

# SEEKING FREEDOM:

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Six Artists' Journeys  
from Oppression to Freedom.



SUMMER 2012

NATIONAL LIBERTY MUSEUM

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Six Artists' Journeys  
from Oppression to Freedom.

June 28 - October 12, 2012

SEEKING FREEDOM:  
Six Artists' Journeys  
from Oppression to Freedom

compiled & edited by D. Scott Patria

curated by D. Scott Patria

National Liberty Museum, Summer 2012

published by National Liberty Museum  
321 Chestnut Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19106  
(215) 925-2800  
www.libertymuseum.org

cover image:

Janusz Walentynowicz "Chain (8L18-1)" cast glass, steel,  
17 x 14 x 78 inches

back cover images:

Pavel Novák "Balance" coldworked, polished, colored and  
laminated optical glass, sterling silver

Jose Chardiet "Mystic Two" blown, cast, hot sculpted glass,  
gilded wood, 23.5 x 15.5 x 5.5 inches

design and production by Amy Hajdas

photography courtesy of the artist unless  
otherwise noted

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ISBN 978-0-615-65626-7

Printed in USA



Pavel Novák "Blue Dream" coldworked, polished, colored and laminated optical glass,  
8 x 8 x 8 inches



Binh Pho "Twomo" cast glass, gold leaf, 4 x 9 inches diameter



José Chardiet  
"Burnt Orange Napoleonic"  
blown and hot sculpted glass, 15.5 x 10 inches

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## About the National Liberty Museum

Located in the heart of historic Philadelphia, the National Liberty Museum is dedicated to preserving America's heritage of freedom by fostering good character, civic involvement and understanding for all people. The Museum includes 78 exhibits, 179 works of contemporary art, and stories of 2,000 heroes within eight expansive galleries and adjacent spaces. Our primary art form is world-class glass art to illuminate the strength and fragility of democracy and illustrate the role each person plays in safeguarding our freedom. The major themes presented in the Museum are described below. All are presented in visually stunning displays and through interactives that are both challenging and fun.

**Honoring Heroes** – Known as America's "Home for Heroes," the Museum honors 2000 men, women and young people of all walks of life who dared to step beyond their comfort zones to help make the world a better place. Exhibits honor a range of individuals from American Nobel Peace Prize

Winners to the firefighters and police who lost their lives on September 11.

**Exploring the Concept of Freedom** – For over 300 years immigrants from around the world have come to America seeking freedom and opportunity not available to them in their homelands. The National Liberty Museum devotes an entire gallery to the reasons for "Coming to America," as well as numerous exhibits on the rights and responsibilities of living in a free society.

**Presenting Peaceful Ways to Resolve Conflict** – To help defuse bullying and violence, the National Liberty Museum provides an array of hands-on exhibits that demonstrate easy, practical and fun ways to resolve conflicts peacefully. Highlights of this gallery include a "Shredder" machine that devours cruel words, a "Bridge of Forgiveness," and two life-size children made entirely of jellybeans.

**Comparing Liberty to Glass** – The Museum features 179 world-renowned works of art which bring its various themes to life. The

collection includes bronze sculptures, original oil paintings and an extraordinary array of contemporary glass art representing the beauty and fragility of freedom.

The centerpiece of the Museum's glass collection is a 20-foot "Flame of Liberty" by Dale Chihuly symbolizing the universal quest for freedom.

### HISTORY:

The National Liberty Museum is an independent learning and exhibit center supported by visitors, community leaders and foundations interested in protecting America's heritage of freedom. The Museum opened its doors in January, 2000. For the past 12 years, we have impacted more than 600,000 individuals, including 315,000 students. Exhibits are regularly updated and now include a state-of-the-art, animated interactive called **Heroes of Character** and a tribute to our Home-State Heroes, **The Pennsylvania National Guard**.

## Foreword

When Scott Patria, the new Director of Glass at the National Liberty Museum and former glass gallery owner, first introduced the idea of creating a "Seeking Freedom" exhibition, I thought "Wow," what an exciting way to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Studio Glass Movement. Harvey Littleton, the Founding Father of the Movement, would be very proud of the message this exhibition conveys.



*Pavel Novák  
"Triforium", coldworked,  
polished, colored and  
laminated optical glass  
5.5 x 8 x 5.5 inches*

Littleton's mission in establishing the Studio Glass Movement was so that artists would be able to create glass sculpture in their own studios rather than in factories. He wanted artists to have the opportunity to create their own designs and develop their individual talents. Little did he know that he would spawn an environment that was so creative and dynamic artists around the world would be willing to risk their lives to live and work in a free society.

All six of the artists represented in this exhibit had to fight their way to America to become the artists they were meant to be. Janusz Walentynowicz from Poland, Binh Pho from Vietnam, Martin Rosol from Czechoslovakia, José Chardiet from

Cuba, Latchezar Boyadjiev from Bulgaria and Pavel Novák from Czechoslovakia. When you read their stories, you realize how lucky we all are to be living in America.

The National Liberty Museum is the perfect venue to share their stories, because its many exhibits instill in visitors the important role they play in protecting our democracy and freedom. The Museum uses glass art as a metaphor for liberty. Both liberty and glass are strong and beautiful, but also fragile and thus must be handled with great care. The six artists represented in "Seeking Freedom" know this fact all too well and they are delighted not only for the opportunity to share their stories, but to tell it through a Museum that encourages Americans to appreciate their freedom.

Yes, Harvey Littleton is proud of the Movement he started, just as the National Liberty Museum is proud of what it has accomplished. It's gratifying to know that the world of art can have such a tremendous impact on our lives.

Arlene Silvers  
Past President AACG  
Curator of Glass  
National Liberty Museum

## Introduction

America is a nation of immigrants. As we celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Studio Glass in the US, it would serve to not only recognize the native-born whose contributions we honor, but also those who emigrated to the US, bringing their own skills and viewpoints.



*Latchezar Boyadjiev  
"Dwelling" cast glass,  
16 x 12 x 4 inches*

The National Liberty Museum is a unique institution. Dedicated neither strictly to art nor artifacts, we use glass sculptures in each of our galleries not only as three-dimensional metaphors for freedom and liberty, but for their content - to tell stories. I thought it fitting therefore, that we mount an exhibit of works by artists working in glass who did not always enjoy the freedom they now do... artists who left their homes, and in some cases their possessions and family, in search of the political, religious and economic freedoms we enjoy.

"Seeking Freedom: Six Artists' Journeys from Oppression to Freedom" is the result of that notion. The exhibition features the work of six artists, all of whom fled Communist homelands. While their stories might easily be told in print, once, the artworks featured may tell the story(ies) in whole or part, many times.

