

# Proposal For MAEP Fundraising Exhibition



Friday, June 26, 2009

Christopher Atkins

Coordinator for MAEP  
Minneapolis Institute of Arts  
2400 Third Avenue South  
Minneapolis, MN 55404

Mr. Atkins:

Congratulations on your position at the Institute. I'm a member of the museum and saw the write-up on you and MAEP in the last edition of the museum's quarterly magazine. I have attended a few MAEP meetings but have never formally participated in any manner. I'm glad to hear that MAEP will have strong leadership moving forward.

The following sentence in the article caught my attention. "*He looks forward to brainstorming with them and the MAEP panel for ways to respond nimbly to economic constraints.*" Given our current global economic situation, 'economic constraints' can become an overriding concern both at home and in business. I am a local artist who has been very lucky in also having a rewarding career in Information Technology. This has placed me in a position of being able to use my creative skills for the benefit of others.

The enclosed portfolio is a body of work I'm calling *Circular Obsessions*. This series will be featured in the Fall issue of *Sculptural Pursuits* magazine as well as on the front cover. I would like to offer this series as a means to raise funds for MAEP. I am open to discussing options on how exactly this may occur, but the first thought that came to mind would be a MAEP fundraiser exhibit at the MIA where a few local artists would donate their work for the event with the proceeds benefiting MAEP.

After discussing this idea with several artists, two common concerns were raised: would artists have the capacity to participate at all (given the current economic climate), and if so, what percentage of the proceeds may be passed onto the artist? I feel that solutions to these and other concerns can be worked through.

It is not my intention to be the only exhibiting artist, but I am prepared to fill a gallery with my own work if necessary. In addition to the Circular Obsession series, I'm planning for two other bodies of work illustrated at the rear of the portfolio. This combination of two and three dimensional work should suffice to create an interesting exhibit.

You may wonder why I am making this proposal. My blog details many of the motivational factors. The fundraising exhibit for MAEP is one of many ideas I have been exploring. I have also become involved with the Chicago Avenue Fire Arts Center (CAFAC), and will be teaching there when it opens to the public. I have been involved in developing the curriculum for the glass program, and have been working with members of the board on similar fundraising concepts.

CAFAC is in process of securing funds for renovation of their building in south Minneapolis. If it is not a complicating factor I would like to include CAFAC in the design of the fund raising exhibition concept.

I hope you enjoy reviewing the portfolio. You will find more information on the Circular Obsession series at my web site as well as many other examples of my graphic arts interests.

I have provided for return postage. If we do not meet in person please return the portfolio using the shipping label and the box it was delivered in.

Please feel free to contact me via email or call at 612-369-2191.

I look forward to hearing from you.

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# Contents

**Catalog** - This section contains the catalog for the Circular Obsession series.

**Syngamy**- This section subtitled *The Deconstruction of an Obsession* gives a detailed description of the creation process of one of the works in the series. It helps provide a greater appreciation of the mix media fabrication and creative processes.

**Additional Works** - At the rear of the portfolio are examples of glass powder painting and macro photography which could be included in the exhibition if needed to fill out the exhibition.



# CIRCULAR OBSESSIONS



Series Catalog

Mixed Media Series  
In Glass, Metal & Wood  
by Jim Boles

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# CIRCULAR OBSESSIONS



**C**ircular Obsessions is a sculpture series focusing on media in-the-round. From lathe-turned objects to torch-worked glass spheres to cast bronze hemispheres, the circle and the sphere are the central motif revealed in continuously changing form, texture, color, and media.

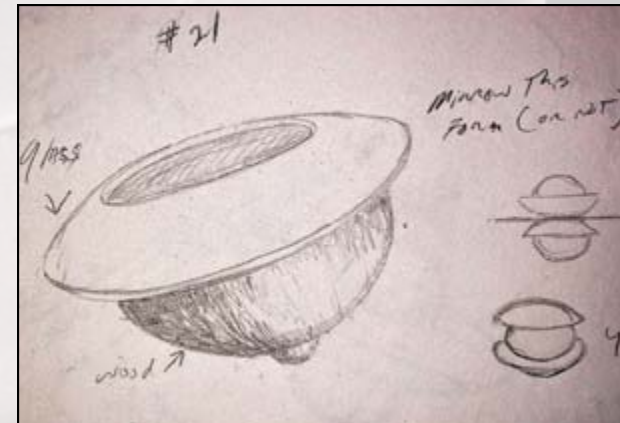
This mixed media series was 15 years in the making. Working out of his studio in Savage, Minnesota, sculptor Jim Boles has been on a aesthetic odyssey of ongoing discovery.

Little printed information was available when he started glass fusing. The Internet was not yet available as a resource and many of

the media materials were becoming readily available for the first time. Jim worked almost exclusively with glass from the Bullseye Glass company. When he began working on a bench torch Jim continued to use the same glass, but he grew increasingly dissatisfied with the stock colors and the lack of naturalistic detail found in typical fusing and torch-work methods.

"It's purely an personal aesthetic for me or maybe I'm just a control freak. I couldn't use the stock colors. I had to create my own colors and my own way to produce natural flowing detail that just isn't possible with stock colors. I wanted the look of polished stone or agate."

Jim spent more than four years, conducting experiments with various glass inclusions such as gold, copper, mica, and enamels. He

