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Oral history interview with Paul Stankard, 2006 June 9-August 20

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Paul Stankard on June 9 and August 20, 2006. The interview took place at Heller Gallery in New York, New York and was conducted by Doug Heller for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America.

Paul Stankard and Doug Heller have reviewed the transcript and have made corrections and emendations. The reader should bear in mind that he or she is reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

DOUG HELLER: This is Doug Heller interviewing Paul Stankard on June 9, 2006. We're sitting in my living room at 420 West 14th Street, which is above the gallery, Heller Gallery, where we represent Paul's work, and this interview is being conducted for the Archives of American Art, the Smithsonian Institution, and this is disc one.

So, Paul, you and I have known each other for quite a long time, and we'll use the questions here as an outline, but, of course, I think it's important that you feel free to address issues that you feel are important in addition to what the questions may be.

PAUL STANKARD: Sure.

MR. HELLER: The first question is when and where were you born?

MR. STANKARD: Well, first, Doug, I'd like to say thank you for hosting me and interviewing me for the museum. It sounds pretty exciting.

I was born in Attleboro, Massachusetts, April 7, 1943, and had a happy childhood. We lived in a rural setting among dairy farms. It was nice growing up in the country.

MR. HELLER: Paul, do you come from a large family?

MR. STANKARD: I'm the second oldest of nine children. My dad was a chemist. My father's claim to fame was that he was the first Stankard with a college education. This was significant because in the 1930s few people graduated from college.

My family came from Ireland in the 1840s, and they were masons. My grandfather had a large construction company in Waltham, Massachusetts, and during its heyday employed 100 people. My dad worked summers for him, and went off to college. It was interesting, as I come from an Irish Catholic background. After college, my dad became a chemist and achieved a respectable level of professional stature.

MR. HELLER: Now, when you say masons, you mean stoneworkers?

MR. STANKARD: Stoneworkers.

MR. HELLER: Right.

MR. STANKARD: Bricklayers.

MR. HELLER: Craftsmen who work with their hands?

MR. STANKARD: Right. Yes. It's interesting because my mother's father, Philip McGivney, whom I loved dearly, was an engraver, and he lived to be 87. I used to go into his room and watch him draw art nouveau designs. He was a wonderfully creative person.

MR. HELLER: So was this fine art engraving?

MR. STANKARD: No, it was commercial.

MR. HELLER: Illustration?

MR. STANKARD: No, he engraved precious metals. He would engrave initials on spoons, utensils. He would personalize mirrors. North Attleboro was the jewelry and silver-plating capital of the country. The jewelry business from Providence, Rhode Island, splashed over into North Attleboro, where he lived and worked. There

were a lot of silver-plating companies that my grandfather did contract work for.

MR. HELLER: Personalized things?

MR. STANKARD: Yes, custom decorations, initials, et cetera.

MR. HELLER: Right. Now, your father going to college was a big departure then. What motivated that?

MR. STANKARD: My grandfather on my father's side was very successful and very much wanted his son to be educated. I think the family was delighted to think one of the children would go to college, so my father went to Holy Cross, which is a good school in Worcester, Massachusetts.

MR. HELLER: So did your father going to college then shape his interests and hopes for all of his children, your siblings?

MR. STANKARD: Actually, yes. That's a very good question, Doug, because education was promoted in a very, very enthusiastic way in our household. We knew we were all expected to be educated. My mother graduated from Elmira College in Elmira, New York. It's interesting because at the time, in the 1920s, Elmira was a Presbyterian women's college. My mother was 15 when she went off to college. Her mother thought that Elmira College in New York State would be off the beaten track and a safe place for her 15-year-old daughter. Education played a strong role in our family. We were raised to educate ourselves.

MR. HELLER: So your early education then was comprised of what?

MR. STANKARD: Well, I had a challenge. I had undiagnosed dyslexia. As a consequence, I was put into the slow classes. There was something pretty special about being in the slow classes, at least in high school, because nobody expected much from me. [Laughs.]

MR. HELLER: So was that helpful or was that harmful to you?

MR. STANKARD: It allowed me to sit there and daydream all day. I was totally bored out of my mind with school. I think of my early education, or my high school education, and with graduating from high school the last in my class without being able to read, with horror, and I think, what was going on? [Laughs.]

MR. HELLER: So did you, literally, not have the ability to read?

MR. STANKARD: Yes, I literally couldn't read.

MR. HELLER: By the time you graduated high school?

MR. STANKARD: I was a very poor reader, and it wasn't until I enrolled at the Salem Vocational Technical School [NJ] where I realized for the first time in my life that by not being able to read, I may not be able to be involved in glass and to learn this craft.

I told my brother Martin, who was very smart and was attending the University of Pennsylvania [Philadelphia, PA] at the time - I said, "I think my not being able to read is going to prevent me from being a glassblower." I was enrolled in the scientific glassblowing program at Salem. Martin said, well, when you read, don't go to the next paragraph until you've understood what you've read in the previous paragraph. So that actually resonated in my mind to the point where I would take hours to do my assignments, but I would read each sentence as it came along and understood each sentence and understood the paragraph, and then moved on.

MR. HELLER: Well, you just took a rather big jump, you know. We were talking about your primary school education.

MR. STANKARD: Right.

MR. HELLER: And you mentioned the fact that by the time you graduated high school, you didn't feel that you could read adequately, but what kind of an impact did that have on you during your school years?

MR. STANKARD: Well, I was always a popular, outgoing kid - I was an athlete. I was a very good runner. I always enjoyed and excelled in long distance track. I had friends, and was entrepreneurial as a youngster. I had a paper route and I was always actively involved in earning money.

So, interestingly enough, Doug, my grammar school from K through eight - I failed the third grade, and they wanted to keep me back in the fifth grade, but my parents said no. I had to go to summer school. But when you're one of 44 kids in a parochial school class, if you behave yourself, you could be anonymous. You can almost be invisible. So, I was a poor student but a happy kid.

MR. HELLER: So this was a parochial school?

MR. STANKARD: I went to the parochial school in North Attleboro.

MR. HELLER: Private, church school?

MR. STANKARD: A Catholic - grammar school. Half the kids in town went to the Catholic schools and the other half went to the public school. And in the Catholic schools it was not uncommon for me to have 45 kids in my class and one nun.

MR. HELLER: So this was the time before dyslexia was recognized? Did you suffer from them, feeling perhaps that you were just lazy or avoiding -

MR. STANKARD: Well, my parents were told, Paul is a daydreamer; Paul is lazy, you know. They didn't identify dyslexia until around 1972.

MR. HELLER: And did your parents accept that you were just lazy or -

MR. STANKARD: Well, my mother tutored me in reading. When I think of my mother, every night, making me read, it was like hell. I found it very uncomfortable having to sit there for a half-hour or 20 minutes. Maybe it was five minutes, I don't know, but it seemed like hours. But when you're being made to learn to read where you're stumbling along - they were very concerned about my poor performance in school. And I think during my high school years, to go from grammar school into high school, my mother, truth be told, did most of my homework. [Laughs.] She was so, you know, so involved in my performance and making sure that I would do well.

MR. HELLER: So there was work to turn in to the school?

MR. STANKARD: Yes, I think that it's interesting that I did poorly in school, academically.

MR. HELLER: Academically.

MR. STANKARD: Academically.

MR. HELLER: Socially, you did fine.

MR. STANKARD: Fine. I was entrepreneurial outside of school. But what I loved to do, Doug - I loved making things. From high school, my most pleasant memories were in machine shop, woodshop, and metal shop.

MR. HELLER: Well, that's where you could express yourself.

MR. STANKARD: So I loved it. I mean, during my high school years, I just couldn't wait to get to the woodshop, to take my woodshop class. And I can remember in high school in North Attleboro, if you got a B or better in your classes, you were excused from the final exam. [Laughs.] I didn't have to take the final exams in my shop courses. So I'd be hanging outside. I remember - it's funny I'm telling you this - hanging out with the smart kids. Someone asked me, where do you have to be, Stankard? I don't have to take my exams. [Laughs.]

MR. HELLER: So do you think you channeled more energy towards the shop courses because the school was so frustrating academically?

MR. STANKARD: Absolutely. I think that I just love making things. I love working with my hands. My mother would say, Paul is good with his hands and he loves to make things. Paul is going to be a great carpenter, or Paul is going to be a great, whatever, but always with hand work.

MR. HELLER: So that was encouraged?

MR. STANKARD: That was - I knew that I would work with my hands. I knew that. And I was very comfortable with that idea. I also wanted to be working for myself. I wanted to be my own boss. So when I went to technical school, one of the things that I worked hard to do was master my craft. I worked very hard to meet their academic standards, and I was put on probation. I think I've shared plenty of information about my struggle in school, but one of the things that I loved about glass was believing that, at some point, I would be able to do it on my own, and that was very interesting to me.

MR. HELLER: Well, to jump back a little bit, how did you find your way to glass, specifically?

MR. STANKARD: I graduated from high school. My father saw a scientific glassblowing course being offered at Salem County Vocational Technical School in South Jersey. This was the pre-runner to the community colleges. So they had a two-year technical school, post-high school, that I enrolled into the scientific glass, and I loved it.

The fact that I melted glass and worked with my hands - you know, there was something a little risky about melting glass in the flames and making things.

MR. HELLER: Did you contemplate working in any other materials, or once you saw glass -

MR. STANKARD: Well, I felt fortunate to have found glass -

MR. HELLER: - it captivated you?

MR. STANKARD: Yes. There was something very challenging about the material, glass. It requires a commitment to master the craft, and as you're mastering a craft, you become aware of more complex issues and efforts. I saw these young people when I first went to the school and got excited about working in glass. I discovered that as soon as I felt comfortable with a technique, it leads to a more difficult technique that would be more interesting.

MR. HELLER: But you can see, then, the experience that you, yourself, had.

MR. STANKARD: Exactly. Yeah.

MR. HELLER: Did you feel you had something to prove to other people, or just you found it exciting, yourself, to work, or a combination of the two?

MR. STANKARD: I'm not a psychiatrist, but I think that I've had a pretty large and strange dose of low self-esteem, and I think that my poor performance in academia is responsible for the low self-esteem. And the idea that I could do something well - you know, by working in glass, was wonderful. I enjoyed being good at it, and the respect that being good at it garnished - it was very satisfying.

MR. HELLER: Now, this was a technical school.

MR. STANKARD: Yes.

MR. HELLER: What sort of glass were you learning to create?

MR. STANKARD: I was making laboratory apparatuses, glass instruments, for the petrochemical field, organic chemistry, condensers, flasks, vacuum systems. From the '50s to the '90s, glass instruments were a very important part of research. Glass instruments allow the research scientists to discover things. But computers pretty much changed all of that.

MR. HELLER: So that is no longer currently important.

MR. STANKARD: It's all disappearing.

MR. HELLER: Well, that's very interesting.

MR. STANKARD: I mean, it's fascinating how they're doing micro experiments and then extrapolating the results in a computer and projecting what they need to know. Like, what required several gallons of material, is now done on a micro scale.

MR. HELLER: Using what they call computer models.

MR. STANKARD: Exactly.

MR. HELLER: Right. So since what you were learning was about industry and research, I assume that you had to be very precise; the skills you developed had to be very demanding ones.

MR. STANKARD: They were. It required a discipline that I have. I discovered the discipline to really focus on the task, to master the technique and do it well. I would get bored. I would get very bored by the task if I had to repeat it more than a dozen times. But I was in industry. I was good at what I did and I was paid well. I think 90 percent of my compensation was to compensate me for the boredom that I was experiencing. I mean, it's amazing how I was working in industry and being paid well and asked to work overtime - I could do things that were needed.

MR. HELLER: Now -

MR. STANKARD: It's funny how, you say, well, I'm so bored with this job, but the pay is so attractive that you do it.

MR. HELLER: Now, you've obviously taken a different route to finding yourself as an artist than people who have

gone to university art programs, gone through the standard university cycle. You have come from the technical world. And it was also - it must have been a very big jump to start working artistically. How did that happen?

MR. STANKARD: I was working in industry, and always had a creative need. I've had the need to be creative all my life. And when I was a kid, I would make things; I was always making things out of wood. When I was in industry, there were times when I would entertain myself. I would make flowers or I would make animals, just to relieve the boredom, you know. I was supposed to be working on this scientific glass apparatus, and if I had an opportunity to just play a little bit, during lunch time, or if things were a little slow, I would play with the glass, and I enjoyed that.

MR. HELLER: And what sorts of things, objects, would you make?

MR. STANKARD: There were a few scientific glassblowers. A fellow named Charles Kaziun from Brockton, Massachusetts, left scientific glassblowing to make paperweights. He was interpreting French paperweights of the mid-1800s using the flameworking process.

I heard on occasion there was a lot of flameworking or lampworking, by scientific glassblowers who were very secretive, and Kaziun was making paperweights. It was a secret, supposedly.

That intrigued me, the idea that here are flowers being encapsulated in glass and it was a secret. So I started experimenting to mimic what Kaziun was doing, and there was another scientific glassblower named Francis Whittemore. The paperweight collecting market was growing, and there were three or four contemporary paperweight makers that came from the scientific glassblowing tradition. I was aware of these people and started experimenting, and really found something that felt wonderfully satisfying to me.

MR. HELLER: Now, when you started experimenting with paperweights and making flowers, did anyone encourage you? Did anyone act as a mentor? Or were you simply inspired by knowing about these other people?

MR. STANKARD: I was inspired by knowing that this work had been done by my contemporaries, people older than me, but came from the same background that I had - a scientific glassblowing background. And the idea that if they could do it, then I could, too - you know, in a strange way, Doug, it wasn't about being an artist working in glass; it was more about if they can do it, why can't I do it? And what they're doing seems to be so much more interesting than what I was doing.

So I think that was the genesis of my experimenting. And then there was so much misinformation about paperweights, about the floral paperweights. The French paperweights were being sold for a premium in America and there were antique dealers that specialized in paperweights. The South Jersey glass tradition reveres the Millville Rose [an open-rose design created by scientific glassblowers in their spare time] as the crown jewel of that glass tradition. So South Jersey paperweights and the interest of the South Jersey glass tradition was close to me. I was commuting to Philadelphia, not too far away from the people who were interested in paperweights.

MR. HELLER: And at this time, Paul, were you married; did you have a family?

MR. STANKARD: I was married. I married young. Pat and I were married in 1964. I was 21. We have five children. When I left industry in 1972 to devote full-time to paperweights, I had been making paperweights and working at home, part-time, for about three years.

MR. HELLER: In addition to your regular job?

MR. STANKARD: In addition to the regular job.

MR. HELLER: Scientific work.

MR. STANKARD: I started making giftware at home - I was making small animals that were selling in gift shops, and it was very successful. I earned extra money but really didn't like it - there was no artistic challenge, didn't feel that it had a life - it didn't hold my interest. So when I got involved with paperweights, Doug, in the fall of 1969, there were so many technical problems - [laughs] - to solve, I didn't have - I mean, I was never bored. I think that's what it was.

MR. HELLER: Now, these people who inspired you, Kaziun and Whittemore, did you ever have the opportunity to meet them?

MR. STANKARD: I knew them -

MR. HELLER: Did they encourage you or discourage you?

MR. STANKARD: Well, I think they were secretive - it was a craft mentality. It wasn't as celebratory as the glass art world, the studio glass world; paperweight making was always secretive in the early days, but I changed that. I'm sure I was secretive when I started to experience success with the paperweights. I was invited out to the Bergstrom-Mahler Museum in Neenah, Wisconsin, where I met [Harvey] Littleton and [Dominic] Labino and a few of the other artists and really thought they were having a hell of a lot more fun than I was having.

MR. HELLER: Now, who invited you to that museum? And what was the focus of that museum?

MR. STANKARD: The focus was a contemporary glass exhibit. The Bergstrom-Mahler Museum has one of the leading paperweight collections in the country, in the world, on display. So this is the Mecca for paperweights. They were interested in glass paperweights, and they considered paperweights to be contemporary glass, or contemporary paperweights to be contemporary glass. So they had a contemporary glass exhibit featuring Littleton, Labino, and a few others, and I was included in that exhibit.

MR. HELLER: Do you recall what year that was?

MR. STANKARD: I think that was in '77. I was very excited by the experience. I was excited to have a chance to talk to Littleton. I can't remember how many artists there were, but I knew about the studio glass movement in the '60s; I knew what was going on. I was very interested in it. I was interested in being creative in glass, and I was interested in anything that evidenced creativity. I would go to crafts shows and talk to people. I followed this whole craft revival from the '60s.

