

Through THE Glass... CLEARLY

Classical composer and glass collector Stephen Goldman devotes his life and his living space to championing the arts

BY KAY HARWELL FERNANDEZ

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROGER FOLEY



The Florida home of collector Stephen Goldman was designed to bring the lush environment outside into the living space, complementing his strong collection of glass art, including "Whistling Swan" by James Randolph.

Unabashedly, Melanie Love proclaims Stephen Goldman a "true Renaissance man." Even though Love admits to favoritism toward her significant other, Goldman is, indeed, a man of talents and surprises. A lifelong resident of Winter Park, Fla., Goldman merged the left and right sides of his brain to compose classical music and excel in physics. Along the way, he acquired a breadth of knowledge in design, glass art and gastronomy.

Though self-effacing and down-to-earth, Goldman embraces all his undertakings with zeal, commitment and a sense of wonder. Take his home, for example. The dazzling 10,000-square-foot contemporary glass house sits on five lush acres on a canal off Lake Maitland. "It's a reverse greenhouse," explains Goldman. "I knew I wanted a glass house, so I did a lot of research in modern architecture. It took about three years of research and design, and another three years to build.

"We finished the house in 1999 and had a lot of fun," he continues. "I wanted a minimalistic effect. There are no curves other than circles. Everything has straight lines—a very clean look. One





Goldman, pictured with his partner Melanie Love, used a freestanding Plexiglas handrail with the granite stairway to maintain the clean lines of the home's interior.



thing you have to worry about is having things too sterile-looking. I wanted to stay away from anything cold, which is another reason for the lush plantings outside.”

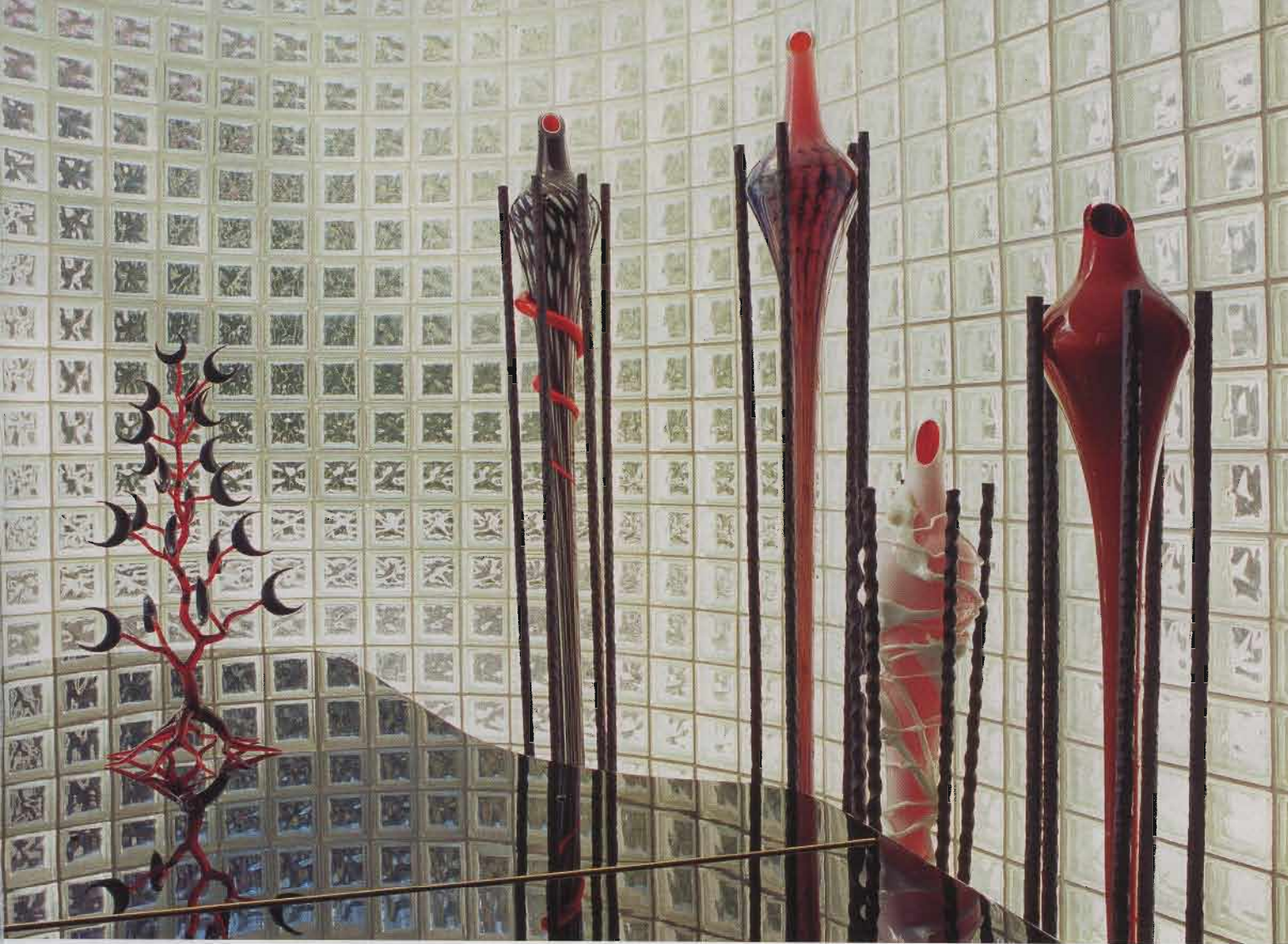
Goldman did encounter a few challenges during the process. That’s when his analytical mind and physics degree came in handy. He was concerned that the sleek, circular stairway next to the foyer might be too slippery. His solution: stainless steel strips embedded in the granite steps. The foot-gripping strips simply blend into the decor of the stairs. In keeping with the circle-and-glass theme, Goldman explored options until he located

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an artisan who created a stunning freestanding, circular Plexiglas handrail.

