

DAYBREAK



The latest creation from Marcel Braun

By Deveron Musgrave
Photos by Steve Defurio

What's four feet high weighs forty pounds and is rocking the boat in an already tempestuous sea of innovative borosilicate techniques?

'Daybreak', a new creation by Marcel Braun and his team at Living Glass works has even the most jaded boro buyers impressed. "Marcel is taking this to the next level," says Mike Cook, a glass collector and the buyer for Dementia, a chain of stores in the Los Angeles area that features functional glass objects." I've always liked people who push the edge, and Marcel is constantly pushing back the limits of lampworking."

Currently on display in Malibu, this shimmering object has a strong presence that invites the viewer closer where a wealth of detail is discovered. A towering sun rises out of a sea whose smooth surface is carpeted in brilliant yellow blossoms, under which is lingering a school of shining angelfish that encircle a wizened Octopus. This piece is the second object in a series of nine, which are intended for a show in 2003.

The large dimensions of the work made necessary a variety of adaptations in tools and technique. A typical lampworked piece can weigh as much as two to three pounds, Daybreak weighs in at nearly 40 pounds. In order to work at this scale, Marcel spent nine months designing and building the equipment needed to transform a couple

hundred pounds of glass, color and dichroic into a vision he had nurtured for years.

It was during the spring of 2001 while working on the first piece in this series, 'Walrus Vision'," says Braun, "that the concepts started to cross the line from the possible to the practical. When I first began working on this project, I don't think I realized how much time would need to be devoted just to research. Assistance from people like John Degenfelder (owner of Aim Kilns) and Henry and Susan at Glass Alchemy as well as several others has proved to be invaluable."

Sometimes spending several hours a day on the phone in addition to daily email is a requirement for maintaining connections to the world outside his shop. This has required speaking to people at length about this project, and being available to receive information when people are ready to share it. Marcel says that he also often gets calls from a variety of peers and students with questions about equipment or any number of other glass related topics. He also tries to keep updated information available through his website, www.livingglassworks.com.

With sparkling eyes and a loquacious nature, Marcel has an outgoing personality that engages and motivates the people around him. He is quick to laugh, and says an even temperament is essential to success in an environment

where a mistake can result in several weeks of effort abruptly becoming a pile of shards. "Communication and teamwork are becoming more of a focus as the projects we work on increase in scale. Having an assistant wasn't a necessity, for me a year ago, but it has become much more important," Marcel notes, "and creating a work environment that can include other people has been part of the challenge of this project. I've had to ask my assistants to do extraordinary things and seeing them calmly deliver the impossible really inspires me to keep pushing forward." Marcel views the other artists around him as a constant source of inspiration. "Clinton Roman (a successful lampworker of nearly nine years experience) has been a major contributor to the long term visions and goals of this project. Having him just down the road from here is a definite resource. Most of all I'm thankful for my assistants Deveron Musgrave and Craig Hamilton."

Having attended the 2000 summer session at Pilchuck Glass School, Marcel returned home inspired. "I want to increase my understanding of glass every day. I'm very actively continuing my education in this medium by working with it as much as often as possible, as well as taking instruction

and classes whenever I have an opportunity." When I ask Marcel where a beginning lampworker could go for instruction, he is quick to reply. "Brian Kerkvliet at Inspiration Farms, says Braun, decisively. "The first class I took was from Brian in '97, after I had been lampworking for about one year. He's a very knowledgeable and skilled glass artist who teaches and hosts a comprehensive variety of classes." Inspiration Farms can be found on the web at www.inspirationfarms.com.

Marcel is creating a unique niche in contemporary borosilicate lampworking. "I've been fortunate in that I have been able to sell my work outright. Having a marketing plan and sticking to it is crucial."

What's next for this ambitious artist? "I plan on displaying the 'Environ's' series that I have in progress by the summer of 2003." Marcel says. "I will have all of these pieces together for viewing so that people can see the evolution of these objects and how the narrative progresses through them."

After that, we'll just have to wait and see. ■■■