And so when I was out in Neenah, Wisconsin, I remember being so impressed with the studio glass artists' attitudes that I started to really think about, where do I want to be? Where do I want to fit in? And I started to associate more with the studio glass experience.

MR. HELLER: Now, you've made the point already at least twice that the paperweight makers and the paperweight world was very secretive. What kind of an attitude did you find when you met people like Harvey Littleton and Dominic Labino?

MR. STANKARD: I felt there was a lot more freedom, Doug, but in truth, coming from a technical background, coming from industry, if you were a glassblower or a scientific glassblower with a secret and people wanted to know how you do things, and you chose to keep that a secret, that was a mark of stature for you.

MR. HELLER: You had something that people wanted.

MR. STANKARD: Exactly. You were the big man on campus. You had prized techniques. You had knowledge of techniques and skills that people wanted to know how to do but couldn't figure it out. And when I met the studio glass artists - [laughs] - they didn't have any secrets. In truth, they didn't have anything that I felt puzzled over, that glass people couldn't figure out. [Laughs.]

MR. HELLER: So what you're saying is that, technically, what they were doing didn't intrigue you?

MR. STANKARD: Right.

MR. HELLER: But you were still attracted to that aspect of the glass world. What did interest you?

MR. STANKARD: I was attracted to the freedom.

MR. HELLER: Freedom of expression.

MR. STANKARD: Yes, and their sense of curiosity. Scientific glassblowing was about tolerances [allowable deviations from a standard], and the artist trained in art schools didn't have tolerances. I came from industry, where tolerance actually ruled your work; it defined what you did and how well you did it. I think that plus or minus two millimeters can get to be pretty uncomfortable. I think the freedom of studio glass is to set your own tolerances. You define your own parameters. That was kind of nice.

MR. HELLER: In fact, Harvey Littleton, one of his famous statements was technique is cheap, which I think was meant to say that those sorts of focuses on the technical, measurable tolerances are less important than the grand, expressive mode.

MR. STANKARD: Exactly.

MR. HELLER: So did you find that liberating or a little intimidating or -?

MR. STANKARD: I found the studio glass attitudes liberating and exciting, and I wanted to embrace them. I left industry in '72 to devote full-time to my floral paperweights. And with a peculiar need to do it well. From the

near beginning, my work attracted attention in the paperweight world. So by '76, '77, I was doing very well, and actually, you invited me to have a show in '78 at your gallery, and it sold out.

MR. HELLER: What is it about -

MR. STANKARD: So what I wanted to say is that I was very successful as a paperweight maker, but really felt that there were more poetic challenges and that my work could be more successful, creatively.

MR. HELLER: I want to back up a little bit because you made a big jump for somebody with five children.

MR. STANKARD: Right.

MR. HELLER: Who was at one point working full-time in industry and then forced to make small things to sell, to augment your income.

MR. STANKARD: Right.

MR. HELLER: What gave you the ability and the incentive to quit one profession and move into an entirely new arena? You didn't win the lottery, did you?

MR. STANKARD: It was very gutsy. I was so uncomfortable. I really wanted very much to be on the creative side. And weekends, Pat and I would go to museums; we'd go to the craft shows. There was a wonderful craft fair at Head House Square, Philadelphia, and on weekends in the summertime, mostly Sundays, we would go. I remember being very impressed with Don Gonzalez, who was selling his goblets there in the '60s. I just sought out anything that was craft, contemporary craft, whether it would be wood, clay, glass, metal. I wanted to be close to that community. And as I worked to be creative in glass, I connected with other creative people in the craft community.

MR. HELLER: Now, you and your wife, Patricia, have been together for a long time.

MR. STANKARD: Forty-three years.

MR. HELLER: Forty-three years you've been married?

MR. STANKARD: Yes.

MR. HELLER: That's great. That's really impressive. But backing up again, you know, this idea of taking this step with five relatively young children, was she terrified by this? Supportive of it?

MR. STANKARD: She supported me. I think, truth be told, Doug, I was neurotic. I was suffering from acute anxiety. I hated my job. So I think that everything outwardly looked perfect. Here's Stankard, he has a good career. He's paid well. He's in research. He's got a good job in research. But I really felt stymied. I hated my job. I was so uncomfortable and so anxiety-ridden, and it got so uncomfortable that I just made the break. And once I started working at home, it was difficult but wonderfully satisfying. About a year into it, I damn near failed, couldn't support my family, and I was thinking about going back to work in industry.

MR. HELLER: At that same time, did you think what you were creating was failing? Or was it simply not earning enough money?

MR. STANKARD: I wasn't earning enough money. I knew that my work was evolving. My work was getting better and I was solving problems. The work was gaining. I was growing my audience for the work, for my floral paperweights. I met a dealer named Reese Palley in Atlantic City, who was very successful, selling porcelain. And he was introducing my work to porcelain collectors, among others, and the work was selling very well. I wasn't able to make much money because I was rejecting about 25 percent of my work. But slowly, Doug, I just started to become more successful, and the paperweights were becoming more interesting, and more ambitious. I started to have fewer failures.

MR. HELLER: So, Paul, your work has always been focused on nature.

MR. STANKARD: Yes.

MR. HELLER: How did you choose that subject matter?

MR. STANKARD: I think it came naturally. I think my childhood memories, picking flowers, picking blueberries, a childhood fascination with nature, and doing something well, in glass, like making a flower. I'm self-taught. It sounds a little parochial, but I've educated myself. My curiosity about flowers and nature, and feeling that the work is evolving, that I was discovering new ways to interpret nature, and that my audience appreciated what I

call breakthroughs. As the work developed, as I developed new techniques, the work slowly changed and my audience supported the changes.

So, I don't know, Doug. I don't know how it is that I've spent 40 years of my life focused on interpreting nature in glass? It's a little strange. [Laughs.]

MR. HELLER: Well, I don't know if I'd call it strange, but it's certainly been rewarding, not just for you, but for a very large audience and people who appreciate your work.

Now, how did you go about, once you decided you were going to focus professionally on creative work, finding an outlet for it? You mentioned Reese Paley.

MR. STANKARD: Well, right. I wasn't committed to flowers. The first two or three years making paperweights part-time, I would make animals and flowers - well, animals and flowers, birds. I remember encapsulating an elephant in a paperweight once. I was pretty proud of it. But I just had more interest in flowers. And I loved the idea of incorporating colors into the designs. So I slowly edited the designs, seeking what I was most interested in - I was finding a voice.

MR. HELLER: Once you found your voice - and you obviously found one that has a deep satisfaction for you - how did you find the conduit to the public? How did you find Reese Paley?

MR. STANKARD: I worked hard. I would show my work to antique dealers who carried paperweights, and, hopefully, they would sell my work.

MR. HELLER: So you'd knock on doors?

MR. STANKARD: I knocked on doors. I didn't have - the galleries, they weren't interested. First of all, there were only a few galleries, your gallery. What was the name, Contemporary -

MR. HELLER: Contemporary Art Glass Gallery.

MR. STANKARD: Contemporary Art Glass Gallery. There were very few galleries. There were a few crafts galleries, and then there were antique dealers that carried French paperweights.

MR. HELLER: Yes. The paperweight-collecting world was highly involved and had its own structure.

MR. STANKARD: Right. I focused on that world. It's interesting, Doug, because in 1974, or around that time, I took five or six pieces to the antique center of America to show my work to a paperweight dealer named Jack Feingold, and after selling Jack my work, which was very exciting, I was walking around, and I met you. You were selling - contemporary glass.

MR. HELLER: Contemporary work.

MR. STANKARD: - contemporary work. I think there were four or five artists.

MR. HELLER: Right.

MR. STANKARD: And I was amazed. I knew Lundberg's work. I knew Peiser's.

MR. HELLER: James Lundberg, Mark Peiser -

MR. STANKARD: Roland Jahn.

MR. HELLER: Roland Jahn, John Nygren. Those were the first four.

MR. STANKARD: Yes.

MR. HELLER: Right.

MR. STANKARD: And I believed I knew these people. I knew their work; I didn't know them personally. And I can remember just being fascinated with this contemporary glass that I had discovered. It was an eye-opener. We really had to seek out an audience; there were no formulas to promote new work.

MR. HELLER: What do you mean by formulas?

MR. STANKARD: Well, today, young people have graduated from their art programs. They can go to Penland [School of Craft, Penland, NC] or Corning [Studio of the Corning Museum of Glass, Corning, NY]. They have artists-in-residence programs. They can compete as emerging artists by showing their work in exhibits.

MR. HELLER: So you mean there is more of a support system?

MR. STANKARD: Right. I think there is.

MR. HELLER: Yes. I would agree with that.

MR. STANKARD: Now the support system is in place with more people competing for the slots. And on the one hand, there is this wonderful support system, but you're competing with many more people.

MR. HELLER: So if you look back at things now and the route that your career took versus, let's say, the university crowd and what you see today, if you had a choice and you could do things over, would you do things differently?

MR. STANKARD: I'd get a B.F.A. degree in glass art. I teach at Salem Community College [Penn's Grove, NJ] and at Penland and Pilchuck [Glass School, Stanwood, WA], but as an adjunct faculty member at Salem. I tell my students it's always about the work. If you educate yourself, you become bolder and more courageous in your efforts. So, you know, what helped me support myself was having good work. And the work evolves. It's amazing, what was considered exciting in the '70s and '80s is very quiet today.

I can remember, not to go too far afield, when I first developed the environmental paperweight. I crushed up brown glass and I had placed glass flowers on the crushed glass, which looked like earth. And I was having a show at your gallery, and Mark Peiser came in, and he saw this paperweight with the earth, flowers - I was flattered that he actually got excited by it. He was curious, how did you do this? But I think that today that would be a very quiet effort.

MR. HELLER: Because people can build on what you did earlier, and today things aren't as secretive. You just mentioned that you teach.

MR. STANKARD: Yes.

MR. HELLER: Whereas you mentioned earlier that you didn't have the benefit of people who were teaching creative glassmaking.

MR. STANKARD: Right.

MR. HELLER: But you've always been somebody who can find your own way. You know, you liked these challenges. But going back to the question I put to you a couple of minutes ago, if you could do it over again, would you choose to go to a university program? Or do you think what happened to you is the right thing for you?

MR. STANKARD: If I were to do it over again, I would go to art school.

MR. HELLER: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. STANKARD: I would definitely do that.

MR. HELLER: And what do you think that might give you that you didn't get?

MR. STANKARD: I think it would have enhanced the first 15 years of my career. My work was not as informed as it could have been. I wasn't competing with the past. I think that I had to educate myself to discover that. By putting my work in a historical context, I would have been challenged in ways that hadn't occurred to me, and I think that's the value of an art education, to survey art history and to compete with the past.

MR. HELLER: What was your most rewarding educational experience then?

MR. STANKARD: Well, as a dyslexic, I found other ways to access books. I started reading with the aid of books on tape in the mid-'70s. Franklin Mint came out with a hundred of the greatest books ever written on tape. So I started to listen to books on tape, and that was wonderful. I would listen to public radio. I really wanted to be an educated person. Pat and I would take the children to museums. We went to the Philadelphia Art Museum often. I can remember in the early '70s going to see Marcel Duchamp's exhibition, a retrospective.

[Audio break.]

The Duchamp show was a little frustrating. I couldn't understand the artwork. I didn't get it, even after Pat read a few of the prominent statements about the work.

MR. HELLER: Wall texts.

MR. STANKARD: Wall texts, and I didn't get it.

MR. HELLER: Even after the explanation.

MR. STANKARD: Right. And here is a Duchamp exhibition that was in the news and considered important. The museum was fortunate to be hosting it. I was looking at hundreds of people, all very sophisticated-looking, enjoying what they were seeing, and I left that museum realizing I didn't have a clue.

MR. HELLER: Now -

MR. STANKARD: I realized that I needed to learn about art history. So that was an important moment for me. If I was going to be an artist, I had to learn about art. I wanted to be a professional artist in glass, and to do well, I knew I better learn what art was all about.

MR. HELLER: Well, even this experience speaks of a certain personality trait of yours. Many people, if they encounter a similar situation, reject it. They will go, there is nothing there, or it's stupid, or it's a fake. Your attitude was there's something there that I can't quite understand.

MR. STANKARD: Right.

MR. HELLER: And I'm going to struggle to get it.

MR. STANKARD: And that comes back to being dyslexic in school, and knowing that to learn anything was a struggle. I noticed the college-bound kids were reading Shakespeare, and you're locked out of the whole experience and not feeling good about it. I never felt stupid, interestingly enough. There were other dyslexics in the slow classes just as lively and just as energetic as I was, and we knew who the slow kids were, even though we were getting lousy grades like them. [Laughs.]

MR. HELLER: But the danger of not getting it can be that you ultimately reject it.

MR. STANKARD: I'm curious and it's a gift. Maybe it's the result of my parents preaching the value of learning. I was deficient. And I think that feeling of being deficient, or that I lacked the background to access it, made me work harder to learn. By taking that approach and working hard, I didn't want to be kept down.

MR. HELLER: Well, nowadays, there's a much greater recognition, not only of dyslexia, but the idea that there are different ways intelligence is evidenced.

MR. STANKARD: Yes. Thank God.

MR. HELLER: You found your path, mostly through your hands.

MR. STANKARD: Found my path through my hands by being creative. I educated myself by being creative, studying art history, and putting my work in a historical context. It's been rewarding and fun going to the museums, visiting galleries. One of the reasons you're sitting here interviewing me, Doug, is because I have a tremendous amount of respect for who you are and what you've accomplished and how generous you've been with people who come into your gallery. Before you really knew me and showed my work, I would visit the gallery on Madison and learn about glass art. You made your gallery an educational experience.

MR. HELLER: Thank you. I have to say that I've learned from your work, too. And it's an interesting aspect of the fact that you have this great thirst for knowledge that was frustrated, but you've later found a path to it.

MR. STANKARD: Yes, now looking back, it's a source of pride.

MR. HELLER: In that you've been extremely generous in returning it, through teaching.

MR. STANKARD: Well, you know, I think that's important. Giving back has always been very rewarding.

MR. HELLER: Now, you mentioned that you've taught at your old alma mater, or do you now teach?

MR. STANKARD: I teach at Salem.

MR. HELLER: Right. Salem Community College. Where else have you taught?

MR. STANKARD: I've taught at Penland. I brought flameworking to Penland when there was very little known about the process. From the early '80s, teaching and being exhibited in contemporary glass galleries has resulted in my work becoming well-known and respected. When I was branded as a flameworker or a lampworker, there was not a lot of information about that process. With the respect my glass has earned, I've

been invited to teach at all the major glass centers.

MR. HELLER: Could you very briefly describe what that means?

MR. STANKARD: Well, flameworking is melting glass in a flame with a bench torch. In my studio, my torches are fueled with gas and oxygen gases. Lampworking or flameworking, the same process, is melting manufacturing glass in the flame of a torch. I take manufactured colored glasses and sometimes preheat them in an oven at 1000 degrees F, take them out of the oven, and then rework it in the flame of my bench burner. I've been challenged by people in the studio glass movement over the years and have appropriated various techniques from traditional glassblowing to incorporating the process into my work.

So the heart of my process is called flameworking, but I've incorporated a glory hole and a lot of cold working into my glass. In the early '80s, I was anxious to share and promote the flameworking process to creative people with the idea that this was an alternative process to blowing.

MR. HELLER: So you went to Penland and taught?

MR. STANKARD: I shared. I brought flameworking to Penland.

MR. HELLER: Is this something you proposed to the Penland school?

MR. STANKARD: Mark Peiser called me up and said, Paul, could you come and teach flameworking at the school? And I said, I'll be happy to. I thought about it. Actually, this was a big decision for me. I had five small children. They wanted me to go for a week, and that was a long time to stay away from home and leave the kids with Pat.

And you and I both were involved with the Creative Glass Center of America in Wheaton Village [now Wheaton Arts, Millville, NJ] as founding board members. You may not remember this - I don't know why I do - but I picked you up at the bus station, and we stopped at our house before going to Wheaton in - Millville - for a CGCA meeting. Pat asked you about the benefit of teaching at Penland, and you told her that it was a very prestigious invitation - and you said it was a much respected thing to do. Penland was respected. It would be a feather in Paul's cap if he, in fact, taught at Penland. She felt better about letting me teach there. She let me go and teach.

MR. HELLER: Now, did you ever teach at Haystack [Mountain School of Crafts, Deer Isle, ME]?