In some cases, the works are explicitly narrative; Janusz Walentynowicz' "Prisoner" and "Chain" pieces speak obviously and eloquently about the artist's perspective before and after his escape. Other works, such as some of those by Martin Rosol and Pavel Novák, are notable simply because they exist. Had those men never left Czechoslovakia, they would not have been allowed to operate as independent artists, only as workers, making what the State needed. The Studio Glass movement here would be poorer for their absence.

Other works in the exhibition use symbolism to communicate. Both José Chardiet's and Binh Pho's work use symbols and allegories for their journeys, while Latchezar Boyadjiev's abstracted works are more three-dimensional embodiments of emotion.

Each work uniquely contributes to the whole – a story of sacrifice, of courage, of opportunity ... and of triumph.

D. Scott Patria  
*Director, Glass Department  
National Liberty Museum*



"Flight" cast glass, 35 x 23 x 5 inches

## Latchezar BOYADJIEV



**Latchezar Boyadjiev** was born and raised in communist Bulgaria in 1959. After spending most of a decade studying music, and then being unable to attend music school, he began his art education in 1979 in Sofia at the Academy of Applied Arts. He then continued in Prague, Czechoslovakia, under the guidance of the renowned glass artist Stanislav Libensky. However, he was stifled by the deeply proscribed atmosphere of the country. To succeed as an artist, he would be forced to join the Communist party and, as he explains, "I wasn't communist, nobody in my family was communist, and I had a lot of problems with the government."

"In 1986 my wife and I defected from Czechoslovakia in a search for personal freedom from the Communist oppression. I wanted to be a glass artist and create art free of any propaganda. We quietly

sold everything we owned & bribed an official to allow us to travel to Yugoslavia for 'vacation'. We boarded a bus and traveled from Prague through Austria and Italy. In Padua, Italy we took our two suitcases and left the group. We went to a police station and asked for political asylum. We were directed to a refugee camp in Latina where we spent three months in overcrowded old army barracks."

Arriving in San Francisco Bay area in September that year, Latchezar was unknown and without an artistic support network, but he had passion – and newfound freedom. Drawing on his experience and training, he spent his first 10 years sculpting with cut, polished, and constructed optical glass and colored filters. His work attracted notice, garnering invitations to group exhibitions, and then SOFA. But he longed to create work with more softness and more energy, and soon he began to move into glass casting, for which he has become widely known.

### On the WORK:

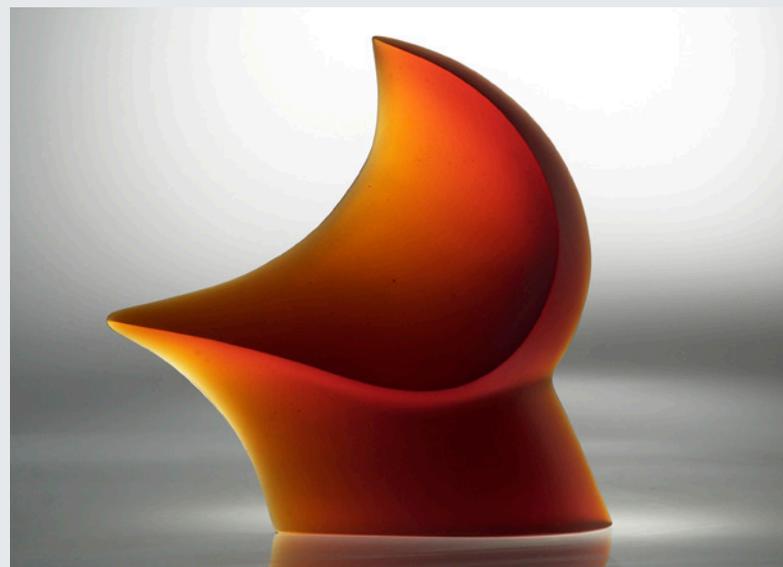
Boyadjiev's sculptures are animated gestural abstractions, the colors rich and vibrant. The free-flowing lines and emotional energy of work reflect his belief in the importance of personal and creative freedom. They catch your attention from across the room – highly energetic forms, full of implied movement and rhythm. This energy, in a way, is an essential part of Boyadjiev's story; his proximity to the ocean has influenced some of his recent imagery, as have both Brancusi and music, in generous part.



*Liberty is sacred and has to be preserved ... Everything is possible when you are free and work hard!*



"Passage" cast glass, 8 x 11 x 2 inches



"Openminded" cast glass, 11 x 11 x 2 inches

Critic Rosemary Carstens writes: "Counterpoint serves Boyadjiev the artist as it did Boyadjiev the musician. In his deceptively simple works, contrasts define and enhance: He uses variations in density and transparency, smooth sweeps of color and textured detail, to create perspective and interest, energy and fluidity. The language of the artist's work is the language of line, balance, and movement. Each piece contains the nucleus of a singular emotion - an emotion that flies beyond written language to evoke sensation."<sup>1</sup> What initially draws viewers to Boyadjiev's work is color. Used

monochromatically in each piece, it is handled so dramatically as to make each work memorable. The use of color achieves superb feelings of volume and depth, giving animation to each piece.

Boyadjiev's process is complex, encompassing a range of materials and disciplines. He attributes his ability to extensive training in sketching (the Academy's strict curriculum of daily drawing and design classes for five years had its intended effect). Each piece begins as numerous drawings in pencil and charcoal, exploring and refining his concept until it

takes final shape. As a result, his sculptures seem to have two dimensions — a flat one that suggests a drawing in space and one that speaks volumes and depths. "It has to be the right combination of size, composition, balance, and energy," says the artist. He recreates on paper exactly how it will look, including its color density and texture. Nothing is left to chance. Once he has his final drawing, he renders it in clay, sculpting the models with a palette knife. Boyadjiev then creates a plaster mold, a negative of his design. From this he casts another positive — in glass.

#### On INFLUENCES:

"I try not to look closely at anyone's work for a fear of being influenced. I try to keep my work purely mine and unique. However, I am highly influenced by music, as is evident in the motion and energy of my sculptures. My wife is a professional harpist, and I played piano and oboe when I was young, so music is a constant in our home.