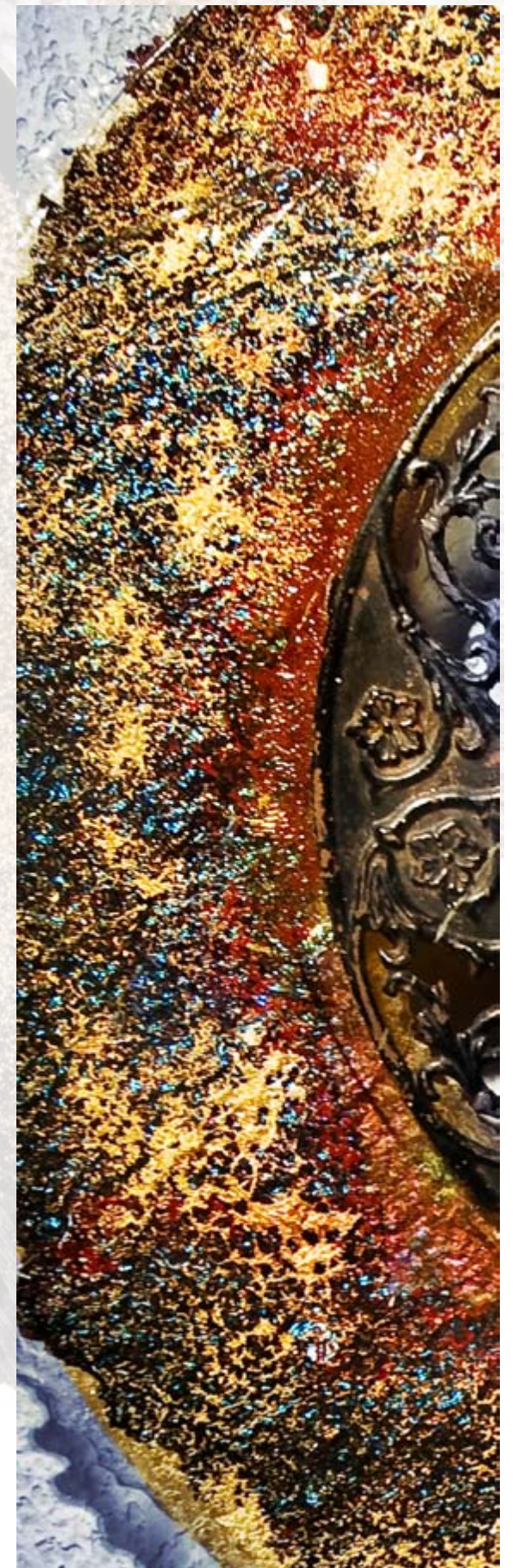


was finally able to develop controllable and repeatable processes, producing the level of detail he considers good enough for this first series.

Producing a mixed media series was not his original goal. Jim originally explored using fused glass in updated Mission style furniture which he was designing, but become disinterested in the business side of producing one-of-a-kind furniture pieces.



After purchasing a wood lathe it became clear that turning objects on the lathe was going to become the catalyst of what he had been previously unconsciously working towards. Suddenly his drawings found a quick means to form. And when looking back at the spherical shapes within his completed wood sculptures it all fell into place... He had been on a sojourn of *Circular Obsessions*.





This series represents a significant investment of time, energy, money, and perseverance. It was expensive to build the physical space for the glass studio and woodshop as well as equipping. Because of Jim's employment in the Information Technology field, he was able to pursue his explorations without undo pressure for financial gain from the work.

"I never thought in terms of selling the work – that is, how many to make and how fast in order to turn a profit. It was purely an aesthetic journey for me, and on some level a self indulgence in pursuing a vision with minimal constraints."

Jim has developed various skills in glass, wood, and casting, but remains reluctant to pursue a career in the arts. He identifies himself more as a designer than an artist and feels his *objets d'art* are just that - objects of artistic merit, created without the inhibitions or self-consciousness which can occur when purposefully setting out to create art.

"It is as though I really didn't make these objects. I can't explain why their form, shape, color, and texture is what it is. I put the materials together

giving them form, but the impetus eludes me. I can't claim to be following an artistic direction or participating in a sculptural genre. There is no social statement, and no driving expression or meaning. I was simply compelled to make them as an aesthetic response to something internal and hidden from examination."

Jim feels that he doesn't 'own' these works, an unusual point of view for an artist/designer. But it's a point of view that has led him to an unusual conclusion – these works should be sold for the benefit of nonprofit organizations.

He'd like to earn enough money from the sales to continue the series, but he feels the majority of the proceeds should go to benefit others.

Jim has several sketchbooks full of designs which could be fabricated if this series sells well. It is his way to give back to the community especially in these hard financial times.

"I've been very fortunate in my IT career and in having the time and resources to pursue these adventures in glass, bronze and wood. To make the journey complete I would be honored in providing art enthusiasts with unique objects, and for both of us to see the proceeds forwarded onto a worthy cause."

The Circular Obsession series was chosen as a feature article and for the front cover of the Fall 2009 edition of *Sculptural Pursuits* magazine.. Jim is hoping national attention will help in his desire to aid nonprofit organizations.

Jim's current projects are focused on exploring new techniques to be used in glass panels. He is also looking to integrate his love of photography, glass and his new-found interest in enameling. He's planning a series of wall hangings incorporating all three media on structural steel frames.

If you would like to learn more about Circular Obsessions detailed descriptions are available at his web site:

[jimbolesdesigns.com/sculptureGalleries.html](http://jimbolesdesigns.com/sculptureGalleries.html)

Jim's blog posts cover his nonprofit aspirations as well as provide up-to-date information about his newest aesthetic adventures.

<http://www.jimbolesdesigns.blogspot.com>

You can contact Jim by email at

[jim@jimbolesdesigns.com](mailto:jim@jimbolesdesigns.com).





# ATLAS

**Measures** - 18 inch diameter by 13 length., 30 lbs.

**Metal Marble** - The spherical objects on the ends of Atlas are Metal Marbles. Metal Marbles are torch-worked glass with various inclusions such as copper, gold, and enamels.

**Copper Plate** - A 1/8 inch thick copper plate separates the two halves representing the cosmos. It was stylized using various cutting and texturing tools.

**Bronze Casting** - The main body is cast bronze. A wood turning was used as the original from which the mother mold was made. Two castings were made for the top and bottom.

**Wood Turning** - In addition to the turning for the mother mold, one end of Atlas has a turned object made from cherry which was stained to look like the patina bronze of the main body.