MR. STANKARD: No, I was invited and I turned them down. I went and taught at Pilchuck a few times and Corning. Lino [Tagliapietra] and I opened the studio by being the first instructors at the Corning Glass Museum Studio.

MR. HELLER: Now, I know your mode of teaching in these situations has been unusual and very generous in the sense that you invite people in with related knowledge and skills, myself included -

MR. STANKARD: Right.

MR. HELLER: - to talk about the gallery-artist relationship, the museum people.

MR. STANKARD: When I invite people like yourself to talk to my class, I'm putting information into a larger context of the glass art world to challenge people to consider the idea behind the work.

MR. HELLER: Where did you come up with this idea?

MR. STANKARD: I know what has been important information for me. What have been important parts of my work and artistic growth is not always about process. Ultimately, it's not a vocational focus that will nourish artistic growth. It's about expressing an idea or feelings in glass.

MR. HELLER: And the experiences -

MR. STANKARD: I deal with abstract - strategies for people to consider when they're learning the process, because you have to balance the vocational needs and learning the basic skills with the creative opportunities that would make the artwork successful.

MR. HELLER: Did you find these teaching experiences productive? Rewarding? Did you learn anything from them?

MR. STANKARD: I think you learn when you teach. I enjoy people. I've taught, and people have been very kind with their praise. People have benefited from my teaching style, and I've been told many times from people that have taken my classes how much they benefited from my style.

I've learned a great deal, yes. I think interacting with other creative people - I don't posture myself as a prima donna master. I'm very hands-on, very touchy-feely. I think it's very sweet when people share their dreams with you; it's an honor. They're inviting you into their world. They share their dreams about how they could be creative in glass, and I want to guide them on a personal level.

MR. HELLER: So when you teach, first of all, you come with a great deal of technical skills -

MR. STANKARD: Yes, right.

MR. HELLER: - to teach. And I know other artists who have been professional artists who have studied with you, specifically, to learn these techniques. But what you're talking about now is the technique is secondary to the inspiration.

MR. STANKARD: Right. Concepts. When I teach, Doug, I make the paperweight. I bring all my skills to developing work and show what I do best. I teach what I do best, but I don't promote it. I don't tell my students what to do. I don't have people do exactly as I do; I just show what I do and let them relate to the demonstration from their own perspective, from their own interests. If somebody wants to mimic what I do exactly the way I do it, fine, but I don't promote that.

MR. HELLER: Do you actively discourage that?

MR. STANKARD: No, I don't. I let them do what they want to do. But what I do is I try to talk about and promote excellence. Somebody told me that I was philosophical when I teach. I'm always talking about feelings or the idea or trying to articulate in glass metaphors about life. I have no way to relate to somebody telling me that I'm less vocational and more philosophical. I'm not interested in being anything other than how I am.

I take a great deal of pride in my teaching. I've taught a lot of people, and I know that I've influenced people because they've told me how much I've influenced them. I don't take credit for people's careers. I always get a kick out of the professional educators who say, oh, she's my student, as if they were responsible for the person's success. I don't know how anybody could be responsible for somebody's success over a three-credit course, unless the student celebrates the teacher's influence.

MR. HELLER: Well, if you've put people on the right track, though, and you give them the tools -

MR. STANKARD: Okay. Well, for me, my students will have to acknowledge my contribution to their career, because I'm not going to say, I did this for that student. The students will have to say, Stankard helped me this way or that way.

MR. HELLER: Well, I think this is a good point. Why don't we take a little break now?

[Audio break.]

MR. HELLER: This is Doug Heller. I'm with Paul Stankard. Today is June 9, 2006, and we're sitting in my living room. This is the second disc in the interview that is being conducted for the Archives of American Art for the Smithsonian Institution.

Up until now, we've touched on a lot of Paul's past and gone through his education and even to the point of his teaching. Now we're going to start to speak about some other aspects of his life.

Paul, would you tell me a bit about the travels that you've made, both at home in the United States and internationally? And what kind of an impact do you think they have had on your life and your work?

MR. STANKARD: I think the traveling has been, at times, very satisfying, Doug. I was invited to exhibit my work in Singapore, which I found to be a beautiful experience. Pat was with me on this trip, but over the years, Pat's preferred to stay home. She's had her homemaking responsibilities, which she's very proud of and loves. Pat has actually given me the freedom, which is very generous of her, very courageous, to let me to take advantage of opportunities to exhibit and to teach and to travel. But being invited to Singapore, Pat agreed to go with me.

MR. HELLER: What year was this, Paul?

MR. STANKARD: This was in '95, or '96. And we were gone over 10 days - traveled around Singapore, which is a very small city-state. And I had an opportunity to meet other artists who worked with craft materials and to see exhibits of their work. Traveling has reinforced a sense of professionalism within me. When I teach - for example, going to Kent State [University, Kent, OH] - Henry Halem invited me to exhibit and demonstrate flameworking in this glass center at Kent State [Glass Studio in Michael Schwartz Center,], and I talk to the students while interacting with the professor for the benefit of the students. Often I have different attitudes than the educators, and I am happy to defend these views. I've enjoyed traveling because it's been a learning

experience for me. It's really a high-octane learning experience that has enhanced my sense of self-esteem. It's fascinating how that works.

I've been to Scotland to teach at the North Lands Glass Center [North Lands Creative Glass, Lybster, Scotland]. I was in Japan for a couple of weeks. Hiroshi Yamano invited me to teach at his glass center, Forest of Creation [Kanazu, Japan]. I was fascinated with the difference in cultures and touched by the respect that I was shown as an instructor. Here, again, traveling is a way of educating oneself in a very special and visual way. And that's worked for me. So by traveling, I've grown with artistic maturity. I'm sure it's complemented my work.

MR. HELLER: Has there been any recognizable addition or change or impact on your work? Did you come back from Japan, perhaps, and say that the way the Japanese interpret flowers was making me look at what I do anew?

MR. STANKARD: Well, yes, but it's in the abstract. It's subtle. You become aware of objects that reference the Asian respect for nature. I can't say that I've had an epiphany as a result of traveling to these studios, but I've become more committed to what I'm doing in the context of what's been done with nature themes in other cultures.

MR. HELLER: Now, the traveling you've mentioned so far has been work-related, teaching.

MR. STANKARD: Right.

MR. HELLER: Have you had the opportunity in your life to do much independent traveling?

MR. STANKARD: I have, in a peculiar way, Doug. I've surrounded my life and internalized my career and my work into a personal lifestyle. So without sounding strange, everything that I've done seems to somehow be related to what I do in the studio, and to me, that's been a joy. I've traveled to the mountains for vacation with the children and to the beach, you know. When I come to New York on vacation, I love the museums. So I've actually blended my lifestyle into opportunities for my work.

MR. HELLER: So your private life and your professional life, in a way, are kind of seamlessly one?

MR. STANKARD: Yes, in a strange way. I don't feel burdened by that or overworked.

MR. HELLER: Well, that certainly sounds more satisfying than the early years when you were in scientific glassmaking.

MR. STANKARD: You know, when I was in scientific glass, I couldn't wait for a vacation. I was just trying to get away from things, but now in my studio, I'm very comfortable, so I don't feel that I need a vacation. I never thought, I'm overworked; I'm just beat and I need a vacation. Today, my wife tells me I need vacations only because she wants to go somewhere.

Henry Halem called me a workaholic once. [Laughs.] And it took me by surprise. And I thought, well, is there anything wrong with that?

MR. HELLER: Well, I think when you love it, when you love what you're doing, you don't think in those terms of being a workaholic.

MR. STANKARD: That's true.

MR. HELLER: Now, you've mentioned, you know, how you've integrated your work and your life. I know in your studio, for example, some of your children work with you.

MR. STANKARD: Yes.

MR. HELLER: Could you describe that situation?

MR. STANKARD: That's been a joy, but a challenge. My children - Pat and I, as I said earlier, we have five children, and our youngest just graduated from Syracuse University [Syracuse, NY] on Mother's Day, and that was very, very rewarding. Billy Joel was the commencement speaker, and I was totally taken by his grace and wisdom and his communication skills, but that's another story.

My child Christine, after working for five years in the museum world said, Dad, I want to come and work for you. I said, Chris, I don't think I can afford it. She says, well, I'll work for you for nothing. I'm going to get a part-time job because I want to work in the studio and learn glass. I said, well, come along. So when Christine - [laughs] - started working for me, I was very proud and very impressed with her commitment to my vision. This can be a very selfish way to go through life, because I'm trying to do this, I'm trying to do that; me, me, me. But anyway,

Christine, when she came to work in the studio, she was very enthusiastic, dedicated, eager to learn, and I realized, this is very comfortable to have my daughter working in the studio with me.

So two years later, Katherine, the third child, graduated from the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art [Philadelphia, PA] with a master's degree in painting. She knocked around for a year and a half as a painter, and said, Dad, I want to work for you. And I said, Kathy, I don't think I can afford it. Kathy said, well, Christine is working for you, how come I can't?

I said, okay, come along. So over the course of four or five years, my three daughters are involved in the studio. Pauline Iacovino, Katherine Campbell, Christine Kressley. My son Joseph came to work for me for five years but had health problems. He is suffering from depression and he's climbing out of it. It's tough sometimes to work with my children. When his health permits it, he's working for me part-time.

MR. HELLER: So with Joseph, your son, one of your two sons working with you, that made four out of five -

MR. STANKARD: Four out of five. Christine said to Philip, are you going to come and work on the family farm? [Laughs.] Philip says, no way.

MR. HELLER: Now, what -

MR. STANKARD: The irony is, Doug, Philip, with his industrial design degree and his art and design background, would start more qualified than any of them to work with me, but he chose not to, which is fine. I never asked the children to work for me; they chose to.

MR. HELLER: Now, one works helping administrate. What do the others do?

MR. STANKARD: They are involved in material preparation, making components for me to incorporate into the designs. I used to have a personal attitude that nobody would make components for me that I couldn't make myself, because I thought that at some point I wanted to be able to know that I could do it all. But what happened as the work started to evolve and became so complex was that I couldn't physically do it all. I don't worry about that anymore. I take advantage of the talent of my assistants. They help me. I assign tasks for them to do, and then I'll take their components, the results of their labor, and then incorporate it into my design and make my glass sculpture.

At this stage of my career, I want to mentor them so that they can have their own future. So we've established Stankard Studio. Stankard Studio allows me to sit here and talk to you, Doug, and hopefully my assistants are in the studio making a paperweight under the name Stankard Studio. And they'll sign it.

MR. HELLER: Now, Paul, you use the term assistants, but at one point, you said you were willing to accept somebody contributing something that even went perhaps beyond what you have mastered yourself as a component.

MR. STANKARD: Yes, not the -

MR. HELLER: Would you ever see an effort together as a collaborative, or how do you view -

MR. STANKARD: No.

MR. HELLER: - they're working with you?

MR. STANKARD: Well, you know, never say never. I claim artistic authorship of my work; it's my vision. They are under my direction. They're not as interested in flowers as I am - [laughs] - which is the way it is. I'm not telling them what to be interested in. You know, they are under my supervision. I mean, I need assistants so they do what I tell them to do. I think if they were to have their own druthers, they would be doing other things, and that's fine.

So they'll do that under Stankard Studio. But I think that it's a fascinating situation, where I started out by myself, worked by myself for a number of years, but didn't feel that I was reaching my full potential. I started to make more creative progress with assistants - first one, and now I have three. It gives me more opportunity to do things. And I can assign tasks. So I say, look, I want you to do this test piece. So they are off doing the test piece, and I can evaluate it with the idea that somehow I'm going to incorporate it.

I feel fortunate with the assistants. I'm able to do more ambitious work. And the fact that three out of my four assistants are my children makes it special and, possibly, Doug, that if they choose to have a career in glass, they can use my career as a foundation, as a stepping-stone.

MR. HELLER: So you find having assistants is liberating and actually helps your creative process?

MR. STANKARD: Oh, absolutely. I mean, it's a plus. It's a cheerful environment to work in. A lot of the collectors are curious about who made this and who made that. I've had people say, well, what do your assistants do? And I tell them, I said, I do everything with the help of assistants. Well, they say, what do they do? What does Christine do? I say, well, I do everything with the help of assistants. I don't dissect my work in the marketplace so a collector could say, how can I calibrate - well, who made this and who made that? It's all my work, and having it dissected like that doesn't make any sense to me.

I have to tell you that there is so much enthusiasm that collectors want to be so involved in every aspect of glass. It doesn't make any sense. I mean, it's really remarkable how glass has nurtured this community, where you have artists mingling with collectors, meeting them at galleries, and some collectors want to come into the studio and work in glass with the artists. I mean, it's so goofy.

MR. HELLER: Do you find that that nourishes your work or, you know - the support of collectors?

MR. STANKARD: I find that the collectors want to know too much. I think it's strange - I bring a fine-art expectation to my work. And so when collectors want to get emotionally involved in the process, I feel that the work is less successful, because they miss the whole idea behind the work.

MR. HELLER: So you think that by focusing on the vocational aspect of it, they're missing the artistic point?

MR. STANKARD: Right, absolutely.

MR. HELLER: And the intention -

MR. STANKARD: They're focusing on the vocational technique, well, what are they buying? [Laughs] I mean, why aren't they celebrating beauty? Some collectors want to know the process; other collectors could care less. And I think, because my work is so intricate and so magical, in the sense that it's almost like an illusion, that people get very caught up in, how am I doing that? How is it that you can have your wings of a bee look so realistic? How is it that you have the flower look real? And it's very flattering, but it misses the point. If they're focusing on the stamen in the middle of the flower, I'm trying to get them to see the whole thing.

MR. HELLER: You have a bigger picture in mind.

MR. STANKARD: Right.

MR. HELLER: But I do think that your work is so highly evolved technically, and it does carry the sense of illusions so effectively, that people do want to try and dissect it -

MR. STANKARD: Yes.

MR. HELLER: - just so they can intellectually get a handle on it. However, it's so effective that even once you understand how it's done, it doesn't diminish the pleasure that it offers.

MR. STANKARD: Well, that's nice.

MR. HELLER: An important part of your work is, you know, your goal. You speak about nature there, but you're not interested, from what I know about you, in slavishly reproducing nature, but rather capturing the essence of nature.

MR. STANKARD: In the early days, my work was illustrative, focused on botanical themes. I looked at a flower and worked in the studio trying to replicate the botanical characteristics of that flower. Then I started to mature artistically and grow intellectually, with a lot of curiosity. I discovered literature, and I love the classics as well as poetry. This has challenged my work and the work has started to evolve, and I started to discover illusions through the process and new ways to be creative.

By trying to interpret a daisy true to a daisy or a mountain laurel blossom true to the mountain laurel blossom, I'm allowing the material to show me ways to be creative. By exploring what I discover with the technique, the work becomes very intelligent. A good example is the moss, where I was experimenting with crushed glass and thought it looked a little like moss, so I started pursuing that illusion and refocusing the technique to enhance this illusion.

I love the idea of interpreting delicacy and detail; to me, they're very different. Glass is a perfect material for me to interpret nature: it's not only translucent but opaque with lots of colors. It's also malleable when heated, and I am able to benefit from the glass's working characteristics. You know, Doug, I discovered by having a lot of detail in the work, it translates into delicacy - the viewer translates the detail into the flowers being delicate. Ultimately, I think it translates to being credible. So now I can bring all this botanical intelligence to the work, and people assume that it's based on real flowers, and, in fact, many of the designs are imaginary.

MR. HELLER: Now, Paul, I know, you come from a religious family. You still practice your religion, and said you're a Catholic.

MR. STANKARD: Yes, I enjoy being Catholic. [Laughs.]

MR. HELLER: Does this play a part in your work?

MR. STANKARD: I love the spiritual. There are two aspects to my faith. I'm comfortable with the Catholic tradition, but I also love the spiritual realm, which is very ethereal to me. It's a metaphysical response to things - I respect all living things. In my Catholic faith, it's more about a system of beliefs. My interest in spirituality is more poetic, celebrating the beauty of living things. I love the idea of beauty as a manifestation of good, and I love the philosophy of beauty in a spiritual way. But I love the idea that you're not supposed to talk about religion, so guess what? I don't. [Laughs.]

MR. HELLER: Well, when you say the idea that you're not supposed to talk about religion, you mean that people, in general, shy away from that?

MR. STANKARD: Yes, I think people keep their faith personal. I like to talk about spirituality as an ingredient in my art making. The spiritual - I'm having a senior moment - I like to think I'm layering spirituality over the glass to suggest a poetic reverence for nature.