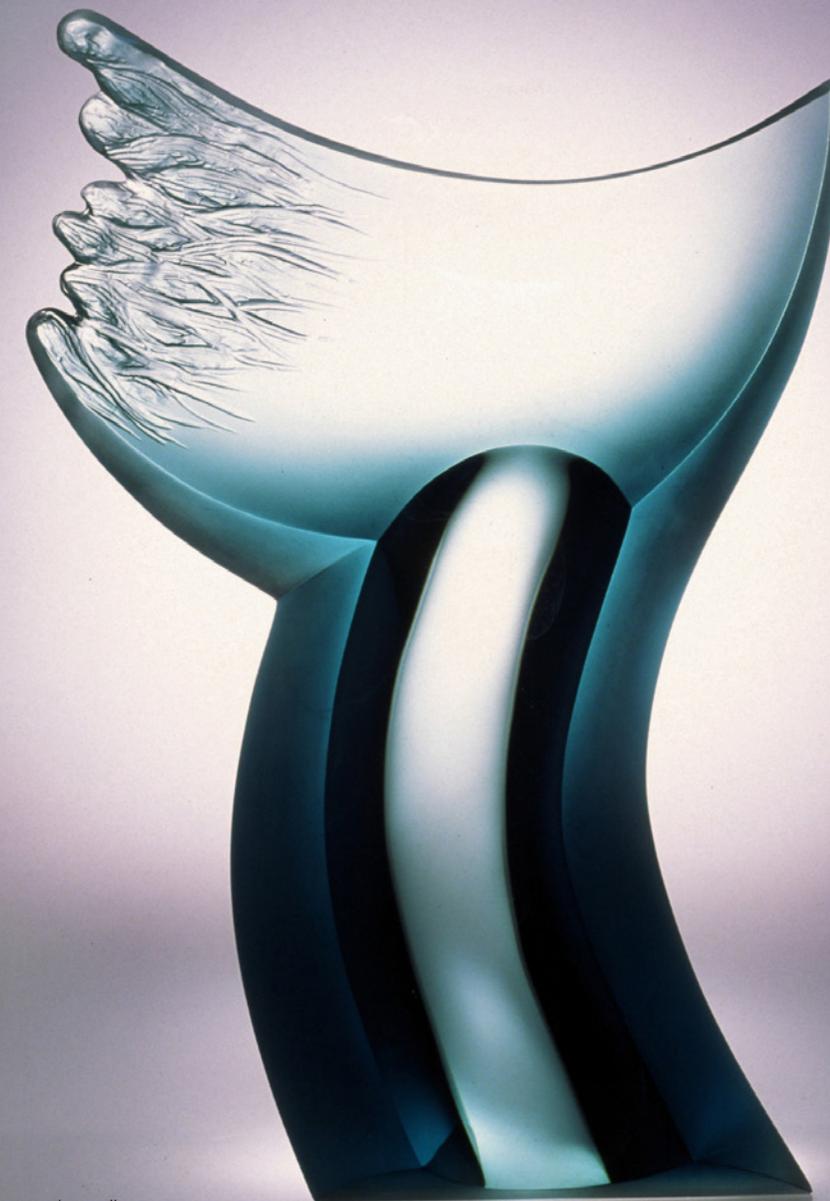
"My influence is also spiritual. I strive to make beauty and energy come to life inside my sculptures. I want my work to be monumental in size as well as in design. I want it to become a part of modern architecture and the contemporary environment, to reflect the era in which we live."

#### On LIBERTY:

"Liberty is sacred and has to be preserved. Very few places on earth do have Liberty and we as Americans have to be more aware how important it is and not take it for granted! This Idea is expressed in most of my work – it is fragile, dynamic, full of movement and bright colors. When you look at my work I hope you get a positive and uplifting feeling which is a result of Free existence.

"America allowed me to grow and be who I am. Everything is possible when you are free and work hard! I have achieved my 'American Dream'."

*Latchezar's exuberant sculptures are represented in private and public collections worldwide.*



"Independence" cast glass, 33 x 24 x 6 inches



"Second Passage" blown, cast, hot sculpted glass, mixed media, 28.5 x 18 x 8 inches

**José Chardiet** was born in Havana, Cuba in 1956, and emigrated in 1960 following Castro's rise to power. "My father worked for a year under Castro and, seeing the growing clouds of communism, took a 'leave of absence'." <sup>2</sup> José and his mother and siblings left Cuba first - having to make it look like they were leaving on vacation, his father stayed behind. "But we knew we weren't coming back. We left with what we could carry, flying first to Miami and then to New York." <sup>2</sup> A few months later his father managed to get a visa and join the rest of the family, by then living in Connecticut, with family friends.

José started working with glass in undergraduate school at Southern Connecticut State University (where his father was a professor). He credits it as having a small but great faculty; and to his surprise, a small glass studio, started by Peter Pellettieri (Jose's 3D design professor), who had studied with Harvey Littleton at the University of Wisconsin. In the late 60's Pellettieri had

hired Mark Peiser to come up and build the studio. One day, Jose followed Pellettieri into the glass studio one day while he checked on some students ... and was "so taken by the dance of hot glass, I was hooked."

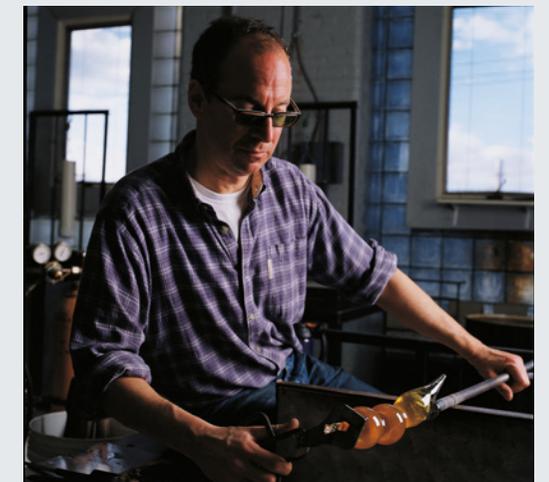
The program at SCSU produced other talented artists as well, including Bill LeQuier, and Chuck Savoie. Chardiet recalls that they really all got into it, and that the studio had great energy. <sup>3</sup> For grad school, Chardiet went to Kent State, and studied under Henry Halem, who had been Harvey Littleton's graduate assistant. He therefore considers himself as a direct descendant of the Toledo workshop(s) ... following in the line of Harvey Littleton, Joel Philip Myers, Henry Halem, and Dominick Labino.

**On the WORK:**

"Glass is such a good material for me," he says. "You can't control it as much as you can other materials. But that's the good

part about glass. It's always changing. When something unusual happens, it's a good thing."<sup>7</sup>

Chardiet believes he has a pretty light-hearted approach to his work, and doesn't ascribe any political content to it, despite his family's flight from communism. Rather, the most constant theme seems to be more basic and social in nature – family itself.



*The word Liberty brings up really strong feelings for me. As a family, having lost our liberties, we know what it is like to live without them, to lose everything that generations worked for.*



"The elements in my work usually start as functional objects such as amphoras, bowls, or tools and are transformed through shaping and gesture into personifications of human beings. What appear to be still-lives can, through the dynamic between elements, be interpreted as family units."

While some artists fall into the trap of nearly endless self-repetition, Chardiet works in many different styles, often simultaneously, explaining that working on each series helps inform the other(s).

