



Weaves of Glass

Markow & Norris Turn Sand into Poetry

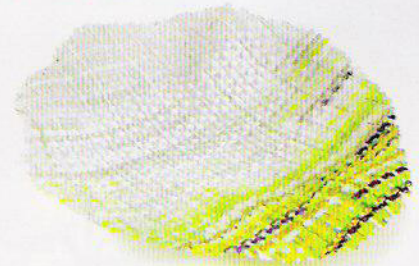


IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR WAYS TO FIND magic in the humblest of natural elements, look no further than the Virginia-based artist duo of Markow & Norris, whose impossibly beautiful creations, when you get right down to it, are really just made of limestone sand. Eric Markow and Thom Norris have been collaborating nearly 15 years, and their commitment to innovation and craftsmanship is evident in their work, which is stunning in its intricacy. Although they reveal little about their process — no one really knows how they actually weave the glass — they are quick to share their commitment to keeping the studio “green,” by recycling unused glass rather than having it wasted, or carted away to a landfill. Thom recalls

their one and only trip to the dump, years ago, to dispose of some unused sheet glass. “We pulled into the dump to throw away this big load of glass, and it just felt so wrong,” he remembers. “Not only is the glass expensive, it is terrible to see such a thing in a landfill.” Today, the artists use 99 percent of all the glass they source in final artwork, by re-heating and re-mixing unused pieces.

Their amazingly complex glass pieces are each tightly woven, intricate layers of glass that call to mind fabrics, or as in their new origami-inspired works, paper. Each piece weaves a tale, so to speak, of countless hours of design and labor. Like most glass artists, they jealously protect their process; however, we learned that the secret lies somewhere in their ability to time the weaving to occur at precisely the right time, somewhere between hot (molten, blown) and cold (solid) states of glass-cooling. The two scientists/artists discovered, years ago as they were embarking on their new discoveries in glass manipulation, that when they layered sheets of glass or added colored glass powders to one another, the material became more malleable for bending and

stretching into shape. The work is intense: each piece takes about six weeks from concept to execution, and requires over 200 hours of kiln time.



The woven effect, perfected over five years of experimentation, is certainly unique. “People can’t believe it’s glass until they actually touch it,” they say, when defending their art as primarily a tactile delight. But this is no ordinary colored sand. Since the first pieces exhibited in a Baltimore art show in 2004, Markow & Norris have become a sensation across the country, and are featured in over 50 galleries across the U.S. Woven glass pieces range in price from about \$400 to \$15,000, and there is a four to six month waiting period for a custom design.

— STACEY WILLIAMS-NG

Milwaukee glass lovers can find Markow & Norris works at the Katie Gingrass Gallery in the Third Ward, or visit their web site at www.wovenglass.com.

Eric Markow and Thom Norris turn recycled glass into intricately woven works of art.