MR. HELLER: Well, you say your work is infused with the spiritual, a respect for that, and hope to express that.

MR. STANKARD: Yes, that's right.

MR. HELLER: That's different than creating religious objects.

MR. STANKARD: Exactly.

MR. HELLER: Ritual objects.

MR. STANKARD: Doug, in a strange way, dedicating my creative energy to doing something well is one of the ways I bring spirituality to the material.

MR. HELLER: Well, I know that your work has been picked up by some spiritual teachers.

MR. STANKARD: Yes.

MR. HELLER: And who have used them as teaching tools.

MR. STANKARD: Well, there's a spiritual being that lives in California who has collected my work for a number of years and finds it to be very pleasing.

MR. HELLER: And I think I recall you using the phrase that "God is found in the wildflowers."

MR. STANKARD: Yes, I think the native flowers are evidence of God's majesty just as much as we human beings are. We humans have this egocentric idea that we're so significantly magnificent, but I think a redwood tree is a thousand times more complex and evolved than human beings. It's funny. I don't have my spiritual thinking cap on right now, but I love the idea that God put as much energy into creating the native flower as he did creating us humans. Nature, to me, is the ideal beauty. I love the idea that objects have ingredients, like components - they comprise beauty. Quality, to me, is about making things well, truth to the material - it's self-explained. When I incorporate these ingredients to my work, I'm giving the glass organic intelligence. These feelings find their way into my glass art under the heading of spirituality.

MR. HELLER: Now, when you say truth in your work, truth to the material, but also truth to the subject matter.

MR. STANKARD: Right.

MR. HELLER: You know, you've always talked about that. You're not slavishly reproducing flowers, but you want to -

MR. STANKARD: Express my feelings, it's a personal response to nature - to me, nature is primarily the plant kingdom.

MR. HELLER: You have used the phrase "botanical credibility."

MR. STANKARD: Yes.

MR. HELLER: Repeatedly.

MR. STANKARD: Yes, I interpret nature in a way that seems credible to me, and it may not reference the true botanical characteristics of the flower, but people accept my interpretation. It kind of satisfies people's idea of what flowers are.

MR. HELLER: Well, and speaking of references, I know that you keep a plot of land as a nature preserve, where you can go walk and study. I know that when you were studying the bees to include in your work, you had a hive -

MR. STANKARD: Yes.

MR. HELLER: - living hive right in your studio, where the bees could come and go, but you know, there they were on your work desk in front of you.

MR. STANKARD: When I look back at my childhood, I had a fascination with nature, and now as an adult, the idea that the more familiar I become with my subject matter, especially as an artist, the more the work benefits. I think that, for me, a walk in the woods at times is more important than being in the studio. I'll kid Pat by saying, I'm taking the afternoon off to do important work. I'm going to go walking in the woods. Sometimes Pat would give me a little snicker, but she certainly understands why and what I'm saying.

MR. HELLER: Do you see that as research? Inspiration?

MR. STANKARD: Yes, I see it as internalizing the mysteries of nature. I love the timelessness of the woods, and I sense that timelessness in Whitman's poetry. The poetry of Walt Whitman articulates a mystical depth of feeling about Mother Earth through poems. To me, Whitman's words on nature are very inspirational. James Joyce is another writer that articulates a depth of human emotion through his words, through the novel *Ulysses* [Paris: Shakespeare and Company, 1922], I'm trying to capture the same depth of feeling that I find in poetry, literature, and nature, and bring it to glass.

MR. HELLER: So other art forms, literature -

MR. STANKARD: Poetry.

MR. HELLER: Poetry.

MR. STANKARD: Paintings. When I think of Morris Graves's paintings, I think of his floral paintings. I first saw his artwork at the Whitney [Museum of American Art, New York, NY] in the early '80s, primarily his floral paintings. There were also a few of his bird paintings. I was overwhelmed by the beauty of his work. I sensed there was a spiritual aura hovering over his work, and I hoped that my work would have that same spiritual aura hovering over it.

MR. HELLER: Now, you know, you talk about these people as inspirations. Has your work changed in a direct way that you can see as you have opened up to certain other artists?

MR. STANKARD: That's difficult to answer. My work evolves, and I think that evolution is a result of my growing and my being informed by Whitman and Joyce and Morris Graves and Robert Graham, another person who I respect a great deal. So I'm not trying to calibrate my progress, but I do feel very strongly about these creative people who have touched my soul. I think that my response to excellence in other artists' work challenges and excites me. It would be a blessing that if I continue to discover illusions in the glass, that people would be inspired by my work as I am inspired by other artists' work.

MR. HELLER: Now, talking about walking in the woods, reading, being inspired by other artists, oftentimes I hear artists talk about playing in their studio.

MR. STANKARD: Okay.

MR. HELLER: Playing with their materials.

[Audio break, tape change.]

Is that an element in your creative process?

MR. STANKARD: This process, flameworking - I'm lucky I'm not insane. It's difficult because it's more about control, and spontaneity is hard to achieve. I think my challenge is to bring spontaneity to the process, which happens after years of mastering the craft. So by being disciplined and by being focused on techniques, there are times that I can discover ways to bring spontaneity to the work, to the process. By taking advantage of this

flameworking process, I benefit from the control that it gives me. This process is so different than glassblowing with molten glass on the end of the pipe, because my process is about certainty. If you choose to play in glassblowing, the results can be fun and spontaneous. In my process, flameworking, there is a relationship between spontaneity and laborious effort with the material. I don't know if that makes sense to you, Doug, but my process isn't too playful.

MR. HELLER: But certainly you experiment, even though you shy away from the word, "play."

MR. STANKARD: Absolutely. I don't think of my work as play. I really don't. I hear others say they're playing in the studio, but to me, it's always a challenge; it's always a struggle. Now - [laughs] - most of the time I don't like what I'm doing after I have made it. I say, oh, God, that is bad. Oh, geez, I want to change that. But it's interesting, after five years, you know, Doug, when I look at these early efforts and because I'm not emotionally involved in them, I say, oh, what a wonderful piece. Oh, God, I'm glad I made it. But when I'm in my studio developing current work, I'm so emotionally involved in trying to get it right - I use that term a lot, but I'm not sure what it means - because when I'm working on a series, nothing is ever good enough.

MR. HELLER: Yet it seems that this satisfaction you're talking about doesn't drive you away, but challenges you to work even harder.

MR. STANKARD: Yes, and I'm well aware of that. Being a perfectionist is the antithesis to being creative, being an artist.

MR. HELLER: Well -

MR. STANKARD: It's a balance; it's a yin and a yang, and sometimes I'm so pissed off because I'm not able to do what I want to do.

MR. HELLER: Well, I don't know if it's the antithesis. I think that a truly creative person is striving towards something, like, the essence of perfection, something higher than ourselves.

MR. STANKARD: Exactly.

MR. HELLER: However you would phrase it. But if you're just a technical perfectionist, yes, then you could become clinically cold. Now, I recall in the early days of Penland, when a lot of these other top people in the field wanted to study with you, one of the words that they used, and they used it in an admiring sense, they said, well, Paul is like a surgeon -

MR. STANKARD: [Laughs.]

MR. HELLER: - in what he does compared to what we do, which is blundering through the studio.

MR. STANKARD: And I think that the process lends itself to that type of control. I think that one of the reasons why I frustrate my students is because I've dedicated my creative energy to mastering a technique that is important to my work, and they may not have the same sense of commitment - it may not be their priority to master these techniques for their work. So I think the best I can do as an educator is to introduce the process to them, give them a pat on the back and be encouraging, and say, go find your path.

MR. HELLER: Well, okay, as an educator, what do you see is the place of the universities in the American craft world?

MR. STANKARD: Well, it's wonderful, the opportunities young creative people have today to go to a university and work towards a B.F.A. degree, go on for a M.F.A. They can focus on glass, wood, metal, or any other craft materials. I think it's wonderful, but it's also very hard to find your voice. It is hard to have enough courage to say, this is what I want to do and I'm going to do it.

And the benefit of academia, the benefit of a formal art education, is to expose you to art history, to expose you to a lot of different ideas or different interpretations of feeling. You are exposed to feelings that have been interpreted in art. So, hopefully, you'll be excited about aspects of art history that will draw you into yourself, which will attract you to that arena, a realm, where you can discover ways to be creative.

I lost my thought.

I tell my students that it's important for them to find their authentic interests.

MR. HELLER: Traditionally the glass world was a secretive place. And you have said the same thing was true in the paperweight community. People would covet their ideas and hold them very close.

MR. STANKARD: Right.

MR. HELLER: The university, as first started with the teaching of Harvey Littleton, immediately went in the opposite direction, sharing and being open. And the result has clearly been a vast growth, because the information has been there.

MR. STANKARD: It has been experimental - no rules.

MR. HELLER: Do you think it's led to better work?

MR. STANKARD: Not necessarily to better work, but it's opened up opportunities to be creative in ways that weren't imagined before. I think that art schools are experimental by their nature, that if you are an apprentice in a program, you don't have the economic freedom that allows you to experiment. You have to master the craft to do it well. In art school, you play for four years, and hopefully you become curious about an idea or a process that you can find ways to make it personal.

But I vote for making things. I think that it's so difficult to establish your career as an artist that, whether you apprentice to master your craft or whether you go to art school to discover something that is very meaningful to you and want to replicate it, I don't think it matters. I think if you're the real deal, you're just going to go do it.

MR. HELLER: So you don't believe that the only true artists are the ones that have degrees from universities.

MR. STANKARD: Absolutely not - I don't believe that. I believe in doing something well and that success is predicated on the work. I mean, the work has to have integrity, and if it is significant, it will survive. All of the art education won't make the work more significant.

MR. HELLER: Is there anything that you might have, sort of, as a pet peeve, let's say, in viewing the way the art schools approach teaching and training, as opposed to the way you have come up, which was a much more pragmatic and organic process?

MR. STANKARD: I think that the art schools have a certain disingenuousness in the programs and that the disingenuousness or the dishonesty is allowing students to do insignificant work, or to do minor efforts, and is allowing them to feel that this is okay, without seriously critiquing them. [Laughs] I think that there are very few artistic standards in the art schools.

MR. HELLER: Now, I've observed you teaching on a few occasions, but not for extended periods of time, and one thing I've noticed is that you're extremely supportive of the efforts that people have. Have I missed the times that you've gone up to somebody and been very critical?

MR. STANKARD: No, because I think that at a one-week or two-week workshop I don't feel that it's appropriate for me to put people on the defensive. I'm honest with people - I tell them that they have to do better and I tell them that, if you're interested in making paperweights, you at least have to do as good as or better than what's been done in the past. But I don't discourage people. I think a four-year art program has more reasons to have stricter standards than a one-week workshop. I really don't know.

Let me say, Doug, let me talk to the person who may be listening to this five-minute conversation about art schools. I just don't know. I think it's such a personal journey. Doug, you represent artists that have found their way to your gallery in the strangest of ways. There's no [one] path that people can follow to be successful as artists.

MR. HELLER: Well, the one common denominator that I've seen with people that I think are successful, and I don't mean successful in the marketplace, but it's been that they have a compelling, driving need to create, which is something that I have heard coming out of this conversation about you. Whether it was young - as a young boy before you were interested in art, but this need to express yourself, to get out there. That's the critical part for us and that's something we look for.

MR. STANKARD: Well, that's the ingredient - the driving need to be creative. As an artist, the need for perseverance, a need, earnestness, you know, making it personal, is what is needed to be successful.

MR. HELLER: I've heard some people call it a calling. They refer to it as, you need to have the calling.

MR. STANKARD: Well, I think it is. I think when you're willing to sacrifice - when you asked me how did I quit my job with children and dedicate my energies to paperweight making, I just had to do it. I was willing to try, at least for a year or two, however long I could hold out, just so that I could at least have a chance to do what I really wanted to do. And after a year I started to think I was getting better.

MR. HELLER: Happily for you and the many people that collect and appreciate your work, it has worked out very

successfully. You have a very credible body of work behind you and a good many years ahead of you as well.

Now we've been talking about the art schools. What about the publications in the field? Is this something that you turn to for inspiration?

MR. STANKARD: I enjoy being informed. I think the *American Craft* magazine and *Glass* magazine, are important. Fortunately or unfortunately, the glass community, at least speaking for myself, is very focused on glass. Glass is so broad, and the effort required to be successful with the process is so demanding, that I find myself being not as informed in other fields, clay, metal, you know, as I should be. Because I think I'm focused on glass and read the *Glass* magazine, I enjoy being informed, but I can't imagine how they would help an artist be a better artist. I'm not sure that material focus is such an important thing.

MR. HELLER: Well, the key word you used was being informed.

MR. STANKARD: Informed. Just to know what's going on. I have a sense of community, you know, the idea that there's a community of craft makers that are represented by the American Craft Council, or that UrbanGlass publishes *Glass* magazine, and you have an opportunity to stay in touch through their focus on the emerging artists and issues. I think that makes a lot of sense to me. I think that *Glass* magazine is more experimental and is more critical of what it writes than, say, the *American Craft* magazine, which to me is pretty polished.

MR. HELLER: Polished?

MR. STANKARD: Yes, I think successful in the marketplace. Not as edgy.

MR. HELLER: Do you think the critical writing in any of these magazines is helpful, useful? Insightful?

MR. STANKARD: Well, I enjoy them. I think Paul Hollister, through the '80s and I think into the '90s, was very insightful. I've complimented his writing - he made me think. I enjoyed Hollister's reviews of the glass scene and how he critiques how artists work. I enjoy a number of writers - Tina Oldknow, James Yood, Bill Warmus. Matthew Kangas doesn't interest me. I think he's a bit of a blow beam.

MR. HELLER: Have you read some of James Yood?

MR. STANKARD: Yes, James Yood, I enjoy his writing, but I think a lot of the writers are hired guns, so when they're writing, often they are commissioned for a catalogue. But when I think of Karen Chambers, I always admire her overview of exhibitions, because she is more critical.

MR. HELLER: Well, she's an artist writing about art. Oh, no, you said Karen Chambers. Excuse me, I was thinking of someone else.

MR. STANKARD: I think that when you're reading an essay in a catalogue, it's very favorable, and it almost becomes about how attractive the words can come together.

MR. HELLER: I agree with you because if someone is hired, a writer to write about Paul Stankard for his exhibition catalogue, that's not nearly the same thing as a critical assessment of your work in a magazine reviewing your exhibition.

MR. STANKARD: The Museum of Art and Design [New York, NY] in 2004 organized and exhibited a retrospective of my work. It was reviewed in the *New York Times* by Ken Johnson. And Ken Johnson opened my eyes to my work in a way that was very interesting to me. He thought my reference to Whitman was a very weak reference, which I thought was interesting. But he also put me in a magical realism category, and I had to go to a dictionary to look up magical realism. I was delighted to realize that it comes from literature, and magical realism is basically what I'm about.

I enjoyed the idea of: here is this high-powered, big, bad *New York Times* art critic reviewed the paperweights of Paul Stankard - [telephone rings].

MR. HELLER: Paul, why don't we talk a little bit about the marketplace and your exhibiting, because that obviously is what supports you as a professional artist. Even though we've touched on your teaching, most of that has been in the area of workshops, and your living is made in the commercial field of combat, in a sense. So about what time in your career did you begin exhibiting? How old were you, what years?

MR. STANKARD: Well, my first gallery exhibit was at Habatat Galleries in '77, and then the following year, the Heller Gallery. But up until '77 I had been represented by paperweight dealers, who showed and sold my work. Then in '77 I was introduced to the glass galleries and balanced my distribution between dealers and galleries

I enjoyed how Habatat and Heller Gallery would display a body of work and then advertise it in the glass or the

craft magazines with an opening. That was very exciting - it was inspirational to me. I mean, I had a chance to develop a body of work and have that body of work tell a story. It would tell a story through the complexity of the designs, and I would try to keep everything fresh.

MR. HELLER: But was there a big difference in the way, as you refer to us, as the galleries exhibited your work versus the paperweight dealers?

MR. STANKARD: The dealers were anxious to have work so they would order two or three at a time and pay for them. The galleries, it was consignment. But I realized that the galleries were presenting the work in a fine art context, where for the paperweight dealers, it was more a product. I mean, they were selling to paperweight collectors. So I was very impressed and loved the idea of having my work displayed on pedestals, as a body of work representing 20, 25 pieces, and having an opening, having the drama of an opening night. I was in my 40s when I worked to make the transition in the '80s from being represented by dealers, paperweight dealers, to being represented by galleries. I had the good fortune of being invited to show at all the major galleries. So I made that transition, which, looking back, has served me well.

