make paste jewellery, went into developing various other casting techniques, she had the skills, but if you look at her work compared to Libenský's, the vision was quite small, married his vision to her skills, you see what happened. . This is the thing about art, isn't it. In our time we treat the artist as a solitary, I don't think Dale Chihuly, himself, could make

glass as good as William Morris and Richey Royal.

**Mc Gettrick:**

No.

**Robinson:**

I don't think he could make glass anyway as near as good as them.

**Mc Gettrick:**

But they couldn't make glass like he does.

**Robinson:**

Without his vision. If you look at William Morris's work, without Dale chihuly it's just .....

**Mc Gettrick:**

It's cod Dale Chihuly, you know.

**Robinson:**

Yes, it's cod Dale Chihuly, so that is the system, but you could say both of them are using the same sort of system, marrying vision to skill. But doing it in different ways.

**Mc Gettrick:**

Who buys their work?

**Robinson:**

Quite simply rich people. Now the rich people might be individuals, they may be corporations, they may be institutions like museums.

**Mc Gettrick:**

But, privately in Czechoslovakia or in Europe, or in America?

**Robinson:**

There is quite an amount actually. There is quite



an amount of the best Czech glass, been bought in Czechoslovakia you see, the thing is, communism, had to put up with the fact, that a lot of his money came from, not quite what it considered legal sources, so that there were rich people in Czechoslovakia, that shouldn't have been rich. But the state was prepared to turn a blind eye.

**Mc Gettrick:**

Let them do that so they kept going.

**Robinson:**

yes, so that some of Libensky's best glass stayed in Czechoslovakia. Now its not cheap there, look at the people who can afford to buy Dale Chihuly glass, at \$800,000.

**Mc Gettrick:**

Some very unusual people. There was this really nice piece, a chandelier. I told the man that bought it, it was really nice. He said that he bought it because it was the first one made a Waterford, does this happen with Libensky's work?

**Robinson:**

Well, one of the things that I found when I was buying from them, when it was a communist state, they would prefer that it went to a museum in Ireland, than to a private collection in America, because the American was only buying it as an investment, when I was buying it, they let me have it at a fraction of the price it was sold in America,

**Mc Gettrick:**

because they knew it would be seen and used.

Where it's going to be a public tool and not a commodity?

**Robinson:**

Yes, and it wasn't just a commodity that people were investing in. That's one, is the work less functional, function is a strange word isn't it?

**Mc Gettrick:**

Function meaning cups and things like that, I mean their work was functional as elements in buildings, or decorative elements.

**Robinson:**

Yes, I know a lady who went out one morning and bought three turners which she had known since she was a child, you know, and she couldn't afford not to buy them, what are we talking about, a million pounds, and she said that she actually needed them, at her stage in life what she needed was a million pounds on the wall which she could look at every morning, that's, you know totally functional isn't it?

**Mc Gettrick:**

There is no value on function, something might work for someone or whatever.

**Robinson:**

It doesn't matter if you're burying the thing with the dead, something like a lot of that time stuff, which the living never saw, was completely functional in its time, put that in a museum, where people can go and worship it because its



Chinese art, it's still fulfilling a function, it's the function that we bring to the piece that it didn't have before, so don't worry about the word function.

**Mc Gettrick:**

OK.

**Robinson:**

Ok.

**Mc Gettrick:**

Thanks very much.

**Robinson:**

My pleasure.

MAEVE MCILHORM

A handwritten signature or set of initials in dark ink, consisting of several loops and a final vertical stroke.