

Mourning the Loss of Former Director David Whitehouse

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David Whitehouse (1941-2013)

David Whitehouse, former executive director of The Corning Museum of Glass, died February 17, 2013, following a brief battle with cancer. He was 71.

Abb. 2013-2/49-01
David Whitehouse



Whitehouse joined The **Corning Museum of Glass** in **1984** as **chief curator**. He became **director** in **1992**, then executive director and **curator of ancient and Islamic glass** in **1999**. He remained in that role until **2011**. Whitehouse had a profound impact on the Museum and on the advancement of the scholarship and understanding of glass.

“David was a dedicated leader and a passionate scholar, and he will be sorely missed by his colleagues in Corning and around the world,” said **Marie McKee**, Museum president. “David embodied the Museum’s mission to tell the world about glass. That mission drove everything that he did, from the **founding of the Museum’s glassmaking school** to the **numerous publications, educational programs and exhibitions** that he oversaw. We are very grateful to David for making The Corning Museum of Glass the world-class institution it is today.”

Whitehouse oversaw the growth of The Corning Museum of Glass during a **critical period** in the Museum’s history, while continuing to position the institution as a global leader in its field. During his tenure as executive director, The Corning Museum of Glass campus underwent a **major renovation and expansion**, adding 218,000-square feet of public space and spacious new quarters for the **Rakow Research Library**, the world’s foremost library of glass-related materials. Under Whitehouse’s direction, nearly **20.000 acquisitions**

were added to the Museum’s glass collection, nearly doubling the Museum’s holdings.

As a scholar, Whitehouse understood the importance of having the **world’s best research library on glass** and led the **Rakow Library**’s growth and expansion. Additions to the library under his leadership included not only books, but also rare manuscripts, and archives from artists and glass companies from around the world.

Whitehouse also conceived of and established **The Studio** of The Corning Museum of Glass in **1996**. His vision was to provide a **state-of-the-art glassmaking school** that would train future generations of artists working in glass and provide a creative resource for the region. Each year, thousands of students take classes at The Studio, and tens of thousands of Museum visitors make their own glass.

“David’s vision was to create a glass studio that was as world-class as the Museum. He exemplified excellence and civility, and we carried out his vision with these qualities,” said Amy Schwartz, director of education and The Studio. “Everyone, from established artist to young visitor, is treated with respect and importance. As he did with all his staff, David empowered us to achieve excellence in our work of creating and programming The Studio. We were overwhelmed with his unflagging support. He had a brilliant vision and gave us everything we needed to make it a reality. Nearly 20 years later, The Studio is a major force in glass education, worldwide.”

One of the **foremost scholars of ancient and Islamic glass** in the world, Whitehouse published **more than 500 scholarly papers, reviews, monographs, and books** - including three volumes of **Roman Glass in The Corning Museum of Glass** - in addition to serving as an advisor to various academic journals. He was editor of the Corning Museum’s annual **Journal of Glass Studies** from **1988** to **2011**. In **1990**, he co-authored with artist and scholar William Gudenrath several groundbreaking articles on the manufacture and ancient repair of the **Portland Vase**.

Whitehouse curated **numerous exhibitions** at the Museum, including **Reflecting Antiquity: Modern Glass Inspired by Ancient Rome (2008)**, **Botanical Wonders: The Story of the Harvard Glass Flowers (2007)**, and **Glass of the Sultans (2001)**. In **1987**, he co-curated the groundbreaking **Glass of the Caesars** exhibition with the British Museum in London and the Römisch-Germanisches Museum in Cologne, a show that introduced ancient Roman glass to thousands of visitors for the first time.

“I first met David when I was a graduate intern at the Getty Museum and, through that meeting, became inspired to study ancient glass myself. He served as the co-chair of my dissertation committee at UCLA, and we

continued to collaborate throughout my career,” said **Karol Wight**, who succeeded Whitehouse as **executive director** in 2011. “David’s scholarly interests went far beyond antiquity. He studied not only ancient Roman and Islamic glass, but also worked on medieval and later material. He was highly regarded by his colleagues and was regularly sought after to collaborate on publications of archaeological material from numerous sites around the Mediterranean and beyond. His lengthy list of publications and articles is a testament to his standing in the glass community.”

Whitehouse is remembered by many not only as a respected scholar, but also as an educator. “He was a skilled storyteller who quickly engaged audiences when he lectured, and delighted visitors when he gave public tours,” said McKee.

Prior to joining the Museum, Whitehouse was director of the **British Institute of Afghan Studies** and **The British School at Rome**. He also directed **numerous archaeological excavations** in the United Kingdom, Italy, Iran, Afghanistan, and Libya. Whitehouse is perhaps best known for his work at the site of the ancient city of Siraf in Iran, where between 1966 and 1973, as a

Wainwright Fellow at **Oxford University**, he directed six seasons of excavation, uncovering well-preserved architecture and several million objects.

Whitehouse held a Ph.D. in Archaeology from **Cambridge University** in England. He was a member of the board of the **International Association for the History of Glass**, and served as president from 1991 to 1995. He was also a member of the Pontificia academia romana di archeologia, an elected fellow of the Royal Geographical Society and the Society of Antiquaries of London, and a trustee for the Rockwell Museum of Western Art in Corning, NY.

In his time at the Museum, Whitehouse **catalogued nearly the entire ancient collection of glass**. In 2011, he left his position as executive director and became the Museum’s senior scholar, focusing on writing and publishing additional volumes on Islamic glass, as well as a book on Roman cage cups. “It is vital that we complete Whitehouse’s work in these important areas. We are planning to see these projects through to fruition,” said Wight.

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