



glass artist

CARLYN RAY

Story | ABBY WILSON

Much like her career, Carlyn Ray's glass art is a fusion of opposites. Her installations combine the fierce, natural energy of molten sand and the controlled, precise application of power.

Ray's life has always been filled with art and physical activity. The art came from her mother owning an art gallery and Ray easily found her way into a number of sports, which eventually led to attending the College of William & Mary on a volleyball scholarship. Inspired after she took her first flame-working class, Ray found a way to forge the discipline, teamwork and strength she learned as an athlete with her love of glass and delicate beauty.

That balance of abilities followed her around the world as she sought to hone her talents. From factory art studios in New Zealand to Dale Chihuly's school in Seattle to living out of her car and sometimes working for free, Ray relentlessly blazed a path in one of the most aggressive and costly crafts in the world.

"One wrong move and the whole piece is ruined," Ray says about the exactitude required by her medium. "If I hadn't played sports, I would have never learned to perform under this kind of pressure."

The finesse of glasswork as well as her skills in metalwork and bronze casting require Ray to be in top form both mentally and physically. "I do yoga and meditation every morning. To conceptualize a project, I really have to empty my mind first."

Ray spends most of her days engrossed in executing commissioned, custom installations. After collaborating with a client on a vision for a piece, Ray and her team begin the process of creating their next favorite work of art. With boundless imagination, they can create anything from massive chandeliers to innovative, intricate glass weavings.

Although she loves all of her projects, Ray says her favorite project is always the one she's currently working on. "I love a challenge. How can I make a 250-pound piece look weightless? Every piece pushes the boundaries and expands what I can accomplish." ♣

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