His latest series (of which *Night Horn* is the most recent example) builds upon and adds depth to his Glass and Metal Series. "The inspiration for the Glass and Metal Series comes from both architecture and the human body. For me, buildings are a metaphor for the human body. The interior or void is where all the spiritual power lies, not on the surface. The power of the interior is increased or made more explicit by exposing it through polishing, transparency and in some instances, the interior light." These

top: "Hermoso" blown, cast, hot sculpted glass, mixed media, 33.25 x 10 x 5 inches

bottom: "Baja" blown and hot sculpted glass, 12 x 10 inches

fascinating works are distillations of myriad influences: shape referencing scrimshaw, surface decoration and pattern honoring Art Deco, and a palette springing from a uniquely American phenomenon: Hot Rod car culture.

#### On INFLUENCES:

José says he feels Peter Pellettieri's influence every day, and is also inspired by Martin Puryear, Antoni Gaudi, and Surrealism.

However, he credits as his biggest influence a 1985 exhibition at the Detroit Institute of Arts, entitled "Primitivism in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern". In an interview with James Yood for *American Craft Magazine*, he said "The exhibition blew me away, the connections between African and Oceanic art and modern artists, it was tremendously forceful".<sup>4</sup> This influence is clear in a great deal of Chardiet's work, particularly the vessels and still lifes, which have, in addition to the earlier-referenced familial connotation, a distinct tribal-artifact sensibility.

Although he taught at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign for many years, Chardiet is reluctant to cite particular artists whose work he thinks might be influenced by his. He does count Greg Fidler and Carmen Lozar, however, among those of his students he feels helped guide to becoming successful artists.

#### On LIBERTY:

"The word Liberty brings up really strong feelings for me. As a family, having lost our liberties, we know what it is like to live without them, to lose everything that generations worked for. To live in fear. This is reflected in the colors I sometimes choose: a sense of isolation and loss."

*Considered one of the leaders in the second generation of the Studio Glass movement, Chardiet has been a successful glass artist and teacher for more than two decades. His works reveal that the conflicts that are inseparable to defining our identities as an individual, couple, family often provide the questions that can challenge who we really are.*



"Night Horn" blown, cast, hot sculpted glass, mixed media, 19 x 4 x 5.5 inches



*"Optical Pyramid" coldworked, polished, colored and laminated optical glass, 4.5 x 4.5 x 4.5 inches*



**Pavel Novák** was born in 1974 Czechoslovakia, a country with a long tradition of beautiful glass made with

impeccable craftsmanship.

After completing 8th grade, at age 14, young adults in Czechoslovakia toured different factories to choose careers ...

"I was most suited for glass grinding because of my abilities to use geometry and think 3 dimensionally. Once the decision was made, I was taken to the Glass school in Novy Bor, where my schooling lasted a little over 4 years and included a mix of both technical and creative curriculum, as well as a comprehensive study of the history of glass as well as art history and drawing."

"Shortly after I began my education, in 1988, the Velvet Revolution happened. Afterwards, fighting between the Czechs and Slovaks led to the separation of the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1993. This left the country,

and our future, completely up in the air. We knew that the communists weren't coming back, but the general feeling among the students was one of pessimism. Our futures seemed uncertain, and we had no idea what direction things would go."

"After graduation from the Glass School at Novy Bor, I got a job at one of the largest glass factories in the Czech Republic, Crystalex. Even though the country was no longer communist, the system was still highly regulated, and salaries in the factory were not determined on skill, but seniority. It was a very grueling job with long hours and no incentive to be creative or use any type of initiative. After about 6 months, I was offered a job at the Glass School. I immediately left and began teaching."

"One day, Vladimira Klumpar-Pavlik offered me summer work grinding glass for her husband in the US. Upon arrival, Michael left an open map on the kitchen table making all the important places I needed to know like supermarket and bank etc., and left me the keys to his home and car. I was

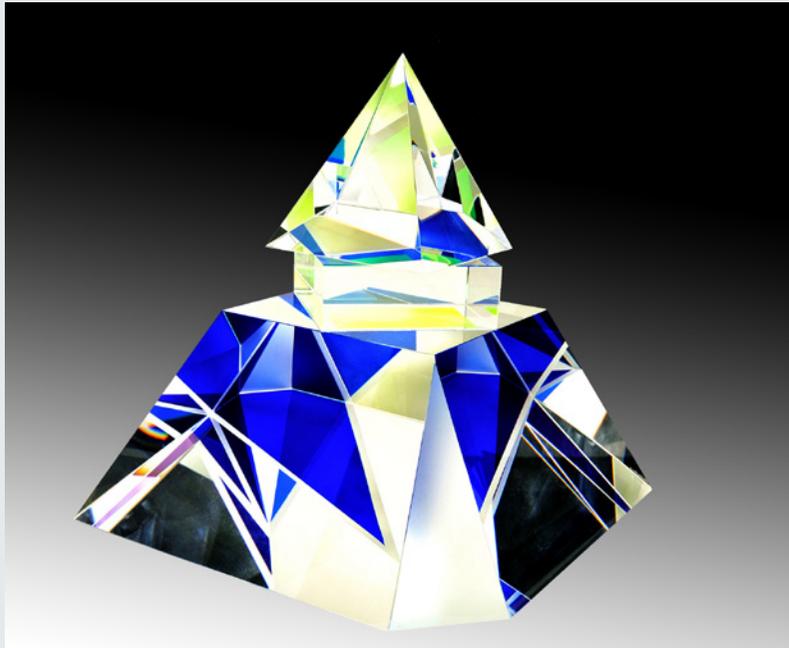
immediately struck by how trusting he was of me, a complete stranger! ... this was my first taste of Freedom."

"Upon returning to the Czech Republic after my first trip working for Michael, I realized that even after the Communists were no longer in power, there was no point in having any creative aspirations in the Czech Republic - it was clear to me that there was no way for me to be an independent artist like Michael. After 7 years working part-time in the US, I moved here."

