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Before I began working with blown glass, I spent many years making mosaics, both on flat surfaces and sculptural forms. Glazed pieces of ceramic - broken figurines, plates and tiles – were my medium, and I used them to create complex, overlapping patterns. (Fig: 1, "Opaque Vessel III")

As an artist who worked primarily on my own, my experience as an artist in residence at the Pilchuck Glass School was a revelation. I found the collaborative process of glassblowing exciting, new and complicated. Ceramicists and mosaic artists revel in the tactile qualities of their materials, and not being able to touch the materials was a real challenge. (Fig: 2, "Spiral Red")

To make the process closer to something I knew, I experimented with making ceramic glassblowing molds, keeping my hands active and imprinting the glass with the textures of clay and the shapes of my fingers. (Fig: 3, "Yellow Head")

Experimenting further, I worked with glassblowers to create large vases onto which I could attach pieces of plates and other tableware, continuing my work with ceramic vessels that were also encrusted with patterned surfaces of broken kitchenware. (Fig: 4, "Glass Vessel 4")

From there I began to explore glass casting more deeply, learning sandcasting techniques and mastering the process of including non-glass objects, like pennies, in those castings. During this time I also spent time as an artist in residence at the Kohler Foundation in Wisconsin – a remarkable opportunity to work with industrial casting processes and materials. There I cast heads with chunks of broken cast-iron objects from the foundry's scrap pile, creating successors to my older encrusted stoneware vases. (Fig: 5, "Green Nose")

Back in Seattle, the processes I had explored at Kohler inspired me to cast a series of wing-like forms, again using my fingers to create the molds – but this time in wet sand. The scale of these pieces presented many technical challenges, but kept me working with my hands and pushed me to think about how glass, and the light it captures and redirects, can occupy space.

(Fig: 6, "Wing & Wood")



Fig: 1, "Opaque Vessel III"
mixed media
20" w 41"h x 20"d
1992
(img: Lynn Hamrick Thompson)



Fig: 2, "Spiral Red"
blown glass
12"w x 31"h x 8.75"d
1985
(img: Bill Wickett)



Fig: 3, "Yellow Head"
cast glass
12"w x 36"h x 3"d
1987
(img: Russell Johnson)



Fig: 4, "Glass Vessel 4"
blown & found glass
11"w x 5'11"h x 11"d
2000
(img: Lynn Hamrick Thompson)



Fig: 5, "Green Nose"
Steel
14"w x 30"h x 2.5"d
1986
(img: Russell Johnson)



Fig: 6, "Wings & Wood"
glass, mixed media
30"w x 70"h x 30"d
1989
(img: Lynn Hamrick
Thompson)



Fig: 7, "Axis"
cast glass
31w" x 33"h x 3"d
1996
(img: Lynn Hamrick
Thompson)



Fig: 8, "Round Tall 8"
blown glass
17.5"w x 9"h x 6.5"d
2003
(img: Russell Johnson)

Around this time I also made a series of glass wall pieces cast in molds I created by pushing and pressing patterned plates and architectural fragments into sand. I wanted to make quiet wall-mounted sculptures, continuing my experimentation with pattern, now with translucent materials. In retrospect, these feel like reliquaries to me, a connection to my Catholic childhood. (Fig: 7, "Axis")

Beginning in 1996, I began to take on public commissions. Although I had created a number of wall mosaics and low-relief sculptures, when I was commissioned in 2001 to create a hanging sculpture for the Washington State Convention and Trade Center, I began broadening my search for materials and techniques. I obviously didn't want anything that might crack or break overhead, and was all too aware of the tremendous resources required to work with cast glass, so I rejected it as a material for the project.

Nonetheless, I was excited about the colors that were available in commercially-available art glass, but that material wasn't sculptural. I wanted to play with space and was still interested in patterns, but needed to devise a way to make complicated structures that would allow me to do this.

This piece was a major turning point for me, the first in which I created a glass mosaic skin applied to a three-dimensional shape—combining the magical ability to bend color and light with space-engaging qualities of sculpture. I started to make my own tiles with metal leaf adhered to glass. The tiles were then attached to fabricated forms made of composite; this combination gave me the kind of control I'd wanted.

In 2003 I was invited to work as an artist in residence at the Museum of Glass. While there, I wanted to create a crusty interior surface for a vase intended to actually hold a flower or stem. Briefly stepping away from the processes I had developed for public spaces provided me the chance once again to combine my ceramicist's roots and Pilchuck know-how, making clay models, cast into plaster molds into which hot glass was blown. (Fig: 8, "Round Tall 8")

I've always tried to make pieces that are about combining little pieces into something bigger, with the goal of playing with and revealing the dynamic qualities of light, color and form in space. My process is very labor intensive and if I could find an easier method I'd change my ways; but I've never found another way to create this kind of skin that manipulates light and color, so I continue to do it.

I also think of my work as being contemplative, revealing the passage of time as it is experienced throughout the course of the day in changing conditions. My attention to this quality grounds me as an artist and allows me to venture into new territory knowing it will always be there to catch me.