

At Salem Community College, glass is where it's at

written by Chuck Murphy

Salem County, N.J., has a rich tradition in glass. In 1739, Caspar Wistar founded what was to become the first successful glass works in the American Colonies near Alloway in Salem County. By the twentieth century, southern New Jersey was the center of a thriving glass industry.

Scientific Glass Technology

In 1959, Salem Community College — then known as the Salem County Technical Institute — made history by offering the first post-secondary training program for scientific glassblowers. The program developed out of the need for skilled laborers in the region's glass industry. Today, the program remains the only one in North America offering an associate degree in scientific glass technology.

This unique two-year program teaches students to create glass apparatus for scientific research in laboratories, universities and industry. Engaged in both classroom study and hands-on laboratory experience, students master glassblowing skills such as cutting, heating, bending, shaping and sealing, as well as technical drawing and advanced fabrication. Program graduates are constantly in demand to fill glassblowing positions throughout the nation.

Scientific glass technology instructional chair Daryl Smith joined the College in 2000 after extensive work experience in industry. Smith holds a bachelor's degree from Texas A&M University and an associate degree in scientific glass technology from SCC. Since 1997, he has served as chair of the Delaware Valley section of the American Scientific Glassblowers Society.

Glass Art

In fall 2001, Salem Community College introduced an associate degree program in glass art. The new program provides students with a solid foundation in using glass as a sculptural material. The program stresses the importance of technical ability and critical thinking in creating glass

pieces. Students take comprehensive classes in flameworking and kiln-casting. In fact, SCC is the only college that offers a degree with a focus on these processes.

Glass art students benefit from an internationally renowned faculty, including Paul J. Stankard and Anna Boothe.

Paul J. Stankard, perhaps the best recognized and one of the most highly acclaimed flameworkers in the world, is credited with spearheading SCC's glass art program. He is known internationally for his delicate, nature-themed paperweights and botanical glass sculptures. Stankard's works are featured in over 35 public collections in museums around the world, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art; the Smithsonian Institute; the Corning Museum of Glass; Musee des Arts Decoratifs, Palais du Louvre; and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. A distinguished alumnus of Salem Community College, he teaches a course there each semester and chairs the International Flameworking Conference.

Anna Boothe, a longtime faculty member at Temple University's Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia, recently became instructional chair of glass art. Boothe is the president of the Glass Art Society and serves as education editor of the organization's newsletter. She holds a B.F.A. in sculpture from the Rhode Island School of Design and a M.F.A. from Tyler. Her own work focuses on kiln-casting, a process that she teaches regularly through a variety of international venues. She is helping to expand and create a vision for the new program's curriculum.

In addition, Paul DeMarco, an accomplished SCC graduate with an A.A.S. in scientific glass technology and a B.S. in philosophy from Humboldt State University in California, teaches the introductory and intermediate flameworking courses. His work was honored in the Glass Art Society's international student competition and was featured last year in a well-received exhibition at Rutgers University.

In addition, visiting artists and lecturers are invited to demonstrate or lecture each semester. Guests have included Doug Heller, owner, Heller Gallery, New York City; Kenneth Leap, glass painter; Bruce Metcalf, art critic, writer and jeweler; Emilio Santini, Murano-born flameworker; Michael Schunke, glassblower; Wayne Strattman, neon artist and lighting designer; Gay Taylor, curator, Museum of American Glass, Wheaton Village; and Burt Wasserman, art history professor, Rowan University.

International Flameworking Conference

Each spring, SCC hosts the International Flameworking Conference, a three-day event that includes an exciting combination of demonstrations and glass-related lectures.

The 2004 conference, which attracted more than 425 individuals from 25 states and Italy, featured Venetian glass master Cesare Toffolo. He was joined by curator Melissa G. Post, of the Mint Museum of Craft + Design in Charlotte, N.C. and a host of other presenters including artists Tina Betz, Anna Boothe, Victor Chiarizia, Robert Mickelsen, Roger Parramore, Gordon Smith and Rex Trimm.



Highlights of last year's conference included a fascinating slide show, presented by Toffolo, that explored the Venetian glass tradition and traced the artist's roots from his earliest flameworking experience as a teenager at his father's side. Toffolo, who has become world renowned for an original body of work and his remarkable flameworking skills, also gave a captivating two-hour demonstration.

In addition, Post presented the well-received slide show, "Glass: Primitive to Pop" that featured a comprehensive historical overview of creative glass, including flame-worked pieces and kiln casting.

"The conference is designed to promote excellence in flameworking through demonstrations and scholarly presentations," said conference chair Paul J. Stankard. "It offers students a unique opportunity to witness and explore the depth of the flameworking experience."

The 2004 conference also featured a panel discussion with emerging artists ages 30 and under with Marcel Braun, Jillian Molettieri and Rex Trimm, moderated by Paul DeMarco.

Japanese glass artist Iwao Matsushima will be the featured artist at the 2005 International Flameworking Conference, March 18-20. He will be joined by his wife Michiyo, who shares his passion for glass and often assists him during the complicated fabrication of his pieces.

Iwao Matsushima, considered a master of core-formed glass, is an artist who links glass' past with its future. He taught himself the ancient art of core forming, but has built upon the traditional techniques, creating an impressive body of work that is easily recognizable as his own. Matsushima has exhibited his work in museums and shows worldwide. The Okayama, Japan native serves as a lecturer at the Toyama City Institute of Glass Art and a faculty member at Okayama University.

Glass Center

Both scientific glass technology and glass art programs are housed in SCC's state-of-the-art Glass Center, which includes a large flameworking studio with 20 workstations, a cold-working shop, a kiln room and an elevated gallery, named in honor of Paul J. Stankard, for the display of glass art and scientific glass technology pieces. The 5,000-square-foot facility, opened in 1999, has allowed the College to continue expanding its course offerings.

Location

SCC is situated within an hour's drive of southern New Jersey's industrial glass sites. Within 35 miles is Wheaton Village, home of a recreated turn-of-the-century glass-blowing facility; the Museum of American Glass, which houses the premier collection of glass in the U.S.; and the Creative Glass Center of America, which provides fellowships to emerging and established glass artists. Due to the College's close proximity to Philadelphia, New York and Washington, D.C., students can visit well-known museums and galleries.

For more information about glass at Salem Community College, call (856) 299-2100 or visit www.salemcc.edu and go to "Glass Center."

Guide to Photos

Left, World-renowned glass artist and SCC alumnus Paul J. Stankard, who teaches a class each semester at his alma mater, works with student Erin Hitchner. **Top right**, SCC's Instructional Chair of Scientific Glass Technology Daryl Smith, left, provides a demonstration to students. **Center right**, SCC's Instructional Chair of Glass Art Anna Boothe, standing in rear, oversees students working in the College's Three-Dimensional Design course. The three-credit course is a required part of the glass art curriculum at Salem Community College. **Bottom right**, Instructor Paul DeMarco works with Morgan Chant in SCC's introduction to flameworking course.