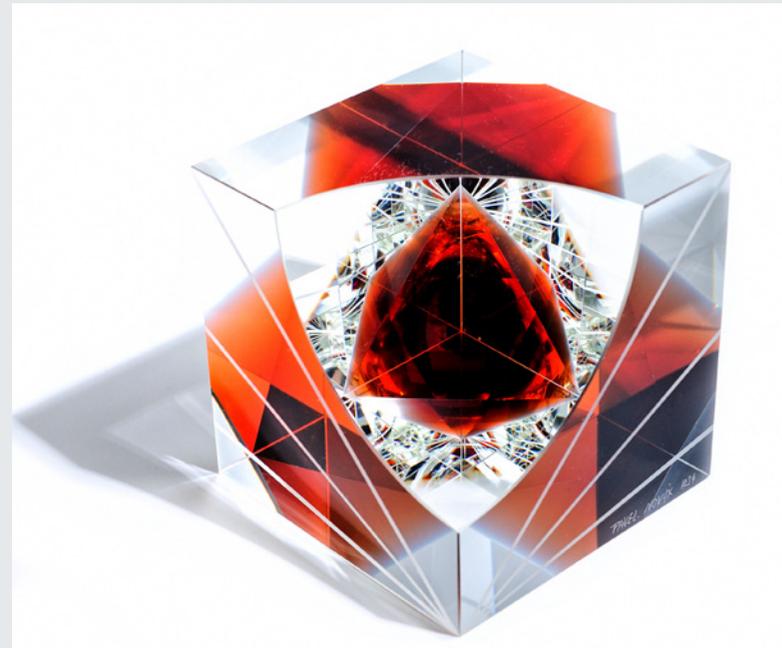
*"Cascade" coldworked, polished, colored and laminated optical glass, sterling silver.*



*My freedom to live the life of my choosing is in the forefront of my mind.*



"Blue Pyramid" coldworked, polished, colored and laminated optical glass, 12.5 x 11.5 x 11.5 inches



"Radiation" coldworked, polished, colored and laminated optical glass 5 x 5 x 5 inches

### On the WORK:

"My work is inspired by clean geometric shapes. I make paper and Styrofoam models of my sculptures before I even touch any glass to work out the geometry of the pieces three dimensionally. Often times I make a small scale piece to get a preview of the optics of the piece. The glass used in all of my work is the highest grade available; It is manufactured using platinum in the melting process. This results in glass that is stunningly clear and has a much higher refractive index. My pieces feature bold

colors and crisp lines that optically reflect on themselves and refract light creating kaleidoscopic results. I ultimately seek a balance of symmetry and asymmetry, shape and color."

"When designing my line of jewelry, I was challenged to integrate my glass with sterling while maintaining the integrity of each material. I am not interested in setting the glass on top of the metal in a traditional stone setting, but integrating the two materials to form a whole."

### On INFLUENCES:

While not directly stated, significant influences in Pavel's work would be the Czech Republic's long history of cut glass, Czech Cubism, and severe Soviet-era architecture -all filtered through his work with Michael Pavlik and Martin Rosol.

"Michael taught me many things about living in the US, but more importantly, he introduced me to my best friend, Martin Rosol, as well as the uniquely American style of cooking called barbeque which still remains a favorite of mine."

### On LIBERTY:

"Living in America gives me the freedom to make my living as an artist, and make and sell the work that I choose to make. If I had chosen to stay in the Czech Republic, my life would have been spent either working as a teacher, or in a factory making someone else's work. It was always my dream to be able to design my own body of work, and make a living on my own terms. I am grateful to be doing just that.

"This exhibition comes at a time when thoughts of my nationality, identity, and my freedom to live the life of my choosing is in the forefront of my mind. I started the lengthy process of becoming a US citizen, which stirred up many emotions and thoughts of my life's path. I had to tell my family, still living in the Czech Republic, that I was going to give up my Czech citizenship. My parents were very hurt and disappointed that I was essentially renouncing the identity that they know, and their way of life. I was forced to confront my past with my present and future. On January 23, I went for my citizenship test and interview, and was delighted to pass, and take my oath of citizenship that very same day."

*Despite his "emerging artist" status, Pavel could be counted among the fourth generation of Studio Glass artists, having worked with some of the most recognized optical-glass sculptors of our time, including Michael Pavlik, Martin Rosol, and Steven Weinberg (who studied under Eric Hilton at Alfred, and Chihuly at RISD). His brilliant sculptures and jewelry are quickly gaining national recognition.*



"Asymmetric Collar" Coldworked, polished, colored and laminated optical glass, sterling silver.



"Gelyu and Fire Flies"  
 cast glass, bubinga wood frame, aluminum, acrylic paints  
 15 x 15 x 4 inches



Binh Pho was born and raised in Saigon, South Vietnam ... and has had a truly remarkable life's journey, a heartwarming and miraculous struggle for freedom, and is

an amazing American success story - a result of his unique combination of intellect, creativity, energy, and perseverance.

"I was born during the war, North and South Vietnam, Communist vs. Freedom. On April 30, 1975, the war ended. I made it to the U.S. embassy for evacuation but was one of the many left behind when the last helicopters departed. It was a dramatic turn in my life. I was in my sophomore year of college majoring in Architecture but the "Red Peace" ended that. At that time there were only two schools. One taught Communism, the other was a Re-education Camp.

"I refused to accept the reality of Communism. Right or wrong, I knew I didn't want to live in a Communist country like the Soviet Union. Six months later I attempted my first escape to find freedom, but I was captured and ended up in a "reeducation camp". I spent one year in there to supposedly get my brain-washed, then they let me back in the city. After that I tried three more times. Finally my day had come... On September 29, 1978, I and my 38 companions reached the Freedom Soil after seven days on the small boat floating across the Gulf of Siam to Malaysia. Due to vast numbers of refugees at that time, I spent eight months in a Refugee Camp located on a deserted island outside of Kuala Lumpur. I was re-united with my family in St. Louis, Missouri on May 7, 1979 after four of the longest years of my life"

From that day on, Pho began his life again. He continued his education, earning his

Bachelor degree in 1982. He picked up wood turning as a hobby in 1992 and has never looked back, viewing his art as a symbol of living things.

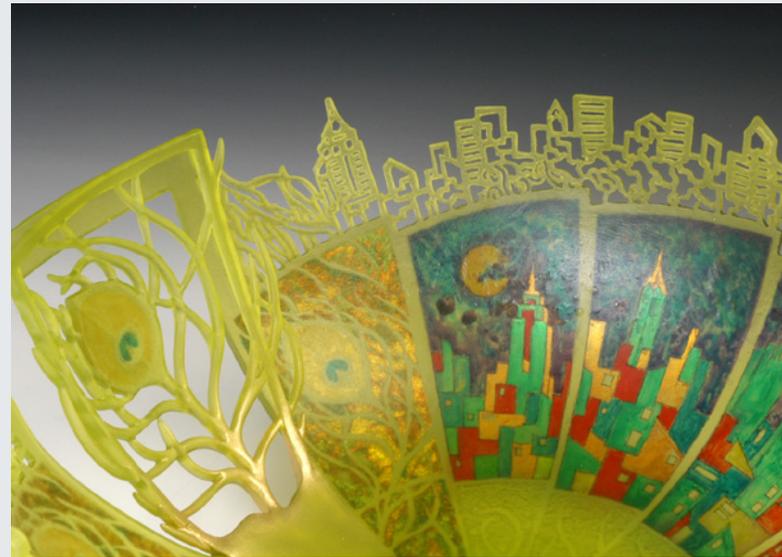
#### On the WORK:

Pho has long been recognized as a master wood turner. He broke new ground with his innovative, intricately carved and pierced surfaces, which were augmented by his colorful, narrative paintings. The works feature a highly personal iconography, with imagery that relates to Asian culture and the natural world. Recently, he has taken on the challenge of expressing his aesthetic in glass, after three years of research and development. The surface detail he has achieved successfully evokes the intellectual and emotional response as you peruse his story in glass. From a heavy log of timber to a light, thin vessel, negative spaces interlock with solid surface.