## ARIES

**Measures** - 21 inch diameter by 16 Length, 14 lbs.

**Cherry Wood** - Single piece of cherry formed from a log with chain saw, angle grinder and hand tools.



jim poles  
designs



# BOHR

**Measures** - 16 inch diameter by 22 length., 60 lbs.

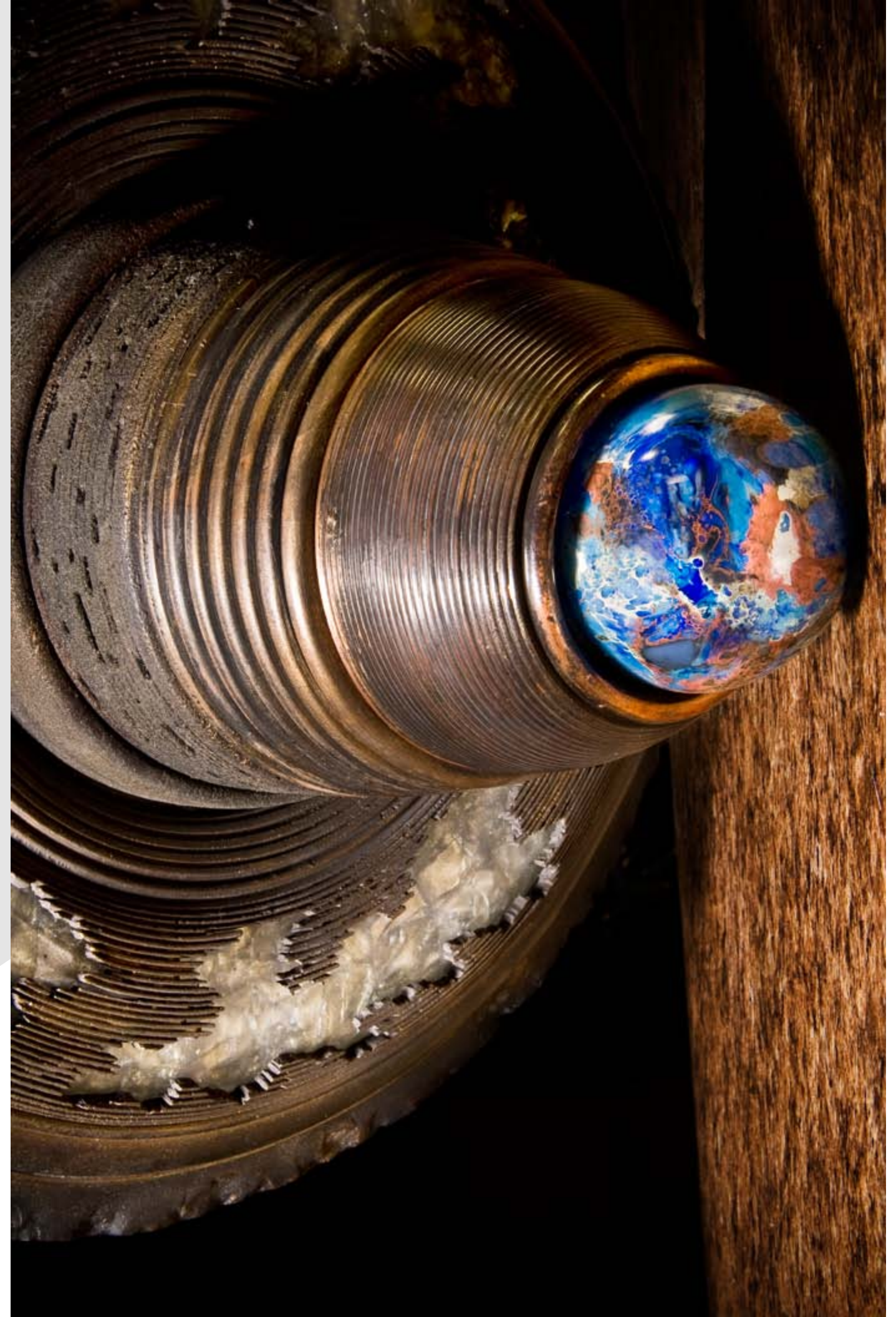
**Metal Marbles** - Two spherical objects on either end are Metal Marbles. Metal Marbles are torch-worked glass with various inclusions such as copper, gold, and enamels..

**Inner Ring** - The inner ring is cast bronze, and inside the bronze ring is a 1 1/4 inch thick cast glass ring .

**Outer Ring** - The outer most ring is a 1/2 inch piece of fused glass. This ring runs completely through the center of the sculpture.

**End Cones** - On either end are cones of a solid surface material called Corian. These cones have been copper plated and patinae applied.

**Center Body** - Under each end cone and running through the rings is lathe turned cherry wood.



CIRCULAR OBSESSIONS



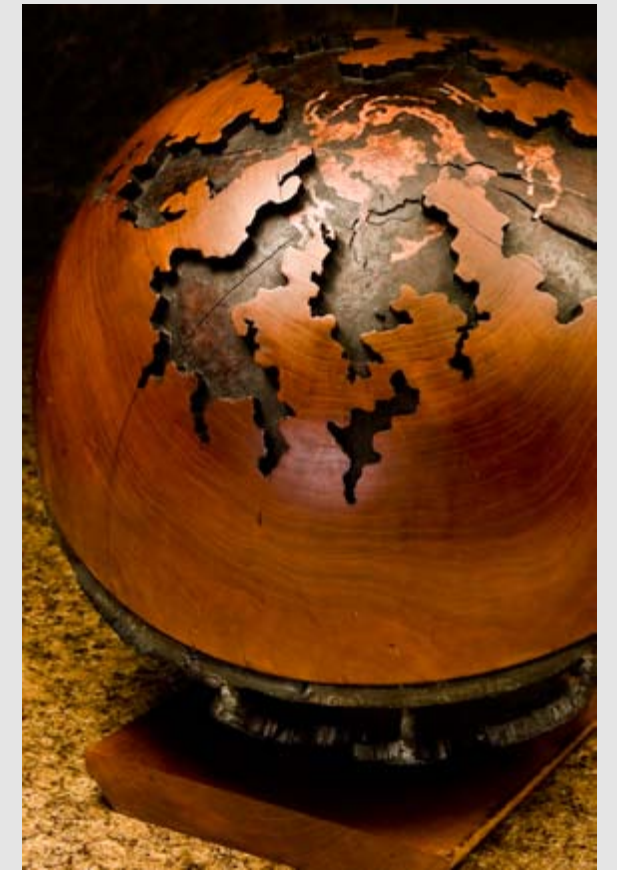


## TAIJITU

**Measures** - 17 inch diameter, 50 lbs.

**Top** - Single piece of cherry wood. Carved with chain saw and smoothed with wood block planes. Hand carvings on top done with various power tools.

