



Katherine Lacaze/For Cannon Beach Gazette  
**Jim Kingwell helps Suzanne Kindland form a piece of glass work at their studio at Icefire Glassworks in Cannon Beach.**

## Glass: An elegant marriage of artistry and alchemy

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confined to a single civilization. The technique was invented by Syrian craftsmen around the first century, B.C. The technique was further developed during the Roman Empire, with Phoenicians setting up workshops in modern-day Lebanon, Israel and Palestine, and throughout the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the Art Nouveau period. During those eras, people created work on a smaller scale, with limited output. The Industrial Revolution changed that, Kingwell said. While the revolution helped increase productivity, it put an economic strain on craftsmen in all fields, including glassworking, and much individuality was lost in the process.

“The start-to-finish work of one pair of hands and associated knowledge was devalued by factory production,” Kingwell said. In a sort of empowering deconstruction of the factory process, Kingwell and the other artists whose work is displayed at Icefire create their art from start to fin-

ish. They design pieces that are original and cannot be duplicated, even by the artist themselves. The alternative, Kingwell believes, is accepting limitations and accomplishing something that could have been done by a machine. “No two of our clients are alike,” he said. “I see no reason who two pieces of glass should be.” Kingwell himself has created at least 150 different formulas for clear glass, each with a different advantage to make it more suitable for a particular purpose. In general, however, he said, “there’s effectively an unlimited number of potential glasses.”

### Self-identification, discovery

One of Kingwell’s primary motivations as an artist is self-identifying. He believes all humans innately possess artistic characteristics: the drive to connect with basic elements, to create an item of worth, to express a facet of oneself. Kingwell himself knows well the effort of not allowing market pressures to dic-

tate his work and, rather, developing his “own relationship with the arts.” Initially, he was enthralled with pottery, an interest sparked by an art historian at Willamette University in Salem. Kingwell then transferred to Portland State University to study ceramics. Not wanting to contort his pottery work by turning it into his source of financial security, he devised a plan to work instead with glass for five years. He then intended to do steelwork for five years and woodworking after. Now, a few decades later, he said, “I just haven’t finished that first five-year program.”

### Galleries and their purpose

Icefire Glassworks houses the studio used primarily by Kingwell and glass artist Suzanne Kindland. However, the establishment also doubles as a gallery for exhibiting and selling the creations of serious artisans that work with a demanding, even risky, medium. The artists on display, who have individual skill sets and techniques, include Michelle Kaptur, Mark Gordon, Pamela Juett,

Robert Tamis, Steve Krig, and Kathleen Sheard. Kingwell believes the role of galleries in the modern marketplace is to provide an “interface between an artist’s individual expression and the general public.” “We become a catalyst for building relationships,” he said. Many people surround themselves with material items that are there by default, rather than being selective and choosing only items that give their life meaning and joy. Art is an exception. People develop an intuitive connection to a creation that has meaning within the context of their individual life and hunt for self-worth, Kingwell said. Galleries provide a connection point for individuals to find artwork they respond to and value.

Kingwell also feels gallery owners have a responsibility to help educate customers, particularly about the criteria for judging a piece of glass work, as they often feel insecure dealing with an unfamiliar medium. “They walk in here and discover things they didn’t know,” he said.

## Council: City will no longer pay for visitor center

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But the new arrangement comes with a degree of risk. In a good year, the chamber could possibly receive much more money in lodging tax than the city could provide from the general fund to run the visitor center. In a bad year, there will be no general fund money to help. “It was a long process, and like any negotiation, nobody’s super thrilled about the result ... but everyone’s reached the result that works for both parties,” Jim Paino, the chamber’s executive director, said at last week’s City Council meeting. “We’re happy with it, the board’s happy with it, and we’re excited to get to work.” The change, which came after more than nine months of negotiation, is driven in part by the city’s desire to minimize transfers out of the general fund. Years of heavily subsidizing other city funds like public works, which has projects that can’t be covered by water rate revenues, has caused concern that the general fund balance will continue to decrease over time, City Manager Bruce St. Denis has said. But it also comes from the city’s desire to have



The Daily Astorian  
**The visitor information center in Cannon Beach.**

more oversight. Part of the contract requires the chamber to meet with the city quarterly to explain what has been done and what they plan to do with the marketing program. Some on the City Council have taken issue with a perceived lack of communication about certain projects — most notably the branding guide released last year, which included a city logo that drew some local criticism. If the council and chamber can’t come to an agreement, the council can terminate the contract within 90 days. “It puts council and city in a better position to know-

ing what’s going on,” St. Denis said. Some on the council, however, felt the contract didn’t do enough to ensure a reserve fund would be established in the event the chamber receives more in lodging taxes than anticipated in a given year. “If the program gets wildly successful and those amounts get so large you can’t utilize those funds for promotion, I’d like to see those funds go into a reserve for a rainy day when we don’t collect as much,” City

Councilor Mike Benefield said. Part of what prompted the city to look at the chamber’s contract was the desire to find ways to save some lodging tax dollars to be used during an economic downturn or for other tourism facility-related projects.

“So when we get presented with an opportunity, like buying the elementary school, we won’t have the money to do that because we won’t have that reserve fund,” City Councilor Nancy McCarthy said. “Yes, we’ll have a little more in our general fund ... but we still won’t have a reserve fund for some other things we’d like to do that has to do with tourism.” St. Denis said he believes the quarterly meetings will help resolve any issues the council may have in the future. “I think there are benefits to both sides,” he said. “And even though it’s been a long and spirited negotiation, I think the contract gets us into a better position than what we’ve been in the past.”

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## Writers to read essays and poems about life on the North Coast

Life on the North Coast will be the topic of essays and poems read by local writers during the Writers Read Celebration March 1 in the Cannon Beach Library. The event begins at 7 p.m. The 10 writers’ residences range from Gray’s River on the Washington coast to Nehalem in Oregon. Their pieces were selected from among 49 entries by a panel of library volunteers, a bookstore representative and a professional writer. Many of the iconic experiences special to the North Coast are con-

tained in the selections to be read. From November through January, the Cannon Beach Library asked local residents and visitors to submit entries about life on the North Coast to be read at the Writers Read event. The pieces were to be no longer than 600 words. The panel making the selections read the submissions without knowing who the authors were. Entries — both those that will be read March 1 and others submitted — will be compiled in a permanent collection at the library.

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