

Featured Fellow: Michael Mikula
Glass Craftsman



April, 2010 - Cleveland

Why have you chosen Cuyahoga County as a place to live and work?

I moved here in 1982 to study at The Cleveland Institute of Art. After graduation in 1987 Brent Young and Mark Sudduth offered the opportunity to join and help them build Benchmark Glass Studio. It made perfect sense to stay put with a completely functional studio at my disposal and continued access to two important mentors.

There have been opportunities to move outside of Cuyahoga County, but for several reasons it has been a good place to launch my career. I've made solid connections with people here and it is only a couple hours drive to my family in Western New York. Additionally, the cost of living is affordable and Cleveland is centrally located for easy access to many of the cities where I market my work. There is a substantial and loyal audience that supports my work here as well.

What is your favorite place, event, or "hidden gem" in Cuyahoga County?

University Circle isn't exactly hidden, but having this obvious gem and all that it has to offer - just ten minutes from where I sit writing this is an incalculable resource.

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How do you generate new ideas?

Ideas most often come during the process of making work and they generally come faster than I can realize them. Sometimes a title comes to mind and then the conception of the piece secondarily.

Travels for marketing my work open up opportunities to visit inspiring places and people. In fact, I make a point to connect with people or notable places and sites with every trip. My art fair colleagues are a frequent source of inspiration for their tenacity and entrepreneurial spirit. Art Museums are a favorite haunt. I make a pilgrimage to several every year.

What is the hardest part about creating?

Getting started and sustaining forward momentum. Some days I just do not feel creative at all, but then it is my turn to use the glass furnace and a show deadline looms. I have no choice but to corral my energies and get down to making. There is never a clear horizon - always another exhibition commitment lay beyond the next rise. The TO DO LIST grows ever longer and more complicated and becomes overwhelming at times.

This leads to the obvious next challenge - finding balance in life outside of the studio. I've not yet mastered this issue and it is a constant frustration.

What is the best moment you have had creating or presenting your work?

There are "best moments" from every phase of my creative upbringing and career.

I can still remember a series of drawings made in kindergarten and the feeling of powerful joy they brought me to. A black and white photograph of a brother and nephew taken in high school is one of

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the best things I have ever made and it still hangs on my wall eliciting further thought.

Now I revel when I can put together a group of works made over a period of months or even years that make a strong impact on viewers, drawing them in for closer scrutiny.

How has the Creative Workforce Fellowship affected your career as an artist or your art work?

It has giving me greater confidence in the direction the work is moving. After days weeks or months toiling away alone in the studio it can be easy to second guess the decisions one makes in the course taken. Making art is taking a leap in faith.

For me the grant is a confirmation, encouraging me to step a bit further out of my comfort zone to take some chances creatively or at least to trust my creative instincts.

For more information on Michael, please visit www.mikulaglass.com.

For more information about the Creative Workforce Fellowship or the Community Partnership for Arts and Culture, please visit www.cpacbiz.org or contact (216) 575-0331 or info@cpacbiz.org.

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