*Liberty is not a fancy word, and its meaning is not obvious until it is no longer there*



"Gateless Dream" cast glass, paint on glass, 5 x 13 inches diameter



"Gateless Dream" detail

The color, grain and natural look of the wood all reflect the principle of Yin and Yang.

"Every piece of my work (first in wood, now in glass) has a story or a memory in the design; they represent my life story." Pho met his future wife, Vi, on that island off the coast of Kuala Lumpur, and she, and the story of their love, figures prominently in many of his works. "Now the challenge

is the combination of the two opposite mediums so it can tell the story better."

"What do I do? I put a soul into every piece I create. I don't make objects; I create characters. If the viewers can pick up on that soul, I've accomplished it. My work primarily reflects the Far East culture and my Journey to the West.

"I love to bring the beauty of nature and hand-creation techniques together to create character and soul in a piece.

"Glass is most opposite from wood, cold and fragile, when it breaks, it's gone... it reminds me of life itself, it can be shattered in an blink of an eye. The idea of wood and glass is also very Yin and Yang. It represents balance of all things."

### On INFLUENCES:

"My work comes from memories, culture, Zen mind and my own thoughts. Negative spaces inspire me, as they represent the unseen weight of the unknown, which I use to take the viewers into my work."

While Binh does not name a particular artist working in glass who influenced him directly, clearly the medium itself has. Alternatively, Binh's influence on other wood turners is significant – he tours, demonstrates and shares his knowledge freely. Recently, his explorations in glass (and the subsequent commercial success) have prompted other wood sculptors to investigate the material as well, many with exceptional results.

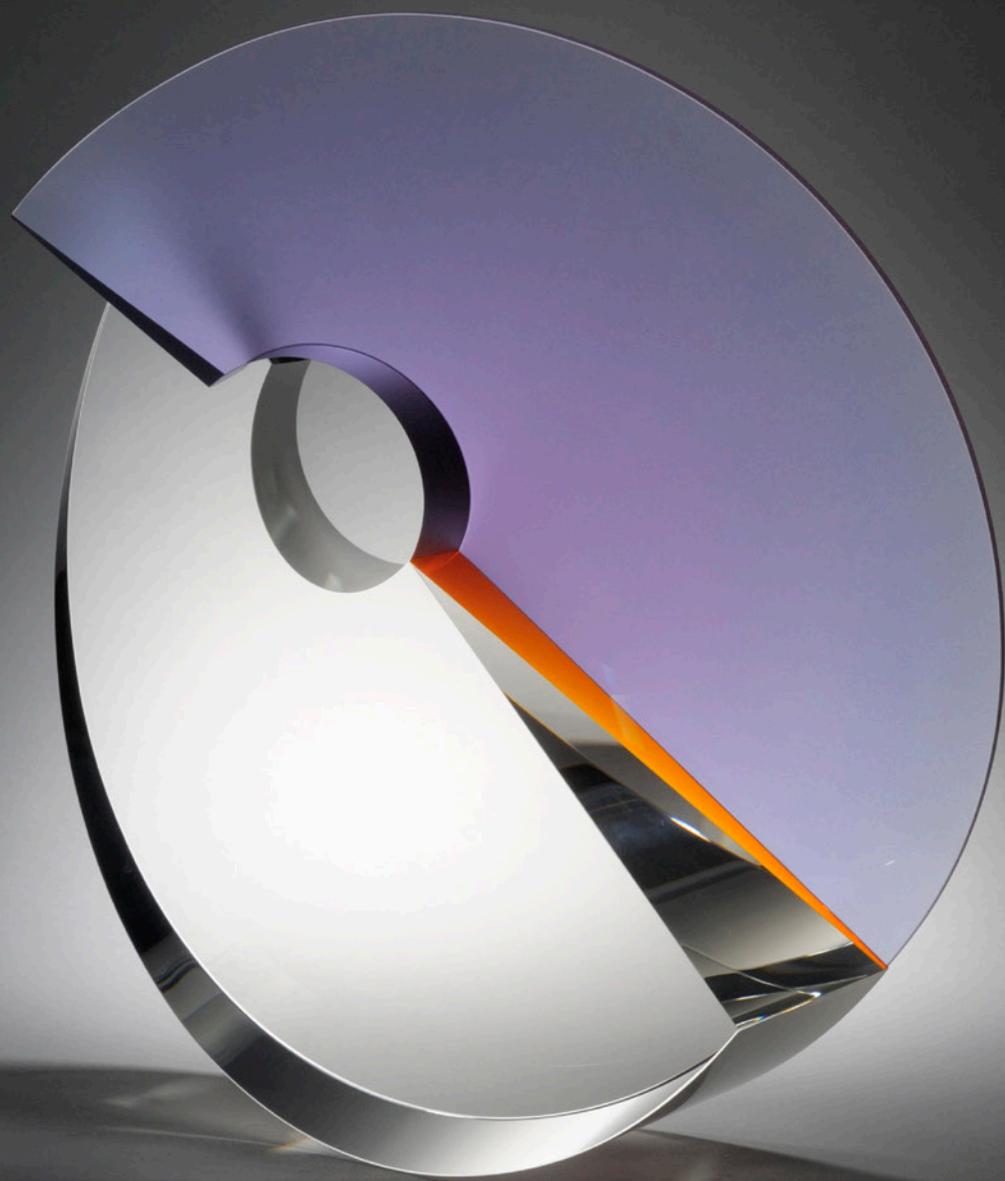
### On LIBERTY:

"Liberty is not a fancy word, and its meaning is not obvious until it is no longer there; the absence of Liberty is much more powerful than when it's there, something that I can't describe in words, only experience it to understand why millions willing to die for it."

*Binh is an internationally-renowned wood sculptor, in museum and private collections worldwide, who has recently begun working in glass and is considered a rising star.*



"Between Worlds - Cerise 1" cast glass, acrylic paints 14 x 8 inches diameter



"Calla" cut, polished and laminated optical glass, 17 x 18 x 5 inches

**Martin Rosol** was born in Czechoslovakia in 1956, and learned his trade in a "company school" set up to train craftsmen to execute limited edition designs for art glass manufacturers.

"My introduction to glass was as an apprentice in Prague, where I worked for 10 years. There was no option for school for me, and at that time you could not be an 'artist' without the official sanction of the government."