MR. HELLER: Now, I know in the paperweight world, before you entered the broader arena of the studio glass community, you were not a premier star. Just about -

MR. STANKARD: Oh, my work -

MR. HELLER: - the most respected figure there.

MR. STANKARD: Yes, I was very respected. The work was sought after. The dealers had people sending them money for work they didn't have. It was a very nutty situation. I enjoyed working with the galleries, and the dealers didn't understand, because they had people waiting for my work. I enjoyed that the galleries were showing my work as fine art in a glass art context, in a studio glass context. The dealers were selling my work, but it was more about money. And that's important, but they didn't understand why I would turn down an opportunity to sell four or five pieces for cash as opposed to putting my work on consignment. But I felt that having the work in a quality, attractive environment, a serious space that suggests that this is not a product but a work of art, is what motivated me to show in the galleries.

MR. HELLER: Well, that's something that's been consistent in everything we've said in this conversation, everything I've heard you say in this conversation. It hasn't been money as the primary motivator for you.

MR. STANKARD: Right. It's always about excellence.

MR. HELLER: Excellence, and a pursuit of satisfaction on a different kind of level.

MR. STANKARD: Exactly. Yes. And I think, you know, the marketplace for contemporary craft, especially glass, has changed. It evolves as collectors become more knowledgeable. They're more discerning. I think that the glass world, and I'm sure contemporary craft world as a whole, has matured through its material focus and skilled virtuosity. What was accepted 25 years ago wouldn't even be considered today. So everybody has grown, and the artists have brought more skilled virtuosity to the work. It's fascinating how the level of connoisseurship today is far greater than it was five, 10, 20 years ago.

MR. HELLER: Well, when you talked about the evolution of the work, how would you characterize the way your own work has changed - the similarities, the differences between your early work and what you're doing today?

MR. STANKARD: I think my work has evolved as a result of the risks that I take. I'm very keen on risk-taking, pushing the limits, the forms, from a paperweight to the rectangular blocks - I call these upright rectangular blocks the Botanical series. I've introduced cold working and laminating components into a larger column, panels, and assemblages. I'm working on the spherical pieces, which I call orbs. The interesting thing is, my early work, paperweights, were a hypothetical reference to function. They can hold down paper. And I love the idea of the orbs having no function other than to be viewed.

The Botanical series, and the columns, was my wanting to break from the paperweight tradition and have that work referred to as sculpture or columns or whatever. But my columns weren't called sculptures. The marketplace tagged me as a paperweight maker and I couldn't get rid of the name "paperweight maker."

MR. HELLER: Well, I think you're somewhat trapped by the scale of your work and the fact that what you do that is more sculptural is encapsulated within something else.

MR. STANKARD: So the encapsulating technique, which references European glass paperweights, have pretty much typecast me in a sense.

MR. HELLER: But at the same time, I know, as somebody who is not an avid admirer of paperweights as a

general field, because I think so much of the work that I've seen over the years has been trite, very commercial, that your work, in spite of the format, the presentation, has always transcended being paperweights. And while you say they could have been used to hold down paper, well, any object of substance and weight can hold down paper. You've never, to my knowledge, created work of utility in mind, only aesthetics.

MR. STANKARD: Exactly. Recently, there was a collector of paintings who was introduced to my work at a spring Chicago art fair, and as he was writing out a check for $5,000, kind of laughed, saying to Bonnie Marx, I never thought I'd be buying a paperweight. He says, of course I'm not - I'm buying a work of art.

MR. HELLER: I know one aspect of your career has been a series of commissions that you've done over the years. Would you describe some of them and talk about whether you approach these differently than your main body of work?

MR. STANKARD: I've had opportunities to do special things for people, and I've been commissioned to do a collection of work as a state gift to China. That was very sweet. I've had -

MR. HELLER: Who commissioned that?

MR. STANKARD: John Moors Cabot was ambassador to Poland [1962-65]. When he would meet his counterpart to China, they met secretly and discussed diplomatic relations between the U.S.A. and China. The Polish embassy hosted the American ambassador and the Chinese ambassador, who were communicating under the radar screen. That was during the Nixon administration.

MR. HELLER: So the Polish embassy was our surrogate in a way.

MR. STANKARD: Surrogate. It's fascinating how this was unknown to the public. Henry Kissinger went to Poland to negotiate Nixon's visit to China - it was a groundbreaking visit. All the preliminary work was done in Poland. Ambassador Cabot was invited to go to China by his counterpart, who was now the premier of China. He became number one and invited Moors [Cabot] over to China. Ambassador Cabot brought eight of my pieces, along with work by Michael Glancy and Mark Peiser.

MR. HELLER: And the pieces that you made for that, did you have special considerations?

MR. STANKARD: Yes. I was interested in native flowers, wanted them to be temperate zone, and they were mostly botanicals, with a few paperweights. There was a variety of forms. Over the years, Doug, I've been invited to create commissioned work, primarily bouquets, for many special occasions.

MR. HELLER: I recall you did state flowers, or was it provinces?

MR. STANKARD: I was commissioned in a will to do work. The collector left money to the Royal Ontario Museum of Canada to commission Stankard to do the provincial floral designs.

MR. HELLER: Like the state flowers?

MR. STANKARD: Exactly. Provincial flower emblems to become part of the museum collection. On other occasions, I've had people commission me to do work to be donated to a museum in memory of their mother or a lost loved one.

MR. HELLER: Do you like commissions?

MR. STANKARD: No, I don't particularly care for commissions. What I do like, Doug, is just to do my work. I get very emotionally involved in my tasks, and I enjoy the series evolving. I don't like people saying, okay, stop everything. I want you to do daisies or something. Because when I'm commissioned, I'm generally working under supervision. I've been commissioned to do work for a very beautiful collector, Mike Belkin, a collector in Cleveland - a very, very sweet person - he commissioned me to do a body of work in the '80s, and he placed no restrictions on the commission. He said, I just want you to build a collection, build me a major collection of work, and here is money to start the project. That was so unusual and very comfortable for me. The commissioned work continued for over 20 years.

MR. HELLER: So you found that liberating.

MR. STANKARD: I found that liberating, yes. Other people -

MR. HELLER: Find it intimidating.

MR. STANKARD: People want to control what you do - most of the time I'm not interested in what they're asking me to do. But commissions are very tricky, and I'd rather do commissions that offer freedom to interpret the

occasion rather than have a lot of instructions. I'm not incorporating my work into an environment or an architectural component. So it's generally an object. If they're interested in commemorating a special event with an object, fine, but I find it uncomfortable to be told what flowers to make.

I hope this makes sense, Doug. It's about creative freedom.

MR. HELLER: Have the sources of inspiration changed for you over the years?

MR. STANKARD: Yes, I would say, yes, it's about nature, but it's also about mysteries. I love mysteries. I love the idea of the unknown, which I think gets back to the spiritual realm. I want the spiritual to be the essence of my work -

MR. HELLER: Now you're talking about mysteries of life.

MR. STANKARD: Mysteries of life is what I've been interpreting. I think of my work as timeless. In my environment, flowers are sealed in glass outside of time. In this timeless environment there are mysteries being interpreted through the work.

MR. HELLER: I've seen some of your work that seems to allude to stories.

MR. STANKARD: The work is referential, metaphors. I kiddingly tell people my work is about three things: sex, death, and God. And having my work reference sex, death, and God is about all I can do. I have a lot of work ahead of me, but I do enjoy the life cycle of nature, the mysteries of the life cycles of nature, and making the work ambiguous yet intelligent.

Early on, about 15 years ago, I started to become interested in poetry and I started to make what I called word canes. They were mosaic letters in glass that I would draw down to small components. You could read the word seeds, "fertile," "decay," on the glass cane. I would camouflage the glass canes into my designs, and with a magnifying glass you could read these symbols. I thought of these glass words as ambiguous symbols that reinforced the botanical feeling of my glass art.

MR. HELLER: In presenting your work to the public I have often likened those words to haiku, just trying to capture the essence of what your belief about nature is.

MR. STANKARD: Exactly. That's a very nice analogy.

MR. HELLER: Paul, I know that you're a great supporter of young people and young artists and their creative efforts, and you've, like many artists I've known, actually been an active collector. Has that had an impact on your work?

MR. STANKARD: I love supporting young artists. I think that, as artists, we compete. I think that I'm competitive, and I think one of the interesting aspects of the studio glass movement is knowing other artists. It's very satisfying to sense their commitment in the level of ambition that they bring to the work. In other words, when I see artists that are really pushing it and making things happen, and I feel that they're bringing a stronger commitment to their work than I've brought to mine, I think that there's a part of me that says, you know, hey, step it up, Stankard. Look at what they're doing.

MR. HELLER: So you see other good work as a challenge?

MR. STANKARD: I do, exactly.

MR. HELLER: And an inspiration.

MR. STANKARD: Thank you. I think you're interpreting my grunts and groans, Doug, in a very insightful way. I think there's a competitive component to the studio glass movement, where you see artists really sacrificing and pushing and making things happen, and you feel their pain and you are also challenged by their accomplishments.

So I've been challenged by other artists, and I've collected. And interestingly enough, because I didn't start out in the studio glass movement, I'm not as emotionally connected. I'm not competing with a lot of these people. I came from a different tradition, and it was easy for me to collect the work of other glass artists without feeling that I was somehow in competition with them, because I didn't come from their art school background.

MR. HELLER: But you also collect outside of the field of glass.

MR. STANKARD: Yes. I'm a collector. Somebody said - which made me feel very comfortable about my neuroses - they said, you're not a true collector until you have to warehouse the stuff. I thought, God, it's me. I mean, in

closets, packed up, giving it to the kids. I just love beautiful things and I love surrounding myself with beautiful things.

We've gone through a major life change in our home. Pat and I have made the environment more of a minimal aesthetic and we've got a lot of openness in the space. So I don't have a lot of room to display art. Well, I do and I don't. We renovated our home. After living in the home for 33 years, we moved out and then came back to a new home that was designed to display art. So now I live with it more than I had in the past.

MR. HELLER: But even though it's designed to display art, you're showing less art.

MR. STANKARD: Exactly.

MR. HELLER: Has that space, the change in the space, has that impacted on your collecting? Since you show less, do you collect less?

MR. STANKARD: I'm not buying as much as I have in the past. Matter of fact, I'm selling. I've been selling some of my collection, and Pat and I have donated, I think, 10 or 15 pieces to the Museum of American Glass at Wheaton. We donated a half-dozen paintings to Stedman Gallery at Rutgers University [Camden, NJ], only because of our lack of space. You know, some of this work is not so well-known, so it will be hard to make a sale. So rather than try to sell it, I'll just give it away.

MR. HELLER: But you've always been inclined to want to share the work.

MR. STANKARD: Yes, I think that's a nice thing to do.

MR. HELLER: Wheaton, the American Glass Museum. There's the Paul and Pat Stankard collection on display. How many pieces -

MR. STANKARD: About 50. I think there are 50.

MR. HELLER: And those are on continual view.

MR. STANKARD: Yes, it's a nice collection. And I've taken collecting very seriously in the '80s and the early '90s. It's slowed up for a lot of reasons, mainly price. I can remember being all excited about coming to the Heller Gallery when you were exhibiting Billy Morris's work. This is probably 10 years ago. I received your announcement. It was a kinoptic job, so I assumed it was expensive, and Pat and I agreed that we could reach a little higher to purchase the piece. So I was all excited. I was expecting to spend upwards of $15,000, which was a lot of money for me.

MR. HELLER: And they were $25,000.

MR. STANKARD: When I found out they were $25,000 and I didn't have that kind of money, I felt bad and started collecting emerging artists' work for more modest prices.

MR. HELLER: There's a comfort zone each one of us has, I think, with prices. And then there's just the reality of what we can afford.

MR. STANKARD: Exactly. It was interesting to see one of Morris's similar pieces just recently auctioned off for $150,000.

MR. HELLER: And some of them have sold for 10 times their original price.

MR. STANKARD: Right.

MR. HELLER: But that's a different aspect.

MR. STANKARD: Yes. I never collected with the idea that I'm going to make money. It's just that this was such a treasure and it looked so attractive on the announcement that I was so excited that I was going to travel to New York and purchase this treasure. But I did in '78, when you had a Mark Peiser piece on your announcement, and Pat and I had been following Mark Peiser's career for a lot of years, for eight years or so, and always wanted to own a Peiser paperweight vase. When I came to the gallery I was fortunate enough to buy the postcard piece.

MR. HELLER: That was the one with the swing.

MR. STANKARD: Yes. *Swing at Horner Hall* [1979], which commemorated Horner Hall, a building at Penland.

MR. HELLER: An interesting footnote to that. At this past SOFA exhibition [International Exhibition of Sculpture

Objects and Functional Art] at the armory, just a few weeks ago, a fellow came over to me and said, I started in glass as a result of seeing this Mark Peiser piece with a swing that was owned by Paul Stankard and was on display at the Museum of American Glass.

MR. STANKARD: [Laughs] That's a sweet story.

MR. HELLER: So sometimes, you know, the ripple effect goes full out there.

MR. STANKARD: Yes. It's amazing how people are so taken by beauty.

MR. HELLER: Well, your passion, it can transmit, in a way.

MR. STANKARD: And that's a very sweet thought. People have told me that their interest in glass was started by the excitement they found in my work. They wanted my work. I think my work is accessible, and I'm not unhappy with it. I'm very proud of that fact. It's accessible to a casual observer, but also if you're discerning, that connoisseurship will allow you to find more information in the work.

MR. HELLER: Well, I recall - a few minutes ago you mentioned the word game, the word seeds.

MR. STANKARD: Yes.

MR. HELLER: Well, I remember when I first found it there, you didn't inform people you were doing this right away. And all of a sudden one day I'm looking very closely at this piece and I see this word the size of a grain of rice, and I called you up and your comment was, well, I was wondering how long it would take before you'd see that.

MR. STANKARD: [Laughs] These discoveries are very nice.

MR. HELLER: And the best work does offer an accessibility that makes it welcoming to people, and then the different levels of depth make it richer and richer. And I think your work echoes what nature has to offer in that sense.

MR. STANKARD: Thank you. If you bring your curiosity to the work, I think you'll be rewarded. I think casual observers can be entertained by the work that you show, but if they're serious about what they're looking at, it will hold their attention.

Where are we, Doug?

MR. HELLER: Well, we've covered a lot of ground here. Some of the questions on the list, I think, were more pertinent to you than others, so we skipped a few. Now there's one question here. We've talked about your teaching and your interest in the community of glass. What involvement have you had with national organizations, such as the Glass Art Society and others?

MR. STANKARD: Well, I'm a founding board member of the -

MR. HELLER: Creative Glass Center?

MR. STANKARD: - Creative Glass Center of America, Wheaton Village. I've been very active at the Village. It's 25 miles from our home, and I actually went to Barry Taylor with the idea of establishing a creative glass center.

MR. HELLER: That was in what year?

MR. STANKARD: That was in 1980. I remember calling you and Tom Patti up, and you were very, very, excited by the idea. And that first meeting, it was you, Tom Patti, Barry, Mike Diorio, a few of us, and the idea started to solidify. And the more we discussed the concept, the more encouraged we became. And that program has been ongoing now for close to 25 years, and has helped and complemented a lot of careers.

I was on the board of trustees of the American Craft Council, only for one term. I chose not to go for the second term because they were in an organizational transition. The main activity of the American Craft Council was the craft shows, and they were trying to attract more and more people to do the craft shows to generate money to support the Craft Council. I thought they were losing something by trying to grow. The *American Craft* magazine had its own identity, but I think the American Craft Council struggled with the transition and how to promote craft as art. Personally, I think they weren't willing to promote excellence through craft - they wanted to be all things to all people.

MR. HELLER: So when you say that they were looking to expand their numbers of people at fairs, you think -

MR. STANKARD: I think they dumbed everything down.

MR. HELLER: So it was at the expense of quality?

MR. STANKARD: Sure, yes. I think that they got very commercial at the expense of originality.

[Audio break.]

MR. HELLER: And when did you serve on that council?

MR. STANKARD: Around 2000.

It's interesting, Doug, because one of the proudest honors that I've received was to be inducted into the American Craft Council College of Fellows. I think there are around 25 artists who work in glass. I think there were about 250 artists in the College of Fellows. It's called the American Craft Council College of Fellows.

