

# PROJECT 33:

## PUSHING THE LIMITS WITH 33 COE GLASSBLOWING

By Marcel Braun

Photos by Chad Boutin, Andrew Gudger & Project 33 crew

Limits can be pushed in various ways. Whether it be through marketing, equipment, technique or sheer physical endurance, the fifteen of us who poured our energy into Project 33 have experienced the trials and rewards of going outside the comfort zone. From August 11 through 22, I had the pleasure of working with a highly skilled crew of flameworkers to execute an elaborate borosilicate sculpture to benefit the Eugene Glass School. Weighing in at over 100 pounds and three feet tall, Logan's Reef is a life size rendering of seafloor being overtaken by internal creative energy; turning itself inside out, if you will.

Our saga began at 9:00 AM.

Monday morning at the Eugene Glass School.

After setting up our torches, we set to work making fishes. Our first victim was the

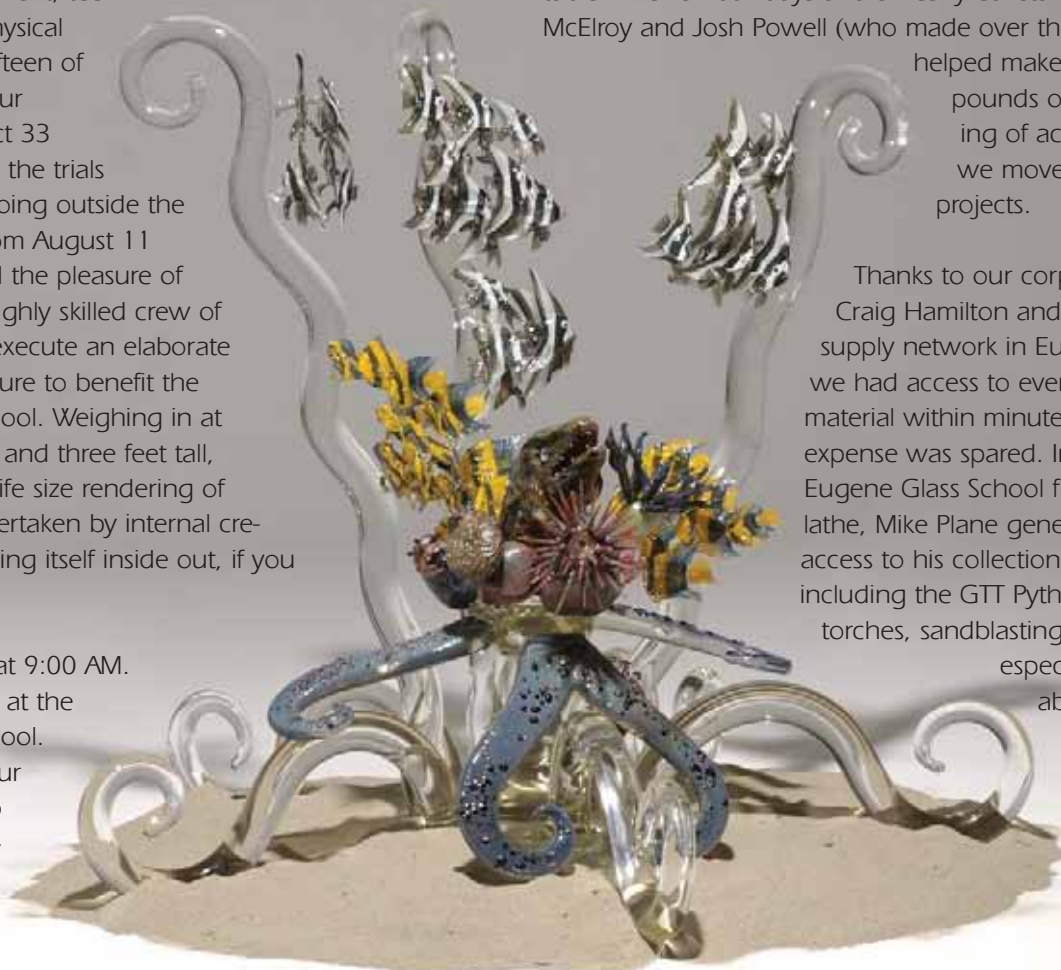
bicolor angelfish, with striking yellow and blue bands of color. The night before, Deveron and I tested our new fourteen inch 3000° gloryhole prepping flat cane for fish stock. This is my third incarceration of boro glory hole and by far the most successful yet. In

addition to the yellow and blue fish stock we made black and white cane with which to make round faced batfish. By the end of the second day, we had made one hundred seventy eight fish threatening to swim off of our overcrowded parts table. Twelve hour days and a nearly constant attack by Chris McElroy and Josh Powell (who made over thirty fish each)

helped make almost 20 pounds of fish. With a feeling of accomplishment, we moved on to individual projects.

