

# Pilchuk Proposal

Ten years ago glass blowing schools in this country were non-existent. Now there are over sixty. For the first time in history glass has broken away from the traditional needs of the consumer and his factories. In the summer of 1970, Ruth Tamura and I began planning for a glass center that would have a rotating faculty representing the various new approaches and attitudes towards glass. It was time to provide an atmosphere where people could get together to discuss and explore these new ideas. From the beginning we wanted to be located in an isolated setting, feeling that such an environment would be conducive to concentration and total involvement. When Mr. and Mrs. John Hauberg learned of our search for property, they offered us the use of their Tree Farm fifty miles north of Seattle overlooking Puget Sound. The result is Pilchuck, a glass blowing center in the foothills of the Cascade Mountains.

With the sanction and aid of the Union of Independent Colleges of Art (UICA), two other teachers and I, along with sixteen students from throughout the United States, started building Pilchuck on June 1, 1971. Sixteen days later we finished the shop, lit the furnaces and started blowing glass in one of the most ideal situations we could hope for.

Pilchuck was a total educational experience, functioning on the premise that the way people live, learn, cook, eat, and relate to each other is all part of how they express themselves—their art. The faculty used this environment to encourage students to design their own program and direction, and to open themselves to new demands on their imagination and intuition. Everyone built their own shelter and prepared their own food. When they woke up in the woods, started a fire and cooked breakfast, they had a lot more energy and confidence for the day than they would waking up in a dormitory and standing in line in a cafeteria.

One must have this confidence and energy to become totally involved in the nature of glass and its complex processes, as in any highly disciplined skill. Students quickly learned to take care of themselves in the woods, and gained the confidence to become completely in tune with glass. They were relaxed and absorbed, the two most important prerequisites for learning how to handle the molten material.

Probably the most satisfying aspect of the eight week program was the obvious skill and spirit that almost everyone displayed in an exhibition we held in a Seattle gallery, where we raised \$800 towards our \$2,900 deficit. Equally encouraging was the hope and enthusiasm young people have when given an educational atmosphere that allows them the opportunity to express themselves fully without the usual distractions and restrictions of our overcrowded and confusing cities and their highly structured schools.

Our conclusion at the end of the summer was that a workshop such as Pilchuck offers students an alternative that complements rather than competes with the normal art school curriculum, giving them a truly broadening educational experience. After Pilchuck we returned to our own home institutions with new energy and purpose, encouraged in our hopes for an expanded program for the second summer.

This summer at Pilchuck we wanted to make available to thirty students an enlarged glass shop with additional new facilities and an expanded program. Many glass blowers, myself included, have been incorporating the use of different types of audio-visual hardware to illustrate certain glass phenomena that would be impossible to exhibit otherwise. As an example: *three out of the twelve glass blowers chosen to exhibit at the First International Glass Symposium in Zurich this June (myself included) are using video TV equipment to illustrate certain aspects of their work.* Others will be employing the use of projectors and films to inform the public about techniques and to illustrate work that might have been too fragile to transport. Because of this fragility of glass and its newly discovered sculptural possibilities, many of us are executing projects that are designed primarily to be recorded and exhibited with audio-visual equipment. After the piece has been recorded it is often left on location because of its fragility or impossibility to transport—the only record of the work being the video tape, slides, and films to be distributed to museums and galleries.

Employing this audio-visual equipment obviously allows a much greater freedom in our collective search for new forms and techniques. As a complement to the glass shop this summer, therefore, we are initiating a media shop which will include film, sound, photography, and video equipment, and will be under the direction of Lewis Simpson. The expanding possibilities in glass, and the growing interest in the potential of audio-visual hardware, will create an exciting relationship.

The audio-visual equipment with its communication possibilities will provide us with many other important services. *In order for Pilchuck to function as a Glass Center representing the various attitudes and ideas from this country and abroad, it will be necessary and important to document the numerous rotating and visiting faculty. We will make complete audio-visual records of the summer, containing all the discussions, material sources, technical information, ideas, experiments, and other information which we will then make available in the form of film, video, and slide kits to interested schools, companies and individuals in this country and abroad.*

**For information on how things progressed this past summer; how to obtain the videotapes made there; or how to apply for next year's program write to: Dale Chihuly, Pilchuck Project Director, Rhode Island School of Design, 2 College Street, Providence, R.I. 02903.**