**Bottom** - Cast bronze. The top served as the mold for the bottom. Once a mold from the top was taken it was used to form and support the wax as it was hand carved. The wax was then encased in casting investment and used in the casting process.







## AEON

**Measures** - 21 inch diameter by 9 Length., 19 lbs.

**Metal Marbles** - Two spherical objects in the center are Metal Marbles. Metal Marbles are torch-worked glass with various inclusions such as copper, gold, and enamels..

**Cast Iron Ring** - The center ring is an antique cast iron heating registrar manufactured by the Adams company whose patent stamp on the piece dates 1897.

**Copper bowl** - The central housing for the marbles is a copper bowl which has gold leaf applied.

**Glass Disk** - The outer glass ring is fused glass with a solid copper sheet sandwiched by glass on both sides. Gold mica and chromium based frit glass add gold and green detailing.



CIRCULAR OBSESSIONS







## SYNGAMY

**Measures** - 18 inch diameter by 33 Length., 16 lbs.

**Metal Marbles** - Two spherical objects on either end are Metal Marbles. Metal Marbles are torch-worked glass with various inclusions such as copper, gold, and enamels.

**Gametes** - There are 32 torch-worked glass "gametes" which are fired onto copper rods and have heavily treated reduced/oxidized metal surfaces.

**Outer Ring** - The outer ring is a lathe turned solid surface material called Coppermine manufactured by the Avonite company.

**Inner Disk** - The center disk is fused iridescent glass.

**End Cones** - On either end are cones of another solid surface material called Corian. These cones have been copper plated and patinae applied.



CIRCULAR OBSESSIONS









# NAUTICA

**Measures** - 16 inch diameter by 28 Length., 20 lbs.

**Top & Bottom** - Lathe turned cherry wood, Texturized and stained.

**Center Ring** - Fused glass with copper inclusion mica and gold leaf. The outer band is a copper cable.







## PAWN

**Measures** - 34 inch height by 12 by 12., 15 lbs.

**Cherry Wood** - Hand carved using various tools.  
Maple burl accent seen below.



CIRCULAR OBSESSIONS





# THESIS

**Measures** - 16 inch diameter by 28 Length., 35 lbs.

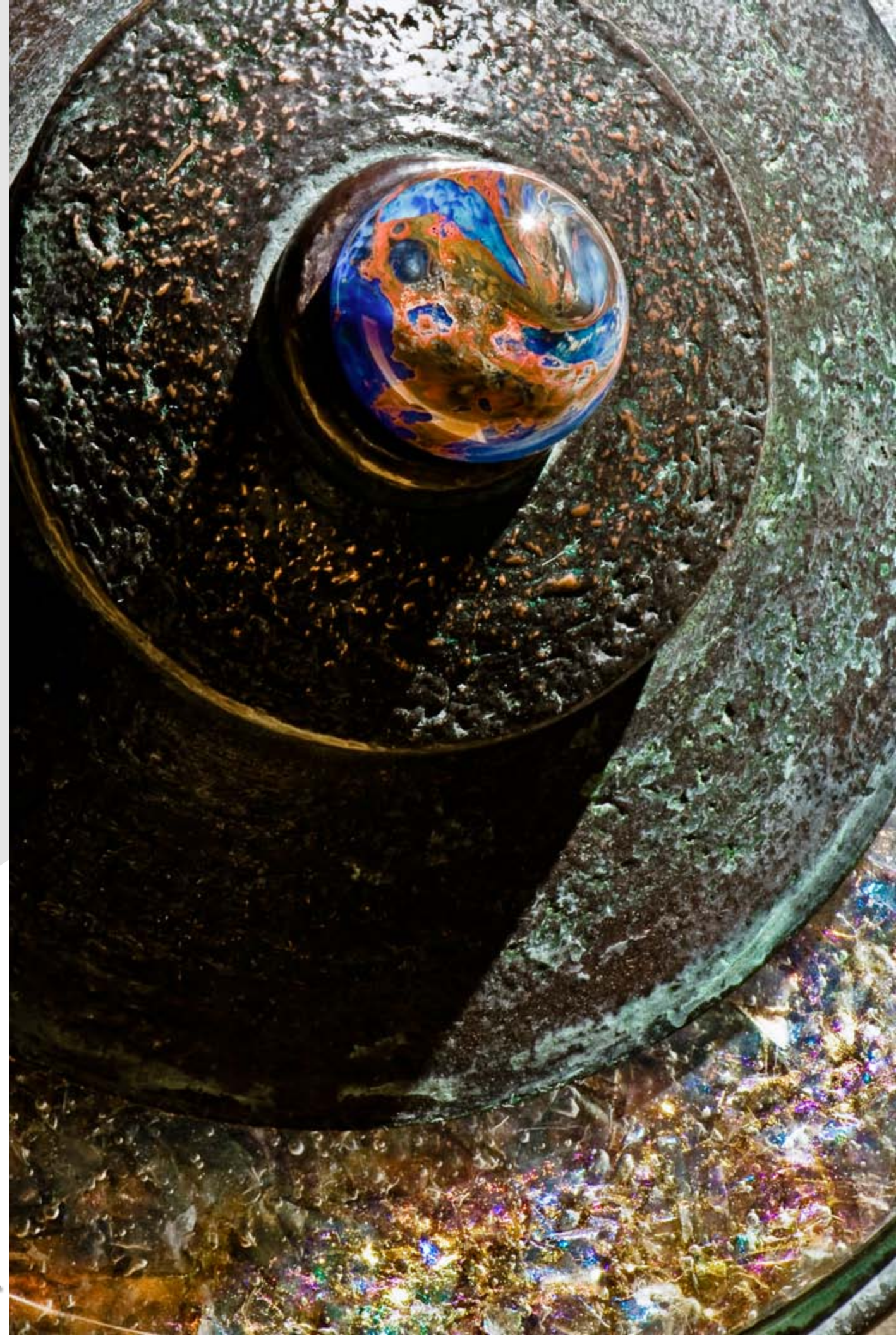
**Metal Marbles** - The top spherical object in the center are Metal Marbles. Metal Marbles are torch-worked glass with various inclusions such as copper, gold, and enamels

**Center Ring** - Cast iridescent glass. The rings are composed of thousands of small pieces of iridescent glass fused together in an open face mold.