After spending all day cutting and grinding functional production objects for the factory, Martin would stay late and use scraps to construct his own abstract sculpture. However Rosol's own designs were not accepted by the art establishment in Czechoslovakia, as not adhering to accepted 'artistic qualities'. Feeling trapped, he entered his pieces to an exhibition in Germany. Three of his

works were accepted and went on display as part of the Czechoslovak exhibition at the 1981 Art and Craft Fair in Munich, with one sculpture awarded a Gold Medal - the Bavarian State Prize - for its mastery of execution and powerful artistic expression. It was surprising, because such prizes had previously only been awarded to internationally-renowned Czech artists such as Professor Stanislav Libensky, Pavel Hlava and Frantisek Vizner. Rosol's prize-winning piece was purchased by the Director of the Fair for his own private collection. However, this acclaim provided no changes in Martin's professional life, and he continued to be rejected in Prague.

A turning point came with established artist Michael Pavlik's visit to Czechoslovakia. He was advised by Czech glass artists to collaborate with Rosol, who was the best in this field.

At Pavlik's insistence, and with the influence of Soviet Perestroika, which made the political restrictions a bit milder for Czechoslovakia, Rosol was awarded a five-month tourist visa to the USA. There, he worked for Pavlik, helping him as an adviser and a grinder in his studio. When Rosol's



*People in free countries take so many of their liberties for granted.  
Liberty is a way of life not easily achieved, which has to be protected.*



"Soul" - blown glass, a piece created by Martin as a reminder of his struggle for liberty and freedom.

Martin Rosol working in his studio

visa expired, he had to return in order to be reunited with his family, which had been forced to remain in Prague. However Rosol was already inspired by the possibilities he had encountered in the US ... and he decided to act.

"I left in 1986 because I was seeking artistic and personal freedom. I escaped Czechoslovakia by car with my wife and two small children to Yugoslavia, then Austria, then Germany, living in the car for three weeks. When we all finally reached Germany, we found we had nothing except the clothes we were standing

in. We lived in Germany for eighteen months before coming to the US as legal immigrants."

#### On the WORK:

Influenced both by architectural studies, and more recently the natural world, Martin's sculptures are designed to receive and contain illumination, and may recall abstract connections between the earthly world of the oceans on one hand and the extraterrestrial world of the cosmos on the other.

Made with several pieces of glass precisely cut from blocks of crystal, the glass is constructed after selected surfaces have been sand-blasted. The sculptures are multi-dimensional; some surfaces clear, some opaque. Often, Rosol includes thin blades of colored glass, sometimes used in concert with (or opposition to) special dyes between the composed elements. The results are "monuments to light", changing from quiet and contemplative to exuberant and dazzling with only a few degrees difference in viewing angle.

#### On INFLUENCES:

"I come from a country with a strong glass tradition, so my work is influenced by the many generations that came before me, but Howard Ben Tre, and Michael Pavlik have inspired my work here in America. In turn, I have taught many students at Corning and have worked with other artists, and have shared my technical and aesthetic expertise with them."

#### On LIBERTY:

"People in free countries take so many of their liberties for granted. Liberty is a way of life not easily achieved, which has to be protected. Here, I am free to explore my concepts ... my pieces were conceived and executed in Freedom, and being in this exhibition is an ultimate manifestation of this process."

*Martin's elegant, architecturally-inspired sculptures have been exhibited, and are represented in, private and public collections worldwide, such as the Museum of Art and Design in New York, The Corning Museum of Glass, the Kanazawa Museum in Japan and the Moravian Gallery, Brno, Czech Republic.*

top: "Atlantis" cut, laminated and polished optical glass, 10 x 14 x 8 inches

bottom: "Duet" cut, laminated and polished optical glass, 10 x 19 x 8 inches





"Vortex", kiln cast glass, 15 x 15 x 5 inches



"I left Poland with my family in 1960, escaping in the middle of the night in an old fishing boat together with two other families, all hidden in a specially constructed hideaway in the engine room. Due to a broken compass, we ended up in Sweden. We continued to Copenhagen, Denmark, where the leaky vessel eventually sank.

"In 1978 I attended the School of Applied Arts in Copenhagen, studying ceramics. There I 'discovered' Glass - the first time I opened the door and looked in, I never returned to ceramics. It was like a vision without a picture. I came to Illinois from Denmark in 1982 to study with Joel Philip Myers, head of the glass program at Illinois State University, for one year ... I am still here."<sup>5</sup>

For over thirty years, Walentynowicz has created compelling sculptural works in glass that repeatedly garner national and international attention. He is among the first artists to move beyond the realm of decorative studio glass to create unique works on a highly personal level. He seeks to portray shared human experiences through the implied fragility of glass.

For over thirty years, Walentynowicz has created compelling sculptural works in glass that repeatedly garner national and international attention. He is among the first artists to move beyond the realm of decorative studio glass to create unique works on a highly personal level. He seeks to portray shared human experiences through the implied fragility of glass.

**On the WORK:**

"For me, art is not merely a means to produce decorative objects, but a tool for exploration, expression and communication. In my work, there seems to be a constant search: for the unknown, the un-tried, a yearning for change and movement."

Walentynowicz mines the physical characteristics of glass – its fragility and fluidity, its reflections and refractions – to metaphorically and expressively comment

on the emotional vagaries of the human condition.

Interviewed by the Columbus Museum of Art, he said, "Glass insists that we look into it, that we not stop at the surface of what is shown. The emotional states depicted here are points of easily disturbed equilibriums between inner and outer states. The traces of surface, color and texture both hold back and reveal clues. You can look past these external details of identity right into the scars and stress of experience which are still evident and threatening internally though healed on the surface."<sup>6</sup>

"Glass as a material reflects and underlines some of the strongest aspects of my concerns, such as the implied fragility, the visible weaknesses and flaws, the transparent exposure of the inner matter. With the work

*In one's mind, freedom can flourish ...  
a narrow mind is the strongest prison of all.*



I'm doing it would not make sense if the glass looked too perfect, because the work deals with aspects of life, and questions about the human condition. Life isn't perfect; my work can't be perfect either.

"My interest has always been focused on the intimate levels of human relations, the ever-challenged gender roles and the factors shaping our identities. Although mostly working with themes from personal experience, I seek to portray shared human experiences in a way which allows the viewer to expand ... with his or her own experience and memories. It is important to me that the beholder becomes personal with the work rather than trying to 'read it'; remembering that, – In art – as in life, two and two is seldom four."