MR. HELLER: And what does it mean to be in that -

MR. STANKARD: You have to be prominent in your field; you have to have 25 years in your field, be a leader, innovator - very sweet criteria for inclusion. But the sweetest satisfaction is that you have to be voted in by the other artists.

MR. HELLER: So it's a jury of your peers.

MR. STANKARD: Yes, jury of the peers. And it's very satisfying to be included as a fellow. I believe Dick Marquis nominated me. I respect Marquis's work. I can't say that I know him that well, but I've admired his work for years, and he obviously respected my work or he wouldn't have forwarded my name.

MR. HELLER: Now, with this honor, is there a group that ever gets together?

MR. STANKARD: No, it's very loose. I'm not required to do anything.

MR. HELLER: So it's recognition.

MR. STANKARD: Just recognition. I've talked to other fellows, and you're well aware of who the fellows are. It's something that you couldn't lobby for. It's an honor.

MR. HELLER: It's bestowed.

MR. STANKARD: Yes. It never occurred to me that I would be a fellow. It wasn't high on my priorities to be in the College of Fellows, but once inducted, it became a great honor.

MR. HELLER: Now, among organizations that do come together, the largest one -

[Audio break.]

MR. HELLER: This is Doug Heller. I'm sitting here interviewing Paul Stankard on June 9, 2006. We are sitting in my living room at 420 West 14th Street in New York City, and this is disc three. The interview is for the Smithsonian Institution, Archives of American Art.

And we were just discussing the Glass Art Society, which is the largest organization, international organization,that addresses the contemporary glass community. I was just wondering, has it played an important role in your career, or any role in your career, and what are your thoughts on it?

MR. STANKARD: Well, I think the Glass Art Society celebrates a sense of community. When I was invited to be on the board, or to be elected, to run, I was so actively involved with the Creative Glass Center at Wheaton Village that I felt I didn't have the time. And then there were a few other times I've been invited to consider a board involvement, but I just haven't had the time, to be honest.

But I do think that it's a valuable organization. Here, like the American Craft Council, these organizations continue to grow, and I worry that they are becoming so cumbersome, with the expense of hosting their annual conference and with the newsletters and the cost of being in business. They want to grow the membership, and I think they lose some of the educational value by trying to be all things to all people.

MR. HELLER: Now the highlight of the Glass Art Society is their annual convention, and they can draw as many as 1,200 or more people from around the world, and it's a rather diverse group. It's not only international, but it can include artists, dealers, collectors.

MR. STANKARD: I think the Glass Art Society, over the last 10 years, has become like a trade organization. It's become more about the business of glass and less about the creative opportunities to be involved with glass as an artist.

MR. HELLER: Now, do you attend any of the conferences?

MR. STANKARD: If they're close. The last conference was at Corning, and it's always special to go to Corning. Speaking of Corning, we're both fellows of the Corning Glass Museum. I enjoy that involvement. I can't say that I've given it a lot of time. But over the course of my career, Doug, it's nice to be associated with Corning and contribute. I think of Corning as the center of the community that we both give back to.

It's interesting how the artists in clay and the artists working gold have their associations and organizations and magazines. I enjoy thinking of the diversity in the contemporary craft landscape. It's interesting how we are all very tribal. It's amazing how each material has organizations and education. In many ways we're all the same.

MR. HELLER: Well, there's certainly an aspect of that that's natural, because you share some of the same challenges and the rest. But do you think that makes for a provincial attitude rather than a more holistic, bigger vision?

MR. STANKARD: The simple answer is that it always comes back to the work and the people making the work. These organizations benefit many people, and if the artists benefit directly from the organization, he or she should feel very fortunate. In my case, my technical issues and challenges are so personal to me that I don't see myself going to organizations to get help. It's up to me to solve my own problems.

One of the goals of the organization, I would think, is to facilitate a sense of well-being among the artists by promoting the organization's material aesthetic. They share goals, promote work, invite speakers to philosophize on the worthiness of the organization and material, and it's all good, because I think glass has its own aesthetic. The dilemma is that many of the members think their ideas transcend the material, but it is interesting to experience museums and exhibitions dedicated to glass. The field is supported by collectors who only collect glass from artists who identify themselves as glass artists. So we're very focused on the material, and I'm sure it's the same for clay, gold, textiles, and wood.

I was recently talking to Richard Ritter, and we were talking about the many collectors who are donating their collections to museums around the country. The museums are expanding their facilities to accommodate these wonderful collections of contemporary glass. But they're not integrating it into their art collection. They're calling it their glass collection. I recently exhibited at the Mobile Museum of Art in Alabama. The museum had a great expansion to accommodate their glass collection. The Toledo Art Museum recently completed a 64-million-dollar expansion, building a major pavilion for glass. My point is that you have all these museums around the country that are building additions and expanding their exhibition space to accommodate glass art, and they're displaying it as a material focus.

MR. HELLER: That's not inconsistent with a lot of other things that museums do. So if you go to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, for example, you can go to the hall of arms and armory. You can go to one period; you can go to the ethnographic work from Africa or pre-Colombia. So, in a sense, if you recognize that a focused collection has strength as a teaching tool, it has its greatest impact all together.

On the other hand, I think for the many people who say the success of the studio glass world might be its absorption into the greater art world, keeping it together in a glass ghetto is antithetical to their fondest hopes.

So let me pose this question. Are you more inspired by looking at the artwork and work of other people who specialize in glass, or more inspired when you look farther afield? I know Walt Whitman's poetry particularly -

MR. STANKARD: Sure, my inspiration comes from various sources. I mentioned the paintings of Morris Graves and the sculpture of Robert Graham. For me, it's about excellence. You know, I love excellence; I seek out excellence. I think that if you expect, hope to do, excellent work, you have to know what excellence is. So whether it's paintings by Edward Hopper, which I always look forward to visiting at the Whitney, or the sculpture of Robert Graham, excellent work has an energy that touches me. I think it's a growing experience. It's a maturing experience. You have to bring an openness to the artwork you are looking at. By experiencing excellence, hopefully you can somehow internalize this emotional energy and redirect it into to your own work, lift your own work to higher level.

Many in the glass community early on considered themselves to be sculptors in a fine arts tradition. I think that you can embrace the glass community as an artist in a fine arts tradition. What am I saying? The glass community is so broad that if you work the material as a craftsperson or think of yourself as a designer, it can accommodate a wide variety of expectations. I don't think it matters how you're working in glass, as a craftsperson or in a fine arts context - excellence transcends categories. I have a habit of simplifying things.

When I work in the studio, my need is to make it personal. I need to be innovative - I'm doing the best I can, and ultimately, when the work leaves the studio, my job is over. It's not important to me to designate what part of the art world it will be labeled in. Let the curators and art historians decide where it is going to be. I think in 100 years, it will be quite different from what we understood it to be today.

MR. HELLER: Well, we should meet again in 100 years and discuss some of the same issues.

MR. STANKARD: I think that would be wonderful. In 100 years it would be fun to realize how the glass impacted on the international artistic landscape.

MR. HELLER: But even in the 30-plus years that we've been involved, nearly 40 years, we've seen some very dramatic changes in the marketplace. We've seen changes in the maturity of the work. You've mentioned how things 25 years ago, many times, you know, don't hold a candle to what we see today.

You also said something - glass has its own aesthetic.

MR. STANKARD: I believe that.

MR. HELLER: Do you think glass brings something to the table that's unique, that's important?

MR. STANKARD: I think glass is a unique material. There's a fun phrase that I enjoy saying: glass is a 5,000-year-old material of the future. Corning, developing fiber optics, is changing the way we live. I recently read an interesting book on the history of glass. The author, an Oxford University professor, wrote about scientific breakthroughs that changed humankind - that contributed to the knowledge of humankind. He identified 30 experiments that changed the way we viewed the universe and how we viewed ourselves. Glass was responsible for over half of the experiments. Without the glass apparatus and lenses, this information couldn't have been extrapolated.

So glass is a remarkable material, and it's only been in the last 25 years that creative people have been challenged to make art from it. I think Harvey Littleton, the artist, and Harvey Littleton, the educator, came along at the right time to challenge creative people, and he did it by bringing glassblowing to the art schools.

MR. HELLER: Well, there was this interesting panel at the SOFA exhibition the other day with some of the early figures in the field, and one point that was made repeatedly was the right people, the right time, the right place, the right situation. And a lot of factors had to converge in order to make this thing start the way it did and take off the way it did.

MR. STANKARD: I think that Erwin Eisch, the painter and glassblower from Germany, being invited to give workshops at Littleton's program in Madison, Wisconsin, was very important. He shared his glassblowing, but more importantly, he shared his philosophy about artmaking. He challenged people to think "fine art" and articulated the spirit of the studio glass movement, which continues to unfold.

MR. HELLER: Erwin is 79 this year. He was on the panel, and I must say he was in remarkable shape. He looked to be 20 years younger than his stated age, and many of the collectors in the audience said, you know, I never knew he was considered to be so significant, because he's never been a force in the marketplace, and yet he has always been an underlying inspiration, what I always call an artist's artist. People that other artists turn to for inspiration.

Harvey Littleton was a great proselytizer but a very pragmatic guy. Erwin is the classic, sort of, absentminded professor. His head's in the clouds; you know, he's talking art, dreaming art; he's very much a philosopher. So this distance, this gap between the marketplace and its perception of artists and their perception of art, I think, sometimes is a remarkable chasm.

MR. STANKARD: Yes, Littleton was always fixated on the marketplace, and Littleton, rightfully so, was well aware of the cost with being involved in glass on a creative level. I think it's unfortunate that one of the great challenges that artists have to deal with is the cost of blowing glass.

MR. HELLER: Well, this point was made repeatedly by the panel.

MR. STANKARD: Oh, really?

MR. HELLER: That it costs something like five to seven times the average cost of maintaining a student in other departments.

MR. STANKARD: I agree - it costs the schools serious money.

MR. HELLER: To maintain the glass department. Right.

MR. STANKARD: Yes. When these students graduate from their respective programs, they have trouble setting up their own studios, and that was my idea for CGCA -

MR. HELLER: Creative Glass Center of America.

MR. STANKARD: Yes. It gives them an internship or a fellowship where they can dedicate three months of their time to making things. My involvement has been a beautiful journey, Doug. I've enjoyed meeting and interacting with the artists when they've come to the CGCA, and it's really made my journey beautiful - my creative journey has been so rewarding.

MR. HELLER: Well, the journey is not over.

MR. STANKARD: Not at all. Funny, though, the Smithsonian is sponsoring this oral interview, which indicates that the end is coming.

MR. HELLER: Well, I like to make that the closing question, you know. You've seen your career evolve in many unexpected ways. I don't think from where you started out, you ever would have envisioned it. You didn't come out of university saying, I'm expecting to become an art star. You have very different roots.

What would you hope your legacy will be and how do you hope that your work will be viewed in the future?

MR. STANKARD: That's a very sweet question. I would like to think that my legacy would be a person whose work evidences growth. I would like to think my parents would say, my son Paul has given it his best. I've enjoyed the intellectual and emotional challenges of being involved in glass. It's been a lot of hard work. My wife Pat, bless her soul, has been very supportive. And I was recently talking to Mary Shaffer, who said, you know, Paul, I wish I had a wife like yours. I knew exactly what she was talking about.

I had a unique start. Pat has nurtured a traditional household - we have five children, and I have a career that has defined who I am. It has lifted my sense of purpose and self-esteem. So I feel really fortunate.

I wanted to say, Doug, that coming from the factory - I don't want to overromanticize this - I came out of the factory and I got involved in making the floral paperweights, and somehow I wanted to put them in an art history context, mainly building on the French paperweight tradition. It all came together. I've met some of the most remarkable people along the way: captains of industry, political leaders, interesting people who've come from all walks of life and collectively share a common interest in celebrating beauty. And I'm sure the same for you. It's fascinating.

MR. HELLER: Well, thank you very much.

MR. STANKARD: All right.

MR. HELLER: We accomplished our task here. I know it was a pleasure for me. Thank you.

[Audio break.]

MR. HELLER: This is Doug Heller. I'm here with Paul Stankard on August 20, 2006, in the Heller Gallery at 420 West 14th Street, and what we are doing is an extension of the original interviews, with more of a freewheeling conversation between Paul and myself.

MR. STANKARD: Well, we're both intelligent, Doug. We can pull it off. [Laughs.]

MR. HELLER: In our last conversations what we tried to do was cover the suggested questions from the Smithsonian -

MR. STANKARD: Well, say this. Is the recorder on?

MR. HELLER: Yes, we're recording now.

MR. STANKARD: Very good.

MR. HELLER: And I think we did a pretty fair job of covering most of that. But at the end of the interview you still felt that there were topics to be discussed and suggested the idea of us having more of a conversation than rather a question and answer format. So that's what this is about.

MR. STANKARD: Yes. I love the idea that I've dedicated my adult life to this community of creative people working in glass. I feel so proud of what's been accomplished. I know most of the artists, who are my friends, and I've witnessed a great deal of sacrifice that goes into making this artwork. I wouldn't be surprised to learn, Doug,

if you've stayed up late hours trying to make the economics work for your gallery. First on Madison Avenue, then in SoHo, and now in Chelsea.

MR. HELLER: Well, certainly there are, you know, parallel challenges between the gallery world and the world of the artists. People like to talk about the adversarial relationships, but in truth it's more of a partnership. In any partnership there's give and take. Some people are happy. Sometimes you're not as happy. But you know, looking at the background of the community of paperweight makers that you've come from, you've made a point to me that many of them came out of the scientific glassmaking industry and -

MR. STANKARD: Yes. They came from the scientific glassblowing trade and moved into making contemporary paperweights. I believe that the paperweight aesthetic has been market-driven, at least that's my take on it. When I entered the paperweight world, Doug, the antique French paperweights and the contemporary paperweights made in Europe, like Baccarat and Saint Louis, dominated the field. The antique paperweights were produced between 1840 and 1865, and they were very attractive, so people started collecting them. They were also pretty pricey at the time.

MR. HELLER: Do you think they were costly when they were made originally, or did that come about as they became antiques, and rarer and rarer?

MR. STANKARD: They were produced as high-end giftware for what they called the fancy trade. In the 1840s, paper became more available and letter writing correspondence became very fashionable. Stationary shops were beginning to open up throughout Europe, so paper and pens were being offered to the literate upper class. So the French crystal factories developed this line of fancy glass paperweights to be sold in these stationary shops.

MR. HELLER: Kind of as an accessory to the habit of writing and corresponding, and obviously this would be for people who were at least upper middle class.

MR. STANKARD: Right. It was interesting because the factories were very successful. People enjoyed having an attractive floral glass paperweight or a millefiori glass paperweight on their table, writing desk. They were selling for high prices at the time.

MR. HELLER: And they would have a practical aspect, too.

MR. STANKARD: Yes and no. They were functional but collected for their beauty.

MR. HELLER: But certainly that was market-driven. So when you say that the contemporary makers were market-driven, what exactly do you mean?

MR. STANKARD: I think these high-end French paperweights slowly disappeared in the 1880s.

MR. HELLER: They went out of fashion -

MR. STANKARD: They went out of fashion, and they didn't reappear until the 1950s.

MR. HELLER: In terms of being made?

MR. STANKARD: In terms of being collected as antiques.

MR. HELLER: So then people started to discover them as a collectible again?

MR. STANKARD: Right. And I've heard the explanation that after World War II Americans came back from Europe with a lot of small-scale objects - many of them were antique paperweights.

MR. HELLER: Souvenirs of their travels.

MR. STANKARD: Yes. The glass was introduced into the American market, and then started to appear as antiques in shops. They began to be collected by collectors - many were pretty sophisticated. People like Ambassador [Amory] Houghton from Corning - he was ambassador for France, I think in the late '50s, early '60s, and he collected antique French paperweights. Interesting to me, he donated his collection to the Corning Glass Museum. And more and more people were introduced to antique French paperweights. When I think of the most interesting paperweights, I think of the antique French paperweights. But I'd like to think that artists like myself, and other Americans like Rick Ayotte, and the Tarsitanos, and a few others, have built onto the French tradition.