The end result of Goldman’s glass house is dramatic, especially when his glass art collection is added to the mix. He integrated some 100 pieces of artwork through almost every room of the house. Each complements the colors of the outside environment and how the light reflects, while enhancing the many floor-to-ceiling glass windows and doors.

“I became familiar with the glass art movement, and have been collecting in the last 10 years or so,” says Goldman. “I found it to be a dynamic art form, and exciting to watch its evolution. I’m amazed at the artistic beauty of glass.”



Robert Lombard, managing director of Millenia Gallery in Orlando, has assisted Goldman in his art-collecting endeavors. "I have been working with Steve Goldman for about seven years," says Lombard. "He had already purchased a few pieces from me when he decided to get serious about collecting. So we've established a friendship. I have traveled with him, and helped him come into his own aesthetic sense.

"Steve really responds to three-dimensional work. He's so multifaceted, and the glass art inspires both his creative and scientific mind. He likes to visit artists and their studios. He wants to learn what motivates them, what the creative process is. Then he sees those things in the sculpture work."

Every artwork in Goldman's home gives viewers reason to pause. Stepping inside the living room, the showstopper is a one-ton, 18-foot Dale Chihuly chandelier



Outstanding pieces in Goldman's collection include "Cocoons," of blown glass and iron by Steve Tobin, above, and Robert Mickelsen's "Sunrise Pods."





encased in a two-story glass skylight. The chartreuse tentacles cascade downward, reflecting the all-enveloping light. “You should see it during a full moon,” says Goldman. “It’s spectacular.”

Through the years, Goldman has amassed a museum-worthy collection with pieces from Lino Tagliapietra, exquisite fruit crafted by Flora Mace and Joey Kirkpatrick, luminous sculpture by Christopher Ries, and whimsical forms by Robert Mickelsen, one of which is titled “Ludicrous Rex.”

One room with a 25-foot ceiling is devoted to Chihuly’s Persians. The sun beams through the entire space, capturing the nearly 90 clusters of chartreuse, cobalt, yellow and gold. “Chihuly had never done one like this before,” Goldman says. “I wanted the glass to look like leaves to bring the outdoors in.” Goldman and Lombard took the task straight to Chihuly in Seattle.

“Steve wanted a beautiful floating wall of Persians,” Lombard notes. “He hand-picked all the colors and watched them

being blown. He zeroed in on the delicate nuances. It’s a story of colors of nature across the background of the canal with a lovely play of light.”

“Steve had a blast—he was like a kid in a candy shop,” Lombard continues. “When you see the light coming in over the installation, the clusters are just brilliant. You just can’t find the words. It’s humbling and inspiring.”

In his upstairs study and music room, Goldman talks about the “600-pound egg” by Christopher Ries. With a glass wall as a backdrop that offers a view of verdant foliage, the artist’s “Moonstone” is strategically placed across from Goldman’s massive desk. “It reflects the greenery behind it, and at nighttime, it becomes opalescent,” Goldman says.

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The 18-foot Chihuly chandelier that greets visitors reflects the organic shapes of the hanging ivy that surrounds it. Chihuly’s Persians, which are displayed in a room by themselves, mirror the leaves just outside the windows.



“Moonstone” bears witness to Goldman’s other passion: composing. Here, with 30 studio monitors and an orchestra simulator, he creates his music. “The 30 speakers connect to different synthesizers,” he says. “If you stand in the perfect center of the room, it’s like being in an orchestra pit. It gives true meaning to the words ‘surround sound.’”

His aptitude for music led him to produce classical works while still in high school. Then he studied music at the prestigious Interlochen Center for the Arts in northern Michigan. While his physics degree carried him to a successful computer hardware business (which he has since sold), he continued to compose. To date, his works have been performed by the Hungarian Symphony Orchestra and the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra.

A tireless patron of the arts, Goldman sits on the boards of the Festival of Orchestras, the Orlando Museum of Art and the Orlando Philharmonic, and is a trustee of United Arts of Central Florida.

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—Robert Lombard, managing director, Millenia Gallery



In constructing “Moonstone,” Christopher Ries’ vision was to sculpt the largest possible piece of pure optical crystal. His breathtaking result takes center stage in Goldman’s study/music room, situated directly across the room from his desk.

Somehow Goldman manages to squeeze in other pursuits, such as the art of gastronomy, as evidenced in his state-of-the-art gourmet kitchen. Whenever they can, he and Love, his companion of 11 years, take off on his-and-her Harleys. Now that the four children between them have left the nest, the couple finds it easier to take longer trips. In the interim, Goldman continues his discoveries in glass art.

“Steve just doesn’t collect artwork, he collects the artist,” Lombard points out. “He wants to know and understand the piece and the artist. He wants to know the history and the dialogue. That’s a true collector. Like a fire burning within.”

Sounds like a Renaissance man. ●

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