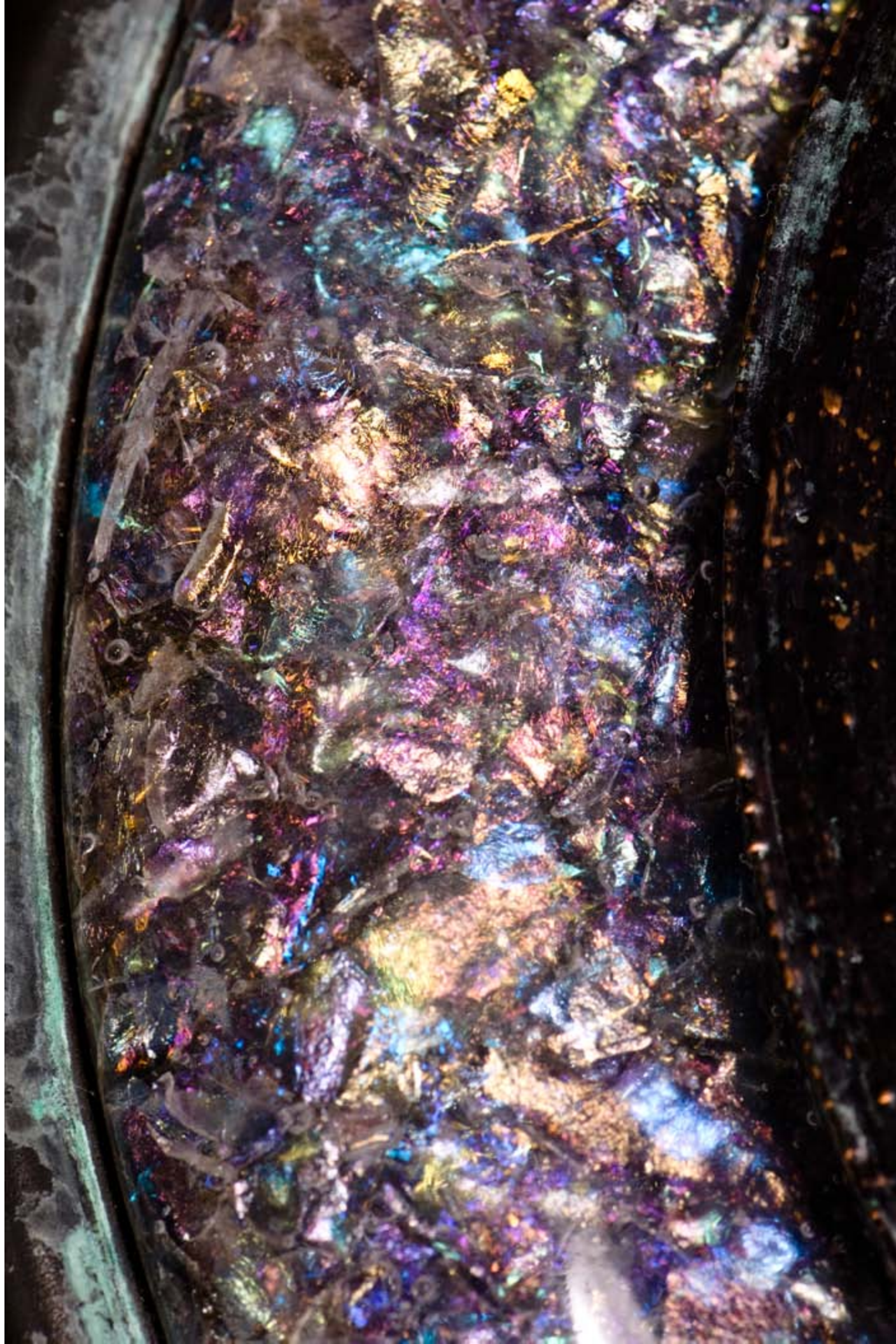
**Outer Ring** - Copper tubing.

**Bottom Cone** - Clear cast glass with Metal Marble inclusion.

**Body** - Turned wood, copper plated, with patena.







## *PEARL*

**Measures** - 19 inch diameter by 22 height, 19 lbs.

**Cherry Wood** - Hand carved using various tools.



CIRCULAR OBSESSIONS



## TARGE I Wall Hanging

**Measures** - 22 inch diameter, 10 lbs.

**Outer Ring** - Kilnformed glass with copper, mica and other inclusions.

**Center Ring** - Cast iron found object.



## Targe II Wall Hanging

**Measures** - 22 inch diameter, 10 lbs.

**Outer Ring** - Kilnformed glass with copper, mica and other inclusions.

**Center Ring** - Cast iron found object.





# **PYROSUTRA** *Wall Hanging*

**Measures** - 5 foot by 28 inches, 55 lbs.

**Panels** - Kilnformed glass with copper.

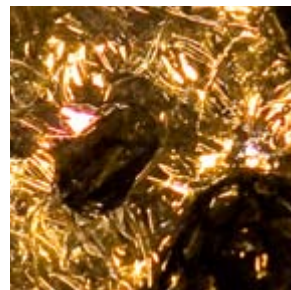
**Structural Steel Frame**



CIRCULAR OBSESSIONS



# CIRCULAR OBSESSIONS



## Syngamy The Deconstruction of an Obsession

By Jim Boles

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**C**ircular Obsessions would have not been possible without the magic of the lathe. It is thrilling to watch intently as an object spins at thousands of RPM as you ever so carefully engage it with a razor-sharp gouge. Focusing just few inches from your face, one slight mis-turn of the gouge could easily send the gouge and the wood soaring at you.

That intensity of concentration carries over also when working with a glass torch. I was drawn to creating round objects, this time in glass, twisting and turning molten glass in a torch hot enough to instantly scorch you

On a hot summer's day, with three kilns cooking my glass creations, the studio could reach 105 degrees. At one critical point, perspiration drenched my clothes and layers of wood dust caked my arms, and yet another failed woodturning lie broken and scattered on the floor. I knew the four years to complete this series had pushed me to my limits.

Yes, I'm glad the series is finished.





