



# The SUNDAY LEADER

CORNING | NEW YORK

SUNDAY | JUNE 29 | 2003

## CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF STEUBEN GLASS | HONORING THE PAST

**BY THOMAS P. DIMITROFF**

Special to The Leader

**EDITOR'S NOTE** | *In celebration of the 100th anniversary of Steuben Glass, The Leader is featuring a look at discontinued pieces of Steuben from both eras of the world-renowned art glass business. The Frederick Carder era lasted from 1903-1932, while the Arthur Houghton era began in 1932 and continues to this day. Local historian and Steuben Glass expert Thomas P. Dimitroff provides a look at common themes that tie the two eras together.*

Frederick Carder's love of nature led to his frequent use of animal themes in his glass creations. Some of the most well-known examples are his cut-glass animals and the animals that often are found as decorations on his acid-etched pieces.

In 1932, after Carder was relieved of his position as director of Steuben, he became art director for Corning Glass Works. He was given an office on the fifth floor of Building 21, which was Corning's headquarters building at that time. It was located at the north end of Walnut Street.

Carder soon transformed a large portion of his office into a studio that included a glass-melting furnace that he built. Dr. Eugene Sullivan, co-inventor of Pyrex glass and vice-chairman of Corning Glass Works, encouraged Carder to continue to experiment and explore glassmaking techniques.

Carder set out to perfect an ancient technique used to produce metal objects known as the "lost wax," or *cire perdue* process. Carder was suc-



**'Cire Perdue Puma' | Designed and made by Frederick Carder in the 1940s**

cessful, as this beautiful figure of a puma and snake testify.

Carder's *cire perdue* pieces were made from the late 1930s to the 1950s. It should be noted that this important development in glassmaking was

achieved while Carder was in his 70s and 80s. These pieces were both designed and crafted by Carder.

**'The Cat—Twenty-Seven Artists in Crystal' |  
Designed in 1940  
by Isamu Noguchi**

Steuben has produced many renditions of cats throughout its history. None has garnered more acclaim than this design by Isamu Noguchi.

As is often the case, an acquaintanceship between two creative people begun in 1937 led to one of Steuben's most successful exhibitions. While in Paris in 1937, John Gates met Henri Matisse, the famous painter. Matisse became fascinated with the notion of using Steuben glass as a means of expressing his artistic and creative talents. Gates was so struck with this idea that he not only agreed to have Matisse create a sketch to be engraved

upon a Steuben piece, but also contacted 26 renowned artists to do the same.

Among them were Thomas Hart Benton, Salvador Dali, Georgia O'Keefe and Isamu Noguchi. Noguchi's fluid and simple cat engraved on a Steuben plate instantly became one of the most popular designs in the series. The plate was engraved by Peter Schelling, who masterfully captured the flowing linear brush strokes of Noguchi's original drawing. Just six plates originally were created.

Isamu Noguchi was born in California but spent his childhood in Japan. He became famous for his sculptures and his work in theater design. Noguchi studied under Gutzon Borglum, the famous sculptor.

When all 27 pieces were completed, an exhibition, "Twenty-Seven Artists in Crystal," opened at the New York City Steuben shop in January 1940. This exhibition became one of the most successful in Steuben's history. Mary Madigan reports, "...on Valentine's Day, attendance grew so large that the doors of the Steuben Building had to be locked several times a day while lines of people waited on Fifth Avenue."



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