*In his free-standing pieces, he evokes the effects of precious stone, where translucence, tonal densities, and colorations contribute to a soft, quasi-glow. And Walentynowicz manages surface texture with skill and insight, contributing both to the psychological impact of the piece and the viewer's awareness of it as an art object.* — G. Jurek Polanski

top: Mask "Armor I", reverse painted cast glass, steel, 13 x 5 x 9.5 inches

bottom: Danish news article on his escape

### On INFLUENCES:

"I have always been attracted to the work of American artists from the 60's – 70's, which includes Johns, Rauschenberg, Oldenburg, Warhol, Pollack etc. More than any particular artist, I admired and loved the virility, the innovation, and border breaching energy of those artists / that age, and 30 years ago, I sensed some of that same energy and passion in the (then still new) media of glass. As a young glass artist however, I was inspired and moved by the work of Bertil Valien.

"Working in America – for ten years I studied with and worked for Joel Phillip Myers, one of the pioneers of this 'new' field of glass, – has had a profound effect on my work ... offered much more room to innovation and experimentation ... provided an opportunity to be part of something new, which did not exist elsewhere.

"Although I have often heard from younger artists that they find my work inspiring, I am reluctant to list any here, as 'influenced' by my work. However, two artists who have directly stated having been influenced by my work are Mark Parsons and Karen LaMonte."

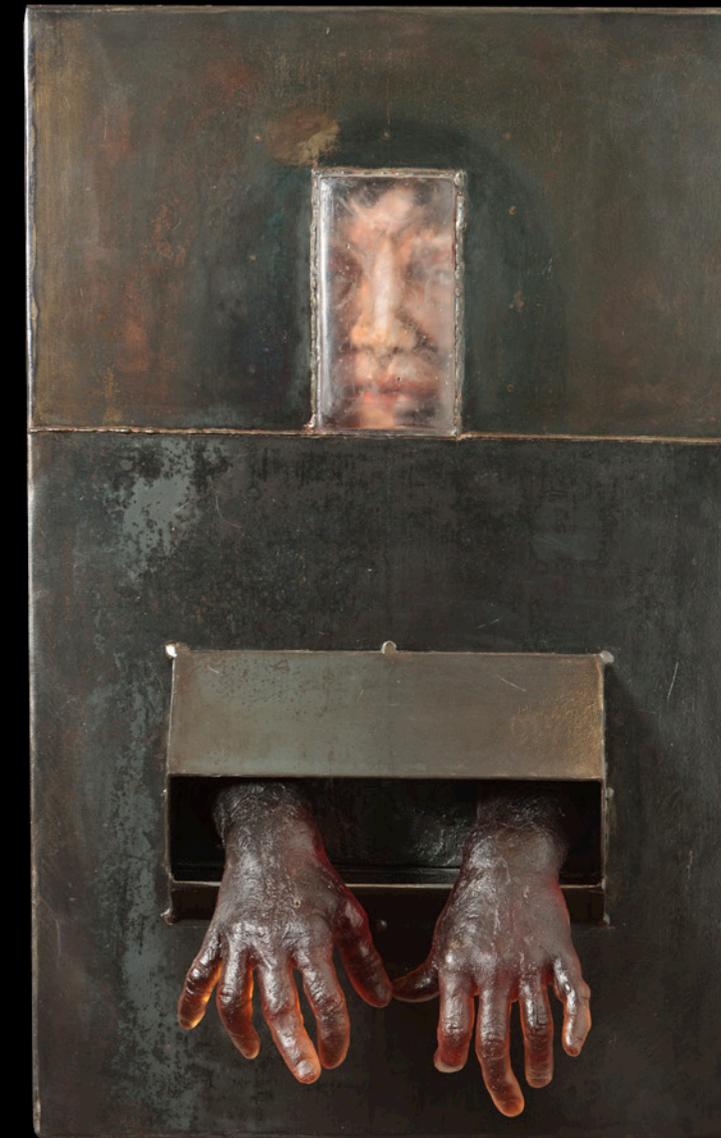
### On LIBERTY:

"Coming from a Communist society, I have experienced first hand the difference between free and oppressive societies. It is fairly easy to point out which countries are liberal and progressive, and which are closed and oppressive; it is another matter to take this down to a more personal level.

"In ones mind, freedom can flourish, even in the most oppressive societies. My background has provided me with an open and searching mind and a "never look back" attitude toward life. All this reflects back into my work, as my work, deepest down, is a reflection of me. "Indeed, a narrow mind is the strongest prison of all. You may enjoy living in a free society, and not even realize that you are living within the confining walls of a closed mind.

"'Prisoner' reflects mental and spiritual imprisonment, while 'Chain', I think, perfectly addresses the notion of freedom and liberty, expressed very much in its large (heavy) scale, together with the last, broken link ..."

*Janusz' works have been included in solo, group, and juried exhibitions at museums and commercial galleries and have been collected by major museums in the United States, France, Denmark, The Netherlands and Taiwan.*



"Prisoner" reverse painted cast glass, steel, 30 x 19.5 x 9 inches

## Credits & Acknowledgements:

In addition to the artists' own materials, the following sources proved invaluable:

Footnote 1: [Southwest Art Magazine](#); January 2009. Latchezar Boyadjiev - Luminous cast-glass sculptures, by Rosemary Carstens

Footnotes 2: [Glass Focus](#), Beverly Copeland's artist interview of Jose Chardiet (June/July 1995)

Footnote 3: [The Smithsonian Archives of American Art](#) - Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project For Craft and Decorative Arts in America; Interview of José Chardiet, Conducted by Josephine Shea - July 29, 2009

Footnotes 4: [American Craft](#), December 1998/January 1999; Chardiet: STILL LIFE by James Yood

Footnotes 5, 6: [Glass Focus](#), Beverly Copeland's artist interview of Janusz Walentynowicz, (Feb., 1995)

Footnotes 7: [AmericanStyle Magazine](#), October 2004; Still Life with Movement, by Lisa Palmer, October

As with every endeavor of this scale, it is accomplished only with the help, guidance, and support of others. I must thank the artists for their participation, exceptional artworks, and willingness to share their stories.

Thanks also go to Gwen Borowsky, CEO of the National Liberty Museum, for the opportunity to produce this special exhibition, the scale of which is unprecedented in the Museum's history. Thanks, too, to Dr. Arlene Silvers, who "wanted to talk to me about something".

I also thank the Art Alliance for Contemporary Glass for their generous support of this project.

And most of all, my thanks to Amy, with whom good things happen.

— D. Scott Patria  
June 2012



# SEEKING FREEDOM:

Six Artists' Journeys from Oppression to Freedom.

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Bribed border guards, midnight sails on homemade boats, refugee and re-education camps are but a few of the dramatic elements in the inspiring stories behind their journeys. All are now here in the United States and are established artists contributing to the collective artistic culture of their new homeland. Many of the artworks featured will reference struggle, journey, transition – even joy

*Participating artists:*

LATCHEZAR BOYADJIEV

JOSÉ CHARDIET

PAVEL NOVÁK

BINH PHO

MARTIN ROSOL

JANUSZ WALENTYNOWICZ



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