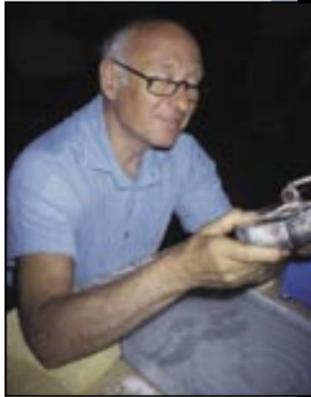
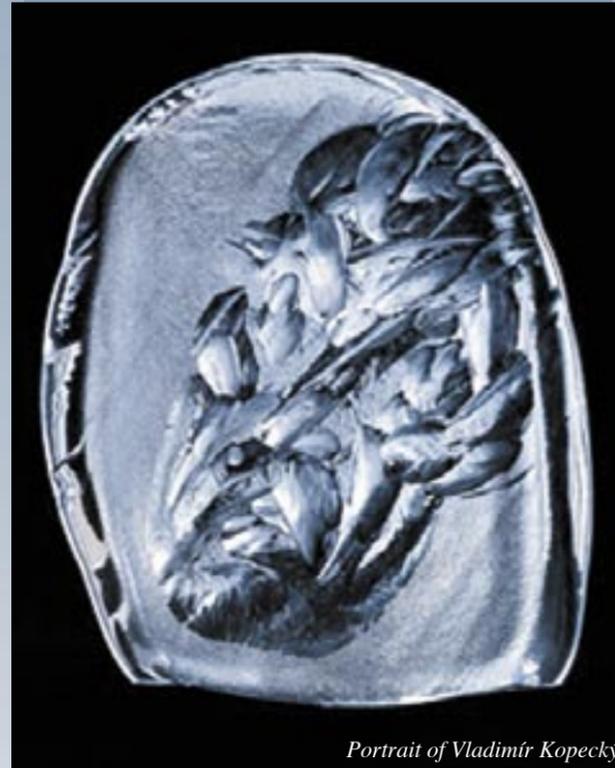


Czech Artist Jirí Hrcuba Exhibition at The Corning Museum of Glass

Text and Photos courtesy of the Staff of The Corning Museum of Glass



Portrait of Václav Havel



Portrait of Vladimír Kopecký



Portrait of Dominik Biemann

The Corning Museum of Glass will display engraved glass portraits by Czech artist Jirí Hrcuba as the next installation in its Masters of Studio Glass series. Hrcuba is known for his glass profiles, which feature spare sculptural cuts and subtle optical effects. The exhibit, which is curated by Tina Oldknow, curator of modern glass at The Corning Museum of Glass, opened on March 27, 2010, and will continue through October 31, 2010. Admission to the exhibition is included in the cost of admission to the Museum.

For this focus exhibition, the artist chose to pare down and simplify this presentation of his work to three objects, all glass profiles, which he believes reveal the essence, or soul, of his work. The objects were selected from the Museum's collection of Hrcuba's work, which includes fifteen examples of engraved vases and portraits in glass dating from 1958 to 2009 and twelve early design drawings dating from 1958 to 1961.

Featured Art

The objects Hrcuba selected include the double portraits of Václav Havel and Vladimír Kopecký that he created in 1995 for the Corning Museum's Rakow Commission, a special commission that is awarded annually to one artist. In this commission piece, Václav Havel (b. 1936), the prominent Czech playwright, poet, and political dissident, is portrayed with minimal, spare cuts. After the fall of communism in 1989, Havel was president of Czechoslovakia (1989–1992) and then the Czech Republic (1993–2003) during its important first decade of independence.

The other personality that Hrcuba commemorates in the Rakow Commission is respected Czech artist Vladimír Kopecký (b. 1931). An innovator and an accomplished painter and sculptor in glass and mixed media, Kopecký represents freedom in art and in glass for Hrcuba, who depicts the artist with a mass of energetic cuts.

The third object in the exhibition is a portrait that Hrcuba made in 2009 while he was teaching in Corning at the Museum's glassmaking school, The Studio. It depicts a personality famous in glass history, the Bohemian engraver Dominik Biemann (1800–1858). In his engraved portraits, Biemann dispensed with elaborate decorative borders and other motifs characteristic of the period, preferring to focus on his finely executed and precisely detailed profiles. Hrcuba's portrait of Biemann is, in Hrcuba's words, "my latest version of Dominik Biemann, with whom I have an eternal dialogue."

Portrait of the Artist

Hrcuba was born in 1928 in Harrachov (Nový Svět), in what is now the Czech Republic. He learned engraving as an apprentice at the Harrachov glassworks (1942–1945), and then he continued his training at the Specialized School of Glassmaking in Nový Bor (1945–1948). From 1961 to 1971, he taught at the Academy, and he also taught at the Royal College of Art in London (1965–1966). In 1971, Hrcuba was removed from his teaching position and held as a political prisoner for designing a medal that openly criticized the 1968 invasion of Prague by Soviet troops. Although he chose to pursue a career as an independent artist after 1971, he did not stop teaching and was reinstated at the Academy of Applied Arts in 1990 as head of the metal, jewelry, and glyptic department. He became a chancellor of the Academy in 1991 and stayed there until 1994, when he resumed his full-time artistic career.

Hrcuba sees himself as an innovator but also a guardian of tradition, which is a perfect description of his approach to his art. "All of my ancestors worked with glass. [In my work] I show the relationship between prehistoric carving and contemporary art. We are the link between the past and the future."

Additional Offerings from Corning

The Hrcuba exhibition is just one of a multitude of offerings provided by The Corning Museum of Glass, which is home to the world's most comprehensive collection of glass. Spanning the globe and encompassing more than 3,500 years of human ingenuity, the collection includes masterpieces from ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome; the great civilizations of Islam, Asia, Europe, and the Americas; and the range of artistic movements beginning in the late nineteenth century and extending to the present day. Interactive exhibits tell the story of life-changing historic advancements and contemporary innovations in glass technology.

Live glassblowing demonstrations (offered at the Museum, on the road in the United States and abroad, and at sea on Celebrity Cruises) bring the material to life for audiences of all ages. Daily "Make Your Own Glass" experiences at the Museum enable visitors to create their own work in a state-of-the-art hot glassmaking studio. The Museum's campus also includes The Studio, a year-round glassmaking school, and the Rakow Research Library, the world's foremost archive and reference collection on the history of glassmaking. A center for scholarship, the Museum also publishes glass-focused periodicals, books, and exhibition catalogs.

Located in the heart of the Finger Lakes Wine Country of New York State, the Museum is open daily, year-round. Kids and teens, nineteen and under, receive free admission. The Corning Museum of Glass is conveniently located directly off I-86/Route 17, midway between Niagara Falls and New York City.

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Visit www.cmog.org to find out more about the exhibitions and resources that are available at The Corning Museum of Glass.

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