# Syngamy

## *“The Conception of Phantasos”*

*Phantasos the brother of Morpheus appears in dreams in the form of inanimate objects. Life is based on the inanimate - arrangements of “chemicals” vibrating in response to each other, directing one another, creating you and me out of the ether of a dream.*

### **Mixed Media Sculpture**

**Size & Weight** - 18 inch diameter by 30 inches length., 20 lbs.

**Metal Marble** - The two spherical objects at the ends are Metal Marbles which are torch-worked glass. Metal oxides are added to it and then run through multiple cycles of oxidation and reduction in the torch.

**Iridescent Fused Glass** - The inner ring is composed of two sheets of gold fusing glass with the addition of mica and small black glass chunks (frit) which all together form the mottled pattern. The combination of these elements was chosen to create the overall harmony with the other glass elements as well as the other ring.

**Solid Surface Material** - The outer ring of Syngamy is composed of Corian-like solid surface material made by the Avonite company. This particular style is called Copper Mine, and was chosen for its color, pattern, and depth qualities to harmonize with the other elements of Syngamy. It was turned on a lath at two thousand rpm and shaped using regular wood turning gouges.



The two ends of Syngamy were formed from pieces of lathe turned Corian which were then sent out for copper plating.

**Torchworked Glass** - The many gametes (32) which act as connectors of the middle to the ends of Syngamy were formed using Bullseye glass at a torch. The glass is fused onto copper rods using enamels as the ‘wetting’ flux agent so that the glass will stick to the copper when heated to a glowing state. A base of black glass is formed and then various metals (gold, silver, copper) are applied to the surface and put through complex stages of oxidation and reduction flames producing the final colors.





**S**yangamy started, as did all the works in this series, as a technical challenge looking for form. The above image shows three works in progress.

The black cone at center left is an eight-pound glass casting for the base of the work *Thesis*. Making this component was difficult because it stretched the limits of my hot glass equipment, consisting of a crucible kiln and bench torches. There was no possibility of reheating the glass if errors occurred in forming the shape so the process had to work flawlessly.

I started with a metal marble formed using a bench torch. When the two-inch marble was finished, it was repeatedly dipped into molten glass inside the crucible, creating a thick clear coating around the marble. This 'gather' of hot glass was then forced into a cone shaped cherrywood mold. I created the mold on a lathe and soaked it for many weeks in water thus enabling it to mold the

hot glass without catching fire.

Once formed, I immediately extracted the glass from the wood mold and placed it into a matching cone-shaped glass casting mold waiting in a preheated annealing kiln, protecting the glass from shattering. I then filled the remaining free space in the mold with a mixture of black and clear frit glass, forming the base of the cone. The black glass would act as a visual transition into the body of the main sculpture.

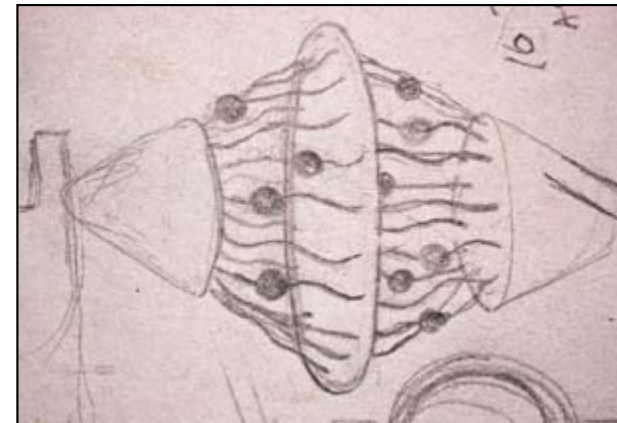
The dark ring at the bottom left above is one of the rings for the *Bhor* sculpture (explained in the documentation for *Bhor*). The glass and bronze castings had to fit perfectly together. Because these materials are inflexible, the castings had to be executed exactly.

The conceptual backdrop of *Syangamy* was determined after the fact. It is typical for me to complete a work, then a title and

conceptual context comes to mind inspired from the finished form. In this case the 32 glass bi-cone shapes represent male gametes in process of syngamy or fertilization.

The mock-up on the lower right of the picture is for *Syangamy* showing a few of the glass bi-cone 'gametes'.

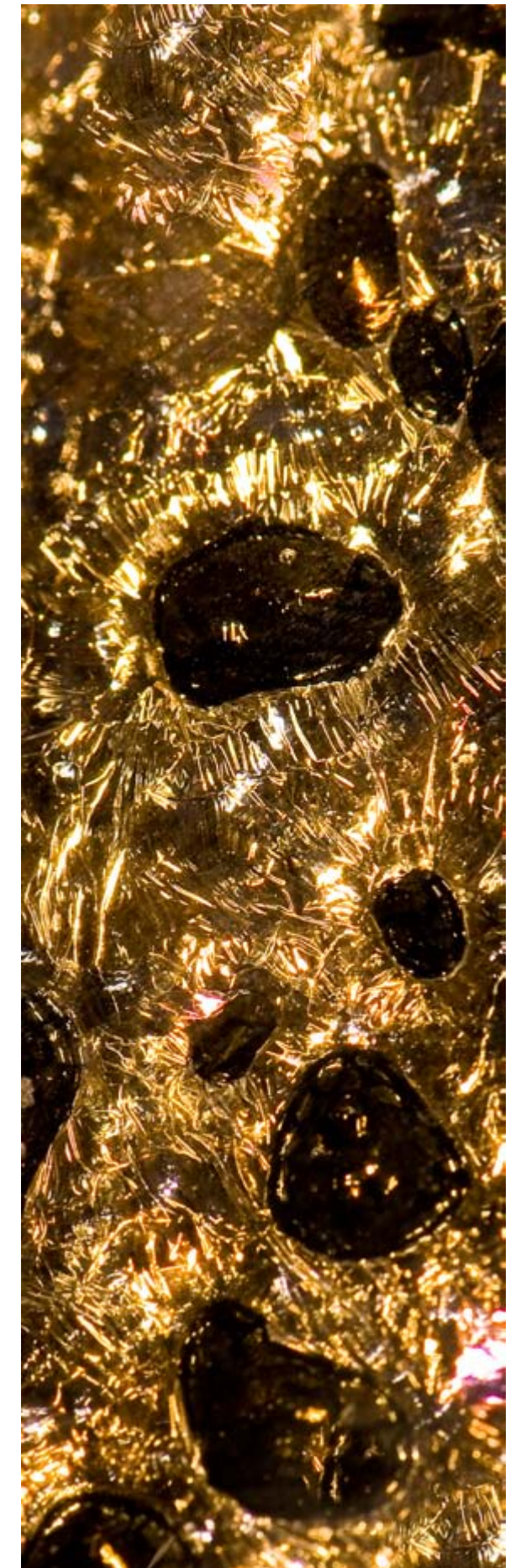
The spheres in the early sketch below were replaced with glass bi-cones on thick copper cable. After creating many of the torchworked gametes I disliked the stiffness of the cable. It lacked the flowing movement the I felt the gametes needed to represent.