Thanks to our corporate sponsors, Craig Hamilton and the local glass supply network in Eugene Oregon, we had access to every conceivable material within minutes, and no expense was spared. In addition to the Eugene Glass School flame shop and lathe, Mike Plane generously gave us access to his collection of equipment; including the GTT Python and hand torches, sandblasting equipment, and especially his considerable knowledge of graal and lathe-work. Our task then became to peruse several aquatic books and choose characters to render, carefully making sure they could be rendered

at or near life size while still fitting on the piece. We also had to prepare prep for the armature we were going to build at my studio. The creative juices were really flowing and we





continued our regimen of twelve hour shifts fueled by Deveron's decadent catering abilities and Chris's plentiful pots of green tea (especially the ones we boiled in seconds with the melta and his specially made boro teapot), producing a medley of brain corals, a giant fan, crabs, anemones, urchins, rocks, an eel, sea squirts, clown trigger and many more experiments and finished pieces before heading out to the studio in Alsea for armature building and to complete the final construction.

The cookie foot base was the first thing we did with the glory hole. I wanted to start with a truly massive piece of glass, so I had Mike Plane gather two whole 40 mm schott rods on the lathe, making an eighteen pound gather. It was quite the operation, starting at one end of a ten foot long (plus six feet for handles) piece of rod and gathering it into about a six inch by eighteen inch cylinder. Once we were at my studio and Mike Conrad picked it up on a punty and it took about half an hour until it started to move. I took over and with the continuing help of our two meltas soon had it so hot it was nearly dripping off the pipe. We threw a piece of kiln shelf liner down as a temporary floor marver and mushroomed it into a thirteen inch wide three inch thick disk. There was so much heat that the soles of my shoes went soft on the side closest to the piece of glass when it was on the floor. The pictures can't even begin to tell the whole story. Glory hole antics continued with several three foot long pieces of 40



mm that were bent and stretched into the arms of the sculpture, as well as gathering a 3' 46mm rod to make the central post. On the last gloryhole day everyone tried their hand at making rocks.

Kiln construction is a tedious process of donning a full hood and jacket, working for about three or four minutes and then waiting for twenty minutes for the kiln to recover. Unless things start going wrong, it is primarily a waiting game. We made steady progress through Friday afternoon building up the large clear parts and began adding the colored pieces. Little did we know

that our little troupe was about to be sorely tested with a little deep combat. Just when I thought we might actually finish on



time Friday or Saturday, a chain of miscalculations all lined up to cause a large crack halfway through the central post. At 3:00 AM we finally pushed the run key to cool the freshly healed (our fingers were crossed) armature for the first time to verify the eradication of the crack. Unfortunately the majority of our brave crew had lives to attend to in the real world and we had to bid them farewell Saturday morning, assuring them that everything was handled.

After taking a couple days for a much needed breather, Deveron, Craig Hamilton, Mike Plane, and I

put the finishing touches on in a few short workdays. While it would have been wonderful to finish the piece within the eleven days, I can't help but feel stoked on every aspect of this





project. I'd particularly like to thank the corporate sponsors who put their faith in my abilities to execute an experimental project, both technically and logistically. It is worth noting that I did the fundraising for this at a very difficult time for the industry and many of our sponsors really went out of their way to make sure this would happen, despite the market situation. As I write this, even the original idea for project 33 is still less than six months old. I'm determined to do an even better job next year, especially in the arena of publicity, so if anyone has any questions or interest in next year's project email me at: marcel@casco.net

Hugest of all props to our corporate sponsors: AIM Kiln Manufacturing, Aura Lens, Carlisle Machine, Digity, Eleventh Hour Glass, Frantz Art Glass, Glass Alchemy, Glass Torch

Technology, Living Glass Works and The Melting Point Gallery Vancouver B.C.. This project could not have happened without their very generous support.

Thanks and more thanks to our brave project participants whose hard work is greatly appreciated: Josh Powell, Melanie Cansler, Craig Clingan, Craig Hamilton, Chris McElroy, Will Henry, Cary Hollenberg, Pedro Smiley, Mike Conrad, Elijah Copeland, Matt DuBois, Abraham Brushland, Mike Plane, Deveron Musgrave and Marcel Braun.

*"Logan's Reef" is the centerpiece for the 4th Annual Eugene Glass School Auction during the 2003 Glass Renaissance on October 4th. Proceeds will be generously donated to the Eugene Glass School.*



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