



Photograph: Dick Busher

Raw Sienna Macchia with Cadmium Lemon Lip Wrap; Dale Chihuly; 1985; Blown glass; 18" x 24" x 23"

Raw Sienna Macchia with Cadmium Lemon Lip Wrap by Dale Chihuly

Glass is a very interesting material for artists to work with. It is the only material that can be blown to make a shape. As a glass blower I am interested in seeing how many different kinds of shapes I can make by blowing into a bubble of molten glass.

Glass comes in hundreds of colors and you can combine them in layers. Color in glass is very different than color on paper or canvas. In glass, color seems to be suspended or caught in mid-air. In my "Macchia" works, I am mostly interested in how the different colors look together. "Macchia" is an Italian word that means spotted or speckled. I think color is so important that I even name the pieces after the colors we use.

This piece is called *Raw Sienna Macchia with Cadmium Lemon Lip Wrap*. I made it with the help of a team of very skilled glass blowers. There are six different colors of glass. Starting with clear glass, we covered the bubble of hot glass with some raw sienna or butterscotch colored glass, then we rolled the bubble through big chunks of white glass that we call "clouds." The bubble kept getting bigger because we added on or gathered more clear glass in between the colors. Next we rolled the bubble in little bits of broken pink glass—"jimmies," like the sprinkles you put on your ice cream cone. We then "wrapped" the piece with a thin thread of colored glass by just touching the hot glass to the bottom of the bubble and then turning the piece, so the thread wrapped around the bubble in a spiral. This thread of colored glass looks and acts just like taffy when it's pulled. The last color was a "lip wrap," which is a thicker wrap of colored glass just around the opening.

For hundreds of years, glass was made to be symmetrical, that is, even on all sides. I like glass that is asymmetrical, or lopsided, with a wavy kind of look. The next time you pick up something made out of glass like a tumbler or a bottle, I hope you will think about how different my glass looks.

Dale Chihuly