To correct this, I cut many of the gamete's cables and soldered in place a multi-strain cable for a more flexible extension. This cabling provided greater flexibility, free flow feel, and detailing that had been lacking.

Getting all 32 gametes and 64 connections to all fit together, and ending with a configuration that looked flowing was a true exercise in patience.

The structural integrity of the piece was a challenge, also. The glass (seen on the right) had to fit both visually and structurally into a supporting material. Wood could never hold it and would not be an aesthetic fit. I chose to turn solid surface material (typically used for high-end countertops) from the Avonite company on the lathe.







A major drawback of solid surface material is its size: it only comes in 1/2 inch thick stock. This didn't present a problem for Syngamy's rings because seam hiding glues are available and I could glue two sheets together. But for Syngamy's end cones, gluing eight sheets wouldn't do because the seams would become obvious with that many sheets.

Seams and joints are a pet peeve of mine. As soon as a joint between materials becomes obvious, the mystery and integrity of the piece is compromised.

For the end cones, I needed a copper metal look with the detail 'holding power' and the structural integrity of solid surface material. After turning my prototype in sheets of Corian (as seen on page two), the idea of copper plating came to mind especially when I learned that Corian is a material that can be

plated.

A bronze casting would be too heavy, but the compromise of heavy copper plating over Corian was ideal because the plating would hold the detail in the Corian turning, it was structurally sound, and it gave me the look I wanted.

A constant challenge during the fabrication process was my search for the right combination of materials. Glass is inherently fragile and can be too showy and dominating. Metal is rigid and costly to fabricate in time and materials. Wood is easy to work but its grain texture is wrong for the series. Corian is a miserable material to turn because it dulls a gouge very quickly.

I didn't set out to create a mixed media series. I chose the materials based on the needs of the design and their inherent strengths and weaknesses. The fact that the series is mixed media works against it to some extent, because viewers don't readily understand what they are seeing, and consequently this affects

the value of the work if the craftsmanship is not apparent or understood.

Every element of Syngamy benefit from an accompanying explanation so a deeper appreciation of it can be had. For example, the center glass is made of a combination of mica, glass frit, and layers of iridescent glass. The close-up image on page four shows its metallic quality, a requirement for visual integrity. The black specks are black glass chunks (frit) which push against the iridescent surface, bending it and causing folds in what looks like gold leaf.

I used an exacting kiln firing schedule to create this effect. Too much heat and the glass turns flat, losing most of its depth and sparkle – yet another example of a technical challenge looking for form.

I knew I could create this effect and kept it brewing in the back of my mind. How it ended up in Syngamy is one of those unconscious



mergers just as the metallic torch reduction atmosphere finish on the gametes, the idea of copper plating Corian; as well as using copper cable for the gametes; and the particular choice of 'copper mine' from Avonite for the outer ring.

How do the various media come together to form a visually integrated whole? I can't say how these independent experiments conducted over a period of years all fit together at this point in time. I do know, however, that each media experiment I conducted had a definite goal at that point in time.

Each experience – either on the lathe, the torch or from the kiln – is independent of a whole and yet it is a whole unto itself. The magic is when these independent experiments meld into a wholly new form. Merging them seamlessly is sometimes a painful process, but after years of forming the parts, the parts demand of the creator to be a completed whole.





# Focus On ...

## Torchworked Glass

Ahhh ... the gentle hiss of the torch on a cold winter day - the warmth and intensity of light is a solace from the grey days in the dead on Winter.

Torchwork is mesmerizing. You can easily forget the danger and become lulled into a false sense of comfort. Don't forget the toxic fumes from the metal I add to the glass and the hazard of staring intently for hours on end into



Figure 1  
blinding white light.

As seen in figure 3, I not only use a vented hood, I also have window fans for cross ventilation. Arm rests to the left and right of the torch are mounted on the edge of the desk to reduce the possibility to carpal tunnel. I also use a magnifying glass above my torch to focus on close objects.

Figure 1 shows one of Syngamy's bi-cones in process. Various metals both in powder and leaf form are added to the base of black glass. The torch's atmosphere is altered by increasing and decreasing either the oxygen or propane

supply. A reduction atmosphere is rich in propane and low in oxygen. This atmosphere brings out the metal on the glass surface, and is similar the Raku process used by ceramic artists.

The metal marbles featured in many of my Circular Obsessions series are created in the same manner of consecutive cycles of reduction and oxidation torch atmosphere. The torch temperature, the atmosphere, time in the heat, distance from flame, type of metal, type of base glass and many other factors determine the outcome.

It can be challenging to get a consistent result with so many variables in play. In fact, it took many months before I was satisfied with the results.

