

The 25 Year Dream

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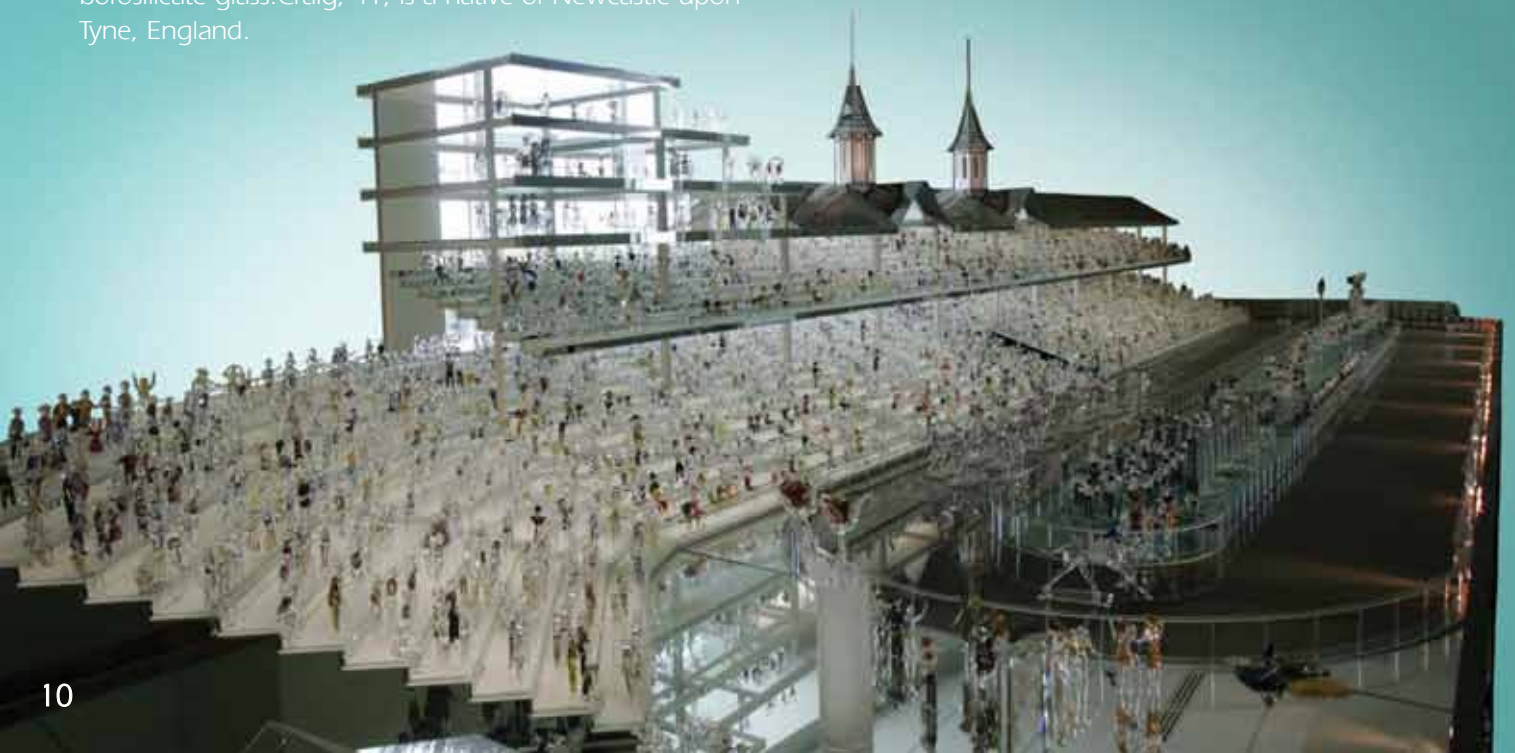
Fans from all over the globe have packed the stadium in anticipation. The starting gate is out and the jockeys plan the race in their minds. The bets have all been placed as the trumpet sounds. A drop of sweat falls from a jockey's brow. His horse's muscles are tense as its nostrils flare.....

"BANG!" the starting gun fires and the greatest two minutes in sports is on its way. 20 horse/jockey teams sprint across the track and the crowd goes wild. The race is historic, the scene is set and it is all made out of GLASS!!

Meet Craig Colquhoun. Colquhoun (pronounced Col-hoon) is a resident of Naples, Florida and this is his masterpiece. It is a 30ft x 10ft x 10ft tall, artist's rendition of Churchill Downs during the Kentucky Derby. The replica holds nearly 5,000 spectators, several buildings, including the famous spires and 20 horses running around a bronze mirrored track. It is detailed down to the tiered and covered grandstands, starting gates, the winner's circle, University of Louisville Marching Band, vendors, flowers, police, security and spectators enjoying mint dolips and champagne in ice buckets. It is an amazing sight to behold, weighs three tons and consists of mostly lampworked borosilicate glass. Craig, 41, is a native of Newcastle upon Tyne, England.

He began the art of torchwork at 16 in a small gift shop the first week of May, 1980. He worked hard and learned quickly. Three years later he set out on his own. After earning a grant from the Prince's Trust, set up by HRH, Prince Charles, The Prince of Wales to help young people start their own business. Craig's life was changed forever in 1986 when he met HRH Princess Diana.

Craig was displaying his artistic glass at the opening of the Newcastle Youth Enterprise Centre, a facility supported by the Prince's Trust. Princess Diana was in attendance and was escorted around to view the displays of the young British businessmen. Upon Craig's introduction to Diana, "The English Rose", he presented her with a glass rose. "What are you going to do with your glass blowing prowess?" she asked. Craig proceeded to tell her of his dream of artistically creating Churchill Downs out of glass. After chatting for a while, Diana continued her tour of the facility. Before the end of the tour she came back to the glass booth and said "Craig, follow your dream." These words have stayed with Craig throughout his life and spurred him on to do just that.



Colquhoun kept the dream and created a niche for himself by making sports objects out of sculpted borosilicate glass. He made racing horses, football (soccer) players and golf figures amongst other things. Different sporting events would pay him to make glass awards and trophies.

In 1999, he and wife, Gail and daughter, Charlie, moved to Naples, Florida to complete a commission for a man associated with the Nuveen Masters Tennis Tournament. His first stadium project, Craig made a 12 ft square tennis stadium. Soon after, he met a man who would become his business partner and investor. Bill Elett, a Naples resident and financial advisor joined Craig in his vision. Bill, an art lover and collector saw greatness in Colquhoun's traditional style of art-work. They joined together and started 'The House of Colquhoun' and got to work on Craig's 25 year dream. Soon, they brought in two talented American lampworkers: Jeff McDougal and Beau Hawn. These contemporary artists not only added a new flare to the Churchill Downs project but will be very active in the creation of many more stadiums on a worldwide basis.

On May 7th 2005, the glass project was completed and displayed at the 131st Kentucky Derby. In amongst several race related artistic pieces, it was one focal point of the \$121 million renovation renaissance of Churchill. "People were amazed" Craig says. "There was a mixture of shock, amazement, encouragement and some people even cried. It was an unbelievable experience and an amazing feeling I got seeing it complete after all those years. I received every compliment imaginable and the gratification I got from people's appreciation was just unreal."

The artist's rendition of Churchill Downs can be seen on the fourth floor of the new building at Churchill Downs (appointment necessary), and more pictures of the work in progress and the final piece can be viewed at www.thehouseofc.com.

To purchase spectators, roses, horses, a section of the stadium, or basically any sculpture imaginable please contact Craig Colquhoun through the website www.thehouseofc.com.