MR. HELLER: So as glassmakers, scientific glassmakers saw these weights, saw the values of them, and became interested in making -

MR. STANKARD: Yes, Charles Kaziun, as a modern maker, became interested in making work like the antique French paperweights and the paperweights made in South Jersey at the turn of the century. He started to replicate what was made in Millville - the Millville Rose of South Jersey is a beautiful paperweight. As a side note to the antique French collecting - Kaziun and his paperweights were highly respected. Other early paperweight makers followed Kaziun, like Francis Whittemore and Ron Hansen. I became interested about the same time that other South Jersey glass people, like Jack Choko and Pete Lewis, became interested in paperweights - in the late '60s.

MR. HELLER: Now, what interested you when you saw the Kaziun weights? Was it the fact you saw an additional source of income, or flowers?

MR. STANKARD: I didn't think of myself as a studio artist at that time. I wasn't concerned with artistic issues. I just wanted to be on the creative side. I was in the factory making scientific glass, which required a lot of skill. I worked hard to acquire the skill, to master the craft, and once I mastered the craft, it was pretty mindless. When I saw Kaziun's paperweights, and I knew he was a scientific glassblower, I started to think that maybe I could do something like that. I thought his work was interesting - I loved the floral designs.

MR. HELLER: So what you're saying -

MR. STANKARD: What I'm trying to say, Doug, is the fact that Kaziun was doing something that I thought was very interesting. I knew his background was in scientific glassblowing, and I realized that, hey, if I put my mind to it, why couldn't I do things similar to what Kaziun was doing?

MR. HELLER: But what I'm sensing in what you are explaining is that here you have these highly refined and developed manual skills and techniques, but you were looking for something more soul-satisfying to do with it. Now, don't you think that was part of Kaziun's motivation as well?

MR. STANKARD: I'm sure it was. I think that there's something wonderfully satisfying about doing -

MR. HELLER: Creative work.

MR. STANKARD: Being creative, making things that one finds attractive.

MR. HELLER: And also working under your own initiative, making what you want to make, as opposed to what a factory says.

MR. STANKARD: Kaziun was a good example - working in his own studio. And I thought, dear God, if I could do something like that and be independent of industry, that would be the greatest thing in the world.

MR. HELLER: So Kaziun started in the 1950s, you said?

MR. STANKARD: I think Kaziun started maybe as early as the late '40s.

MR. HELLER: So he was really a pioneer in the United States?

MR. STANKARD: Yes, he was a pioneer. But Kaziun kept everything a secret. He was very secretive. So when I started in the late '60s through the '70s, there wasn't much going on. I knew about, and met, a lot of studio glassmakers, like Littleton and Labino -

MR. HELLER: Now you're talking about a different community of people when you say studio glassmakers, versus the paperweight community.

MR. STANKARD: Well, there wasn't a lot of contemporary glass people either in the paperweights or studio glass. The focus was the antique work.

MR. HELLER: Reproducing the antique work.

MR. STANKARD: No, the focus in the paperweight world was collecting antique French paperweights and other early American and European glass. There were a few modern paperweight makers at the time, and I was one of them, including Kaziun and a few others. But while I was selling my work to the paperweight enthusiasts through dealers, I was noticing the studio glass activity that Littleton and Labino started.

MR. HELLER: Which, you're implying, is very different, meaning that in your world there was great technique and a history. In the studio glass world it was freedom and also -

MR. STANKARD: There was a lot of freedom and experimentation - very creative - very little economic value. I mean, nobody was making any money.

MR. HELLER: And very little technique.

MR. STANKARD: Right. I mean, it was all spontaneity.

MR. HELLER: Right. There was a great deal of enthusiasm.

MR. STANKARD: Everything was celebratory - it was a hell of a lot more celebratory than the paperweight world. The studio glass world was so much more energized than -

MR. HELLER: Well, celebratory of, kind of, a lifestyle and an attitude.

MR. STANKARD: Yes, I think that, early on, the leaders in the field in the early '70s were educators.

MR. HELLER: Or quickly became educators. Many of the people were studio potters who moved over, including Harvey Littleton. Interestingly enough, on the trip I just took, when we visited Frauenau, Germany, with Erwin Eisch, there's a glass museum in Frauenau, and, in the section with the contemporary studio glass, people from a certain time, Sam Herman, Bob Fritz, Harvey Littleton, Joel Meyers. I mean, to somebody who isn't highly familiar with the nuances of each person, they all looked like blobs. They all showed a decided lack of mastery of the material.

And at the same time, though, they all seemed to demonstrate a certain aesthetic that was beyond - beyond their skills.

MR. STANKARD: I enjoy the attitude that, during the '70s, studio glass was identified as glass art, as opposed to art glass. Art glass was very popular in the antique shows at the time, like pieces from Tiffany and Lalique and Galle.

MR. HELLER: Usually if you said art glass, exactly, it would be Tiffany, Lalique - with the names.

MR. STANKARD: This was art glass. And then there was a distinction among the creative people: glass artists made their own work, but art glass was a factory effort, where the makers were anonymous. And if you say art glass, you're referring to something totally different.

MR. HELLER: Paul, I'm curious, okay, coming from the paperweight community, would people -

MR. STANKARD: Let me say this - it's on the tip of my tongue, Doug. Let me go back to the mid-'60s - I hope I'm not repeating myself, but I saw a show at the Philadelphia Art Alliance, a very prestigious private art club on Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia, a kind of a dinner club, and they exhibited Erwin Eisch's work.

MR. HELLER: That's interesting.

MR. STANKARD: I read in the paper that there was this exhibit of studio glass art - I think they even referred to it as studio glass, and it was being exhibited at the Philadelphia Art Alliance with work from Erwin Eisch, a German artist who influenced his friend, Harvey Littleton. It's fascinating that there was enough background to connect Eisch to the American studio glass world. I went to see the show and I was absolutely so charmed by his work because it was so different. There were these totems and bulbous forms and everything there was exciting. There was a glass telephone, distorted, and I thought, my God, I really love what's being done. It was something I had never seen before -

MR. HELLER: It was another language.

MR. STANKARD: It was another language that I had access to because of my experience in glass, and it was very exciting, but it was -

MR. HELLER: Same material but another language.

MR. STANKARD: - such a strong pull for me because it just reinforced the idea that, my God, I really wanted to be on the creative side with glass. I think seeing Erwin Eisch's exhibition really pulled me - it reinforced my feelings about wanting to do something other than industrial glass; I wanted to be on the creative side.

MR. HELLER: It's interesting to say - to hear you say what an influence that exhibition had on you, because Erwin Eisch is a name that pops up mostly from artists. Collectors know about him from artists who admire him. And he is what I always refer to as an artist's artist, oftentimes not truly appreciated by collectors in the sense that they might want to own it. But they're aware of it; they recognize he has been a significant force, and yet he doesn't create, for the most part, the easy aesthetic, the precious object. His work is a little intimidating to a lot of people.

MR. STANKARD: I think historians that look at the American craft movement, and glass in particular, will discover that Erwin Eisch, through the workshops, through his coming to Madison, Wisconsin, and being a guest artist for Littleton, helped articulate a fine art vocabulary that was applied to contemporary glass.

MR. HELLER: Well, Erwin is a painter -

MR. STANKARD: He was a painter and he worked in glass. I read or heard Harvey Littleton say that, in fact, Littleton [Eisch] embodies the spirit that I was trying to promote while working in glass. I think Eisch came to Madison with an artistic vocabulary and his skills and interests in experimenting.

MR. HELLER: Now you said Littleton -

MR. STANKARD: I meant to say Eisch when I said Littleton made the statement that Erwin Eisch exemplifies the spirit, the creative spirit that I'm trying to promote in studio glass, and I think Eisch came with his vocabulary and his experimental - his experimental efforts -

MR. HELLER: His eccentricity, too. We were just with him. He's 79 years old and very young in spirit and good shape physically, too. But he is quite the eccentric, and the people around him, the artists that come to teach in the glass school in Frauenau and the rest, I think, are drawn to that. Many people assume that's part of his spirit of purity, of being a true artist not motivated by the marketplace in the least, you know, but kind of connecting to a higher source of inspiration.

MR. STANKARD: Well, I was having an exhibition at the Heller Gallery on Madison Avenue, and this must have been about '84, '85. I think the exhibit was during a GAS conference. GAS was meeting in New York City. I remember it was April, and you invited me to have an exhibit during the GAS conference because you thought it would be interesting. I think the rationale at the time was this would be an interesting exhibition. So Littleton brought Erwin Eisch into the gallery for the opening and I was introduced to Eisch. Littleton said, this is Stankard's work; it's lampworked - he's a lampworker; at the time we called it lampworking.

And Eisch looked at my newest work, titled the Botanical series. Eisch looked at the botanicals and said, this is not lampworking. And in fact, I said, yes it is, yes, it's lampwork. And he said, no, it isn't. I didn't argue with him but -

MR. HELLER: What did he imply it was?

MR. STANKARD: Well, he didn't imply, but it must not have matched his idea of what lampworked glass was able to do, and he had a hard time dealing with the fact that I identified the process as lampworking.

MR. HELLER: Now, Paul, were you unusual within the paperweight community in your interest in what was happening amongst people like Harvey Littleton and university-trained artists?

MR. STANKARD: Yes, I had this need to learn. I love learning. I wanted to put my paperweights into an artistic context. I was confident with the idea that I was making paperweights, but I didn't want to replicate what the French had made 100 years earlier, and I worked hard to bring a fresh vocabulary to the paperweight category through my interest in native flowers. But interestingly enough, Doug, being shown at Heller and Habatat Galleries, I attracted a lot of respect among the glass artists. I had more respect among the studio glass artists who were showing in the galleries with me, who had an intellectual interest in my techniques, than the people in the paperweight world. In the contemporary paperweight world, which was small, I just sensed jealously.

MR. HELLER: Well, that could have been an expression of respect, but demonstrated in a negative way. Knowing you and the times and the other people that you're discussing, it's clear why they would appreciate what you were doing, from several directions, one being, of course, the skill level. Many of them lacked -

MR. STANKARD: They weren't used to that. Maybe they didn't think they needed skill to make their art.

MR. HELLER: Right. They weren't used to that. But then it was also the curiosity and the kind of purity of expression, that you had certain themes that, to you, connected to something more - with greater depth than simply finding a marketable subject matter. So you know, your interest in nature and the spirit of nature and, let's say -

MR. STANKARD: Spirituality.

MR. HELLER: Right. Was something that even many artists who were working with - glass artists, studio glass artists - weren't as well connected with what it was that they were trying to express. You had a more clear vision of it.

MR. STANKARD: I was grounded in my process. I think many of the studio glass artists -

MR. HELLER: Process and philosophy and personal beliefs.

MR. STANKARD: Right.

MR. HELLER: And I think a lot of the people who were working in the studio glass field, it was as much the attraction of an alternative lifestyle that brought them to it as anything else, without - you know, it was more like, I know what I don't want to be part of, but I don't quite know who I am. Whereas I think you yourself kind of outgrew something, but what you outgrew wasn't your interest in your subject matter. You outgrew the restrictions of the paperweight community's expectations of you.

MR. STANKARD: It was a craft mentality. I outgrew the paperweight craft mentality.

MR. HELLER: You started to change into unconventional shapes, the level of work wasn't a stylized depiction of a flower. You were going for the essence of nature. You had different things going on.

MR. STANKARD: It's interesting that now my work is less a curiosity today than it was 25 years ago.

MR. HELLER: People are more familiar with it, obviously.

MR. STANKARD: But also, too, the skill, the refinement that has evolved within the studio glass world has reached master levels. I mean, the audience would be so mesmerized by the technique, how I did a floral paperweight, but now you have other masters, like Billy Morris's animal heads and Richard Marquis's composts and Jon Kuhn's laminated cubes, that are also mesmerizing collectors by their technique. I think most of the masters are in America as opposed to what was over in Europe up through to the '80s.

When I look at Tom Patti's early work or Lisabeth Sterling, it's kind of interesting, but it doesn't have the same level of -

MR. HELLER: Refinement, skill -

MR. STANKARD: The same refinement as it does today.

MR. HELLER: So the ideas were there, but they couldn't be as - be expressed as eloquently and elegantly as they are today.

MR. STANKARD: Yes, I was just ahead of the curve in the refinement department. It's interesting, and it's hard to explain, this idea that I was a part of this phenomenal movement for the last 30 years, but some people think on the periphery. I had no problems with it. I mean, I had enough ego strokes - the work was respected and supported me. But I wasn't interested in achieving scale, which may have relegated me to a corner of the studio glass movement.

MR. HELLER: You mean actual physical size of the work?

MR. STANKARD: Physical scale of the work, yes. My work was small-scale and I think that that relegated me to a corner of the studio glass world.

MR. HELLER: Well, you know, one of the criticisms often thrown against glass sculpture in general was a lack of scale. So now you're talking about your work was even more intimate in size than that. But within your work - and you mentioned Tom Patti; I mean, there's another example of there's a lot happening in a small space.

MR. STANKARD: For me, it's layering information into the work. I've made it very personal, and I've layered a lot of information into my process that would leave a curious person unable to understand it on the first take.

MR. HELLER: Oh, right. You mean you really have to study the work to find everything that's in there.

MR. STANKARD: Not so much study it. You have to pay attention. You know, you have to just admire the work, and as you admire the work, I think things will reveal themselves.

MR. HELLER: Actual physical things that are in the work, right, that aren't at first obvious.

MR. STANKARD: The allusions become more apparent. I'm keen on talking about the studio glass movement as a cultural movement in America, and knowing that places like Penland, Pilchuck, and Haystack, even UrbanGlass over in Brooklyn, have nurtured tremendous amount of creative energy and are wonderfully successful. And it's become so broad now, Doug, the glass world - it's hard to see the forest from the trees. It's huge.

MR. HELLER: Well, you know, these places are both schools, kind of community centers for this particular interest group, and they act as an inspirational source for a lot of young people coming along.

We attended, at the last SOFA show, Sculptural Object[s and] Functional Art, that was held in the armory in New York just in the fall. No, spring. In the spring. There was a very interesting panel put together of some of the early figures, including people like Erwin Eisch, Joel Meyers, Marvin Lipofsky. One point that was brought out very clearly, that it was a confluence of things that made it happen. You know, the times, energy costs were low; people were searching for alternative things to do. The university system was welcoming and endorsed it and was willing to help and set up departments.

I think it was Joel Philip Meyers who said it, and you know, was doubting whether the same circumstances exist today.

MR. STANKARD: You know, just as a little side note, what absolutely filled the art schools with students was that everybody was trying to go to art school to get away from the Vietnam war.

MR. HELLER: That was a second wave, yes.

MR. STANKARD: That could have been a major part of it, and graduate schools flourished because they had so many creative people to admit.

MR. HELLER: You could get a deferment and study something you liked.

MR. STANKARD: Right.

MR. HELLER: That's an interesting point.

MR. STANKARD: That's going to be for social historians to figure out.

MR. HELLER: Harvey Littleton used to make the point that after World War II, you know, a lot of the fellows coming home and studying on the GI Bill had opportunities they never had had from their sector of society before, and many of them, after the experience in the war, wanted to do something different, completely different.

MR. STANKARD: Right. Object-making flourished in the '50s and '60s, and into the '70s. So it was more than just painting and sculpture. All of a sudden working in clay -

MR. HELLER: Traditional craft.

MR. STANKARD: Making art with traditional craft material became an alternative and a lifestyle for a wide range of people. I mean, it was just fascinating to me to realize how satisfying it is to make things. I think in my generation, and I'm 63, it was a repudiation of the factory, factory work; I mean, it was so impersonal. I remember my father telling me, Paul, you'll be very fortunate if you can go to work for a big company and work for 35 years and get a pension and have your vacations.

MR. HELLER: In one way he was completely correct.

MR. STANKARD: That was his idea of the ideal job.

MR. HELLER: And probably having been someone who lived through the American Depression, this is something he wouldn't wish on his children.

MR. STANKARD: Exactly.

MR. HELLER: Security was very important. And is today. Look what's happening again.

MR. STANKARD: Well, I think that, you know, we're floating off into social issues, but the truth is that the Depression scarred millions and millions of Americans and informed their attitudes and what they promoted to their children. You and I had attitudes promoted to us that were quite different than what we're promoting to our children. I think that craft galleries and making glass, the idea that you could be creative with this industrial material, was a novel idea. My parents didn't have an inkling as to what glass could do and how it would evolve. People were looking at glass and seeing beauty in ways that had never -

MR. HELLER: It's also intriguing and fun to work with. When we visited the Eisch studio recently, my sister-in-law saw glassmaking for the first time. And she's an architect. She's somebody that lives in the Czech Republic, where there's a long glass culture. She was completely enthralled. And I have to say that the level of work that we were seeing wasn't very high.