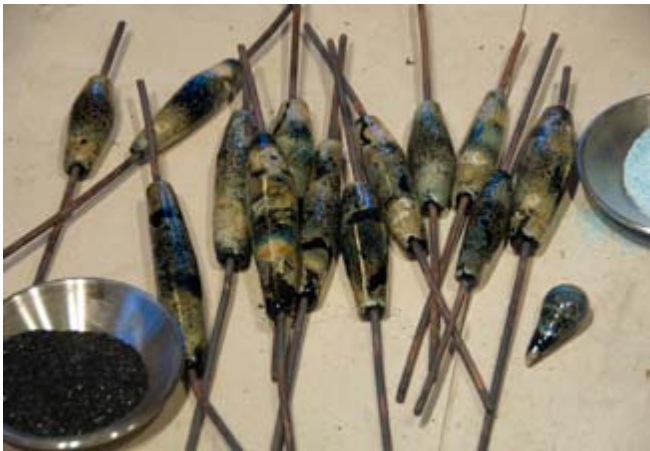


Figure 2

Figure 2 shows a set of the gametes ready for Syngamy. One of the technical challenges I faced was learning how to get Bullseye glass to stick to copper and also to bring it to room temperature without cracking due to the rod running through the center of the glass. The metal and the glass must expand and contract together. Otherwise

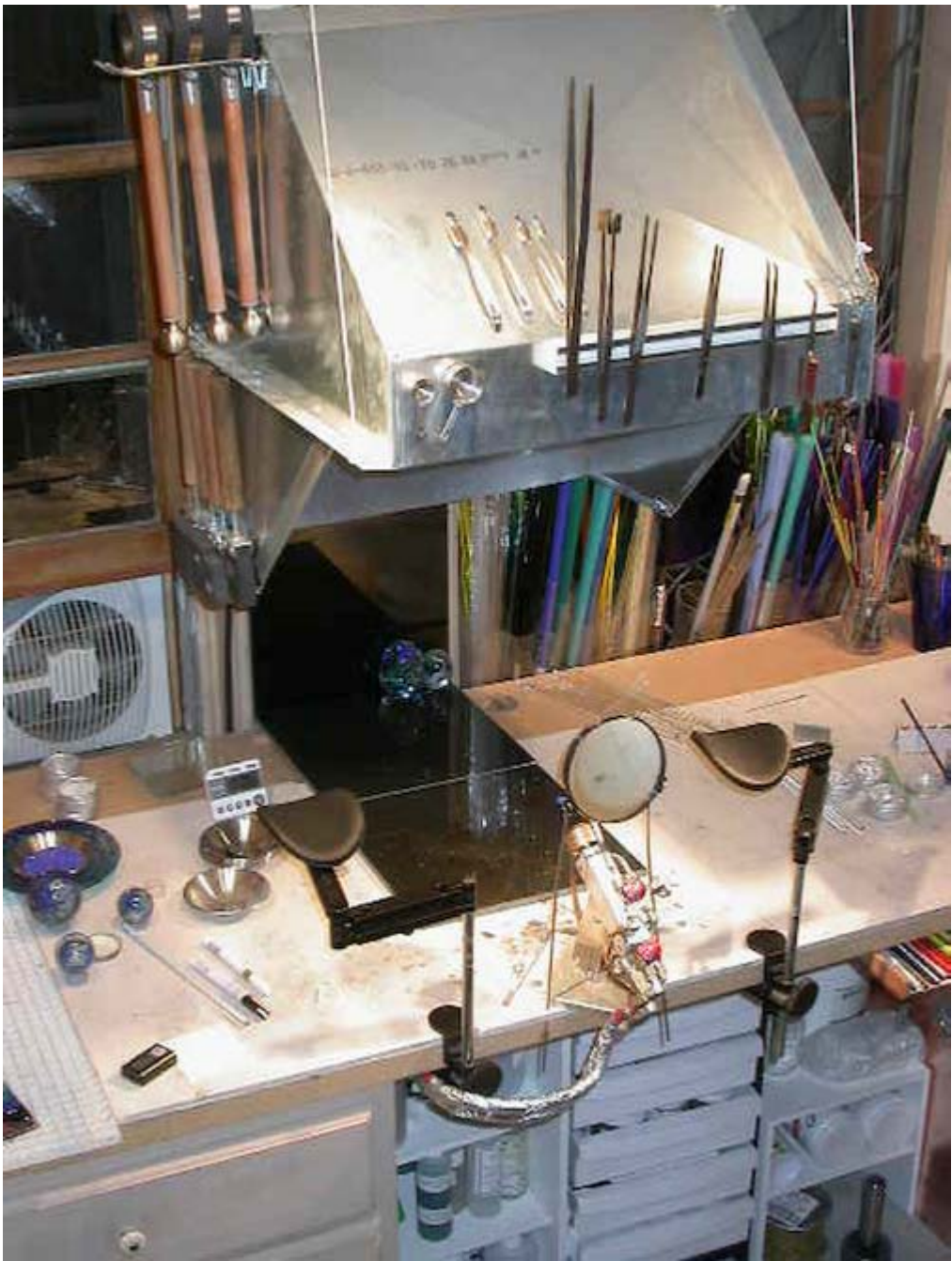


Figure 3

they will separate during cooling, often resulting in cracked glass.

Enameling is the process of melding of glass and metal together, Therefore, I called the Thompson Enamel Company to discuss my project. At first they were skeptical that Bullseye glass would work, but offered one type of enamel that could act as a fluxing agent between the copper rod and the glass, much like flux is used in soldering to help join different types of metals.

Their suggestion worked and one of the many media experiments joined my suite of technical challenges looking for a final form.



# Glass Powder Painting

This series of glass works will venture into the world of painting with glass powders. The powders are manufactured by Bullseye Glass and typically are used by kilnforming artists. For this series the powders will be kiln fired to a solid permanent state while still appearing to be a soft powdery texture. The paintings will range from 6 to 12 square feet in size.

The genre will be impressionistic and in the style of Wolf Kahn the American painter.

The series will explore the use of heavily applied powders capturing texture, brush strokes, and body movements as the powders are thrown, shifted and dizzled onto the surface.

It is hoped that the series will further the acceptance of glass as a fine art as distinct from its craft heritage.





# Macro Lepidoptera

This digital art series starts with macro photography of butterfly wings as the first level of abstraction. It continues the process through digital manipulation techniques, resulting in reducing nature's fleetig lepidoptera into color, pattern and texture studies.

Experimental formats will be utilized for presentation of the completed images. Some of these are:

- Printing on canvas and mounting the canvas on other objects such as oriental folding fans.
- Combining prints with other media such as enameling and glass powder painting.
- Printing on vynal, cloth and other substrates and displaying the prints in new ways.

This series will create an aesthetic experience which breaks from the two dimensional presentaion of photography, while seeking a level of visual impact which waylays habitual value judgements of digital manipulation of photography.