MR. STANKARD: Wasn't very dramatic.

MR. HELLER: No, and it wasn't. But that's because I'm jaded and I've seen it so much. She came away completely intrigued and wants to see more. You know, you get your hands on it; you feel the heat; it has a physicality that's exciting; the fires are there.

MR. STANKARD: Well, you know I was at SOFA Chicago, as you were, and I was amazed with the idea that here is the Corning Glass Museum bringing its glassblowing furnaces on a flatbed truck, and they parked it in the corner of -

MR. HELLER: Of the exhibition hall.

MR. STANKARD: They were doing glassblowing demonstrations to 200 and 300 people, and I was amazed, because I came from a tradition, flameworking, lampworking, that was a carnival attraction. And I was thinking, my God, I wanted to run from the idea of being entertaining to people -

MR. HELLER: They use it as an educational tool and as an attraction -

MR. STANKARD: Well, they're using it as an attraction, but it's come full circle, where the flameworkers were carnival glassmakers, entertaining people. Now the technology and this accessibility to this blowing process has become so common that they're entertaining people in a public hall.

MR. HELLER: Well, it's also immediately gratifying, both for the maker and for the public who's watching it as an audience, because you're seeing something go from an amorphous, hot, molten soup into beautiful form. Watching a skilled potter on a wheel take a lump of, you know, clay and pick up and make a form out of it is kind of magical. So there is a sense of magic to watching something being created right in front of your eyes. Glassmaking has that. That's often - as you say, that's the sideshow. The real significance of it is what it is that attracts more thoughtful people.

MR. STANKARD: Yes, right. What made studio glass so successful is that it's continuing to grow and produce significant work with an idea behind the work. When I came into the gallery, a half an hour ago, Doug, you have a beautiful exhibition representing 20 artists, and these are all mature artists -

MR. HELLER: From 10 different countries, right.

MR. STANKARD: It's absolutely beautiful, and you sense this intellectual content behind the work. I think that's what's so fresh about -

MR. HELLER: Well, if the work doesn't have substance, people lose interest eventually, and actually even work with substance, as times change and people's interests change, can be kind of forgotten and pushed to the side.

MR. STANKARD: But I wanted to say, without getting too abstract about it, the artists, the galleries, and museums, and to a certain extent the collectors, celebrate the spirit behind contemporary glass, and there's a lot of support for promoting this art form to a larger audience. Galleries work hard to promote studio glass to the museums: they help underwrite the shows, things of that nature. In the paperweight world, it was more of a commercial item, with very little reference to contemporary culture.

MR. HELLER: I know that there are paperweight weekends and paperweight conventions and seminars. Who organizes those?

MR. STANKARD: The collectors and the dealers.

MR. HELLER: Because don't they have an educational aspect as well? Or is it a strictly buy and sell?

MR. STANKARD: Well, the Paperweight Collectors Association hosts a convention every two years, and it's successful, but it's market-driven. I don't want to in any way suggest to our listeners that I have a negative bias towards paperweights. I just feel that I've outgrown the paperweight mentality, if I can say that. I mean, I think that with my orbs and the block forms and taking components and building the work into larger presentations, I've just achieved something other than a traditional paperweight.

MR. HELLER: But the essence of your work is what's inside those forms, and that hasn't changed. That's evolved.

MR. STANKARD: Yes. It's evolved. There is a spiritual dimension. I'm inspired by the words of Walt Whitman. I just left the Whitney before I came to your gallery and I enjoyed the retrospective of Edward Hopper. I love his solitary environment - it's almost a sense of loneliness. I'm trying to put all of these experiences into my work.

MR. HELLER: Solitary seeker? You know, when you say you're inspired by it, I think that you may be inspired by them, but they in turn have been inspired by the same things that inspire you, nature in the greater sense. What is nature an expression of, symbolic of?

MR. STANKARD: To me it's spiritual, and without the spiritual dimension, a work of art is meaningless. It's hard to calibrate; it's hard to even discuss, but, to me, the essence of significant art is the spiritual - it's that halo that hovers over it. What is that halo? It's a little philosophical but, to me, it's the spiritual.

MR. HELLER: So Paul, where do you think the future lies for all of this? We've discussed the fact that it was - like the rediscovery of the wheel, the glassmaking?

MR. STANKARD: I think studio glass is going to become more regional. The Heller Gallery in New York City can attract international artists working in glass, but, in fact, it is becoming so large, with many artists working in glass, that I think you're going to see more regional documentation of artists as opposed to national surveys.

MR. HELLER: Do you mean regional styles?

MR. STANKARD: No, I'm talking about seeing hundreds, maybe thousands of people, interested in working with glass.

MR. HELLER: Well, if you go to a Glass Art Society convention, you might see 1,100, 1,200 people.

MR. STANKARD: Two thousand.

MR. HELLER: Two thousand people, okay.

MR. STANKARD: You know, and that's only the tip of the iceberg.

MR. HELLER: And this is an international community.

MR. STANKARD: I was the keynote speaker to the International Society of Glass Beadmaking, and they had 500 people, all flameworking glass beads, with 1,600 people in that organization. I mean, it's remarkable.

MR. HELLER: So I'm not sure what you mean by regional.

MR. STANKARD: I think that -

MR. HELLER: Especially during a time when we have the Internet, and communication is so easily accessed.

MR. STANKARD: Right. What I'm saying is that within the 300- or 400-mile radius of New York City you could conceivably have 2,000, 3,000 artists to select work from.

MR. HELLER: And yet we go farther afield.

MR. STANKARD: Yes, you do. You go internationally. But I'm not sure that I'm saying that there's going to be significant work closer to home. Through the '80s and '90s, and even the turn of the century - even 2000, 2002, 2003 - we've been losing this sense of intimacy in the glass community. It's becoming so broad that we know who the innovators are, we know the pioneers, but it's harder to identify the new talent.

MR. HELLER: Well, you say "we." You can talk to a lot of young people that are working in glass - you might meet them at the craft fairs or wherever - who have never heard of Harvey Littleton.

MR. STANKARD: Mark Peiser came to visit me. He was on his way back from Corning. We had a nice visit and he said, how far is Wheaton Village? I said, oh, not too far. We can be there in half an hour, 45 minutes. He said, I'd love to see the place. So I said, let's go. We drove down to Wheaton Village, had a nice drive, went through the country -

MR. HELLER: The Creative Glass Center of America.

MR. STANKARD: Creative Glass Center of America, the Museum of American Glass. We went into the museum, and Mark looked at the collection, the CGCA collection. And Mark was saying, what a remarkable collection of contemporary glass. There were over 200 examples.

MR. HELLER: All from former fellows in the program.

MR. STANKARD: All from fellows, but all made at the same studio. And he said, there's something wonderfully democratic about this collection. It has integrity, it evidences quite a bit of originality, but it's not as polished as you would see in the galleries.

MR. HELLER: Which is appropriate because the program is meant to give artists free time for experimentation, not to make a refined product to bring to the market but to grow as an artist and have the comfort of saying they don't have to support themselves specifically during that period. But yes, I had the same reaction. Each

time I go back there and I look, the collection has grown significantly. It's more impressive.

MR. STANKARD: We went over to the factory, the studio factory, and I introduced Mark to four of the fellows that happened to be there at that time. And none of them knew who Peiser was.

MR. HELLER: Right. So here is one of the original figures in the American studio glass movement and a very significant one, not just an early-on practitioner -

MR. STANKARD: He's still in the game and they didn't know who he was. So I said, well, there's a paperweight vase in the museum that has a tree with a swing hanging down. Oh, yeah, I saw that. Yeah, I've seen pictures of that. Now I know who he is.

MR. HELLER: Interest has changed also.

MR. STANKARD: It has. They have. The interests have changed, and in the studio, the history of our movement is becoming so broad that maybe there doesn't seem to be a need to be that comprehensive. I'm not sure what's going on.

MR. HELLER: Well, I think a lot of the young best talent, though, their interests have shifted from a mastery of the craft, and some of the best ones are more interested in what's happening in the contemporary art world than they are in the studio glass world. So there was an old saying, I think, for a while, that the eventual success of studio glass may be its absorption into the contemporary art world, and then it's just dissolving, in a sense, as a tight community.

MR. STANKARD: Well said. The ultimate success would be that we don't have a studio glass movement.

MR. HELLER: Right. But on the other hand I think what's going to happen -

MR. STANKARD: Just making art.

MR. HELLER: You have some people who move into one area of interest since there are more practitioners now, others who will go into the paperweight community, others who are interested in the craft fairs, just making a living working with this -

MR. STANKARD: You know, we talked about early studio glass, and we were talking about early studio glass movement as a counterpoint to the paperweight movement, and you have people like David Hopper, Lundberg, Nygren, creating paperweights. They started to make paperweights, and they were the contemporary paperweight makers as a counterpoint to the antique French. So I mean, it's really interesting how things interact - how organizations blend together.

MR. HELLER: And I think eventually history repeats itself. You see a trend; you know, in the early days of studio glass it was the solo practitioner, the fellow who would build his furnace, melt his glass, try and do everything by himself. Then it evolved into more of a team effort. Then the people who were more technically minded started specializing in building the equipment. Then, you know, you have the people who went in to mix the special glasses now. So it's kind of a reinvention or re-enactment of -

MR. STANKARD: Yes. It's a pretty big industry. It's a multimillion dollar industry.

MR. HELLER: Well, multimillion - is small, yes.

MR. STANKARD: Multihundreds of millions. [Laughs] But you know, it's interesting that the enthusiasm among the collectors for art made in glass, glass collectors, has attracted some of the mainstream sculptors to consider glass in their work, so that they would have this identifiable audience to sell work to.

MR. HELLER: Well, I think two things happened. Sometimes people become acutely aware that there's a new market, so if you've got somebody who's trying to assess, well, what can help me market my work, glass suddenly is a material to consider. The other thing is just a search for renewal, this idea of what can freshen my interest, the work. As a sculptor, you typically deal with the outer skin of something. Glass offers you the opportunity to deal with the inner, physical presence.

MR. STANKARD: Yes, it reminds me, when we were talking about Kiki -

MR. HELLER: Smith.

MR. STANKARD: - Smith and her glass. Also UrbanGlass has a glass tire by Rauschenberg -

MR. HELLER: The Rauschenberg tire, right. You see some major names -

MR. STANKARD: Rauschenberg went over to Urban and had his sculpture translated in glass, and now Urban has this donated sculpture by Rauschenberg.

MR. HELLER: I have an example downstairs. Yes, that's the Rauschenberg tire.

MR. STANKARD: I'm curious, what's the price of it?

MR. HELLER: Well, the Rauschenberg tire is over $300,000, because Mr. Rauschenberg's work can sell for well over a million dollars.

MR. STANKARD: [Laughs] That would be a stretch for a lot of the glass collectors, but it's interesting when you think about that. It's a beautiful piece of art.

MR. HELLER: Well, that tire was, you know, was a very significant image -

MR. STANKARD: Part of an installation?

MR. HELLER: Right. And something he used in a lot of his different pieces. I think they were called the Combines, and I think he was looking to give it an iconic status, something that would elevate it from its origins of just being an old car tire. And the glass has that, you know - it's not precious in the sense of gold, but it's precious in the sense of the way it's made and its delicacy, its transparency. I think there's something timeless about glass's ability to attract people and to symbolize something transcendent. The alchemy of its making, you know. I mean, born of fire, the whole magic of it.

MR. STANKARD: Well, it certainly is magical material. And I think for the longest time artists, people like Hank Murta Adams, who I have a tremendous amount of respect for, were self-conscious of the inherent beauty of glass. [Laughs.]

MR. HELLER: Well, I've heard the warning frequently, you know. You have to be careful of the fact that the material itself is seductively attractive. So it becomes the mastery of it or the dialogue that you have, because otherwise you lose your voice as an expressive artist.

MR. STANKARD: You distort the voice with the material. I mean, it's fascinating, the challenges that artists are confronted with when using this material, glass.

MR. HELLER: But we've been in -

MR. STANKARD: How long have we been kicking this around?

MR. HELLER: Talking? Talking for about 45 minutes.

MR. STANKARD: How much more do we go?

MR. HELLER: I think this tape is good for hours - [Stankard laughs] - but maybe we should sign off right now.

MR. STANKARD: [Laughs] I think we got it, don't we?

MR. HELLER: Okay, here we go. And I think we're going to end this conversation.

MR. STANKARD: Oh, well, hold it now, Doug. Let's talk about some of the people that we both know. I think Paul Hollister -

MR. HELLER: Who was one of the early critics, trained painter himself.

MR. STANKARD: Lived in New York City as a painter, graduated from Harvard, and I think he had a double degree in science and art.

MR. HELLER: And Paul was one of the very first people to write seriously about what was happening in the studio glass world.

MR. STANKARD: Paperweights.

MR. HELLER: Also was a paperweight historian.

MR. STANKARD: Paul came from the paperweight world. He was a paperweight collector. He followed the paperweight world, wrote a book, *Encyclopedia of Glass Paperweights* [New York: C.N. Potter; distributed by Crown Publishers, 1969]. And he, like myself, you know, became aware of glass and how people were challenged in a wonderfully creative way. And I think he was attracted to the creative energy that artists were bringing to

glass.

Over the years he championed my work, I think among the -

MR. HELLER: Yours, and then subsequently many other people and wrote frequently for the *New York Times*, as well as published books, specifically books on paperweights, but later wrote very broadly about glass.

MR. STANKARD: Wrote articles, and in addition to me, he championed Michael Glancy and Tom Patti, and was fascinated by Flora Mace, Joey Kirkpatrick, and Steve Weinberg. He was amazing -

MR. HELLER: Paul is an interesting and irreverent kind of figure in the field.

MR. STANKARD: [Laughs] He enjoyed teaching a master's class at -

MR. HELLER: At the Bard Institute, the Bard Institute of Decorative Arts [New York, NY].

MR. STANKARD: Bard Institute. He brought his class down to visit the studio. And here, here is the master, or here is the professor, surrounded by all these intelligent, high-energy young people, and, you know, he was in his element. I mean, Paul had a very active intellect -

MR. HELLER: And he was also somewhat of a showman. He enjoyed indulging eccentricities during his presentations while teaching.

MR. STANKARD: I want to mention, Paul and I would meet occasionally here, at the Heller Gallery, and he was interested in what was being shown. Your gallery, Doug, became a place to meet a lot of different people.

MR. HELLER: And a crossroads, and it still - it's one of the functions a gallery should serve.

MR. STANKARD: That's a sweet attitude.

MR. HELLER: Well, I think it's a practical one, too. It is a meeting place, and a presentation place.

MR. STANKARD: Exactly. I was here in the '90s when you were in SoHo and this woman from Australia who was showing me her slides - she was a flameworker - and I had a chance to introduce her to Joe Gudenrath, who happened to be there, and we talked about the experimental glass workshop over in - what was that, Little Italy section?

MR. HELLER: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Chinatown, Little Italy.

MR. STANKARD: And it's amazing that when you come to the gallery, you're as likely to meet glass enthusiasts from Europe or other parts of the world as you are Americans.

MR. HELLER: Well, happily, that still happens. That's partly because of the role the gallery plays, and to a great extent because it's in New York City, which is such a hub, such a magnet to people from all over. And that's one of the things that's given the gallery the opportunity to introduce a different type of an audience to the work, too. We're in the middle of a community where there's 150, 200 galleries. So if you have an interest and you go from gallery to gallery to gallery, which many visitors do when they're in New York, all of a sudden you might discover something completely new. And after 33 years of doing this, I still meet, every week, people who come in and go, this is brand new to me. [Stankard laughs.] What's going on here?

MR. STANKARD: And it's interesting because there's an intelligence behind the work. I like to think that if you embrace art and your antennas are attuned for the creative side, then you're learning.

MR. HELLER: Well, I believe the work being presented here can hold its own with the work being presented in the other galleries in New York City quite well.

MR. STANKARD: Well, I'll tell you, I was just at the Whitney and looked at the American collection and [John] Chamberlain and, you know, I can't rattle off the names, but it was so experimental that, you know, I'm enjoying looking at it, but I wouldn't want it in my living room.

Anyway, Doug, thank you very much for taking the time to -

MR. HELLER: Paul, this has been a pleasure, and I hope this proves to be a useful tape.

MR. STANKARD: And to the Smithsonian's listeners, I hope this is interesting for them. To all listeners in the future, Doug, I hope this is just as interesting. [Laughs.]

[END OF INTERVIEW.]

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