Transcript for:

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH PAUL STANKARD

Accession 2016.97

Interview conducted May 20, 2016
at The Henry Ford
Dearborn, Michigan, USA

Interviewers:
Charles Sable, Curator of Decorative Arts, The Henry Ford
Catherine Tuczek, Curator of School and Public Learning, The Henry Ford
Bradley M. Egen, Director, motionpossible
An Interview with: Paul Stankard  
Production Date: May 20, 2016  
Location: The Henry Ford, Conservation, Henry Ford Museum

Interviewed by: Charles Sable, Curator of Decorative Arts, The Henry Ford,  
Catherine Tuczek, Curator of School and Public Learning and Bradley M. Egen, Director.

Director: Bradley M. Egen  
Executive Producer: Brian James Egen

Total Run Time: 1 hour, 3 Minutes, 40 Seconds

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| 00:00:10    | CHARLES SABLE  
              Very good, well let’s get started. |
| 00:00:12    | PAUL STANKARD  
              Okay. |
|             | Chapter title  | Early Memories |
| 00:00:13    | CHARLES SABLE  
              Paul can you tell us about the story of your earliest  
              memory of, of, that relates to glass? |
| 00:00:18    | PAUL STANKARD  
              No. |
| 00:00:20    | CHARLES SABLE  
              No. (Laughter) You know the story I’m talking  
              about, right? (Laughter) And how does that relate  
              to what you do today? |
| 00:00:29    | PAUL STANKARD  
              When I was um, thirteen or fourteen the, I lived in  
              North Attleborough, and the little boroughs,  
              Attleborough Falls close by had a, a Fourth of July  
              bonfire. |
| 00:00:46    | PAUL STANKARD  
              And this was a big event, and they stacked railroad  
              ties (laughter) to about I don’t know, from a, from  
              a child’s perspective, fifty feet? (Laughter) |
| 00:00:58    | PAUL STANKARD |
And they, and, and there was a carnival, and there was one, my dad took, took us to the carnival, and there was, and he gave us fifty cents to play with the games.

00:01:12 **PAUL STANKARD**
And there was um, uh, a game that had fish; they had uh, plastic rows in a, in a what was like a fish bowl filled with water.

00:01:26 **PAUL STANKARD**
And it was so beautiful! Here’s this red rose, uh, ya’ know, magnified and shimmering, and oh, I was so taken by this.

00:01:38 **PAUL STANKARD**
And I spent my fifty cents trying to win the, the, the rose.

00:01:46 **PAUL STANKARD**
I didn’t win it on the first fifty cents so I ran back to pop- I call my dad pop.

00:01:51 **PAUL STANKARD**
I said, “Pop, can I have more money?” “I’m trying to win Mom uh, a rose in uh, in uh, a bowl.

00:02:00 **PAUL STANKARD**
So he gave me more money, and I’m assuming he gave me fifty cents more, and um, after repeated attempts, I won the, I won the rose and the uh, in the bowl, and it was so beautiful, and my mom kept it on her bureau for, until she died.

00:02:19 **PAUL STANKARD**
That was kind of sweet.

00:02:20 **PAUL STANKARD**
So of course uh, I ya’ know um, I think of, I think of these ins- these moments, and they’re kind of related to when I became a uh, a young adult and, and seeing similar things in glass.

00:02:39 **PAUL STANKARD**
And I’m thinkin’, “dear God, could there be a relationship?” In ya’ know, the native flowers.
CHARLES SABLE: Can you talk more about botanicals, your early childhood, and how you saw nature in Massachusetts?

PAUL STANKARD: Well, you know, I was curious about wildflowers, about nature, and wildflowers, I was especially keen on uh, uh, I remember risking my life, not really, but getting wet trying to uh, uh, pull water lilies out of the pond.

PAUL STANKARD: And when I brought home the water lilies, my mother went, “Oh Paul, that’s a mud hole! You shouldn’t be playing at the mud hole!” We actually, they called it the mud hole.

PAUL STANKARD: So water lilies were uh, a real prize.

PAUL STANKARD: I can remember uh, oh this is kind of cute, um, I can remember coming home with uh, pink Lady’s Slippers.

PAUL STANKARD: And I brought ‘em, and I was so proud that I had been riding my bike through the woods, along the woods and I stopped to see the pink Lady Slippers, and I picked three or four of them, and um, I drove ‘em home, I gave ‘em to my mom.

PAUL STANKARD: I said, “Mom! I have some beautiful flowers for you.”

PAUL STANKARD: She went, “oh Paul, they’re not pink Lady Slippers, they’re orchids, and you’re not supposed them.” I went, “oh.”
(Laughter) I thought, “oh, what did I do?” She said, “well that’s ok, I mean, we can’t they’re picked, but don’t pick the pink Lady Slippers anymore.” I said ok.

00:04:21 **PAUL STANKARD**
And that was an interesting uh, experience for me to kind of process because it had never occurred to me that native flowers could be rare.

00:04:32 **PAUL STANKARD**
And uh, so, and the pink Lady Slipper showed up in my work uh, what, fifty years later uh, in glass.

**Chapter title** Tools, Technology, Inspiration

00:04:52 **PAUL STANKARD**
I had been making giftware, the little animals, and, and that got to be tedious. I, I, I’d come home from doing scientific glass, a lot of it would be production glass. Not production in industry, but you know, similar things.

00:05:10 **PAUL STANKARD**
And so I, I started to make the animals as a way to earn extra money, but also it was, it was enjoyable for me. It was, I was you know, challenged by it.

00:05:23 **PAUL STANKARD**
But six months of um, melting and sculpting out little glass animals got pretty bo- got boring.

00:05:31 **PAUL STANKARD**
And I thought ya’ know, I said to my wife Pat who is the real hero in this story, “Pat, I wanna’ make paperweights, and I’m tired of the animals.”

00:05:41 **PAUL STANKARD**
And she said, “ok, I, ya’ know, I think that’d be wonderful.”

00:05:45 **PAUL STANKARD**
So this was um, six months, we moved into the house, and I worked in the utility room.

00:05:52 **PAUL STANKARD**
And then I had through the um, through the glass uh, giftware, we were able to save $300 dollars.
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| 00:06:02 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
I mean, that was, I worked hard to, the holiday rush came along, so we had about $300 dollars, and I said, “ya’ know Pat, um, I know you needed a washing machine,” (laughter) because she was taking the clothes to the laundromat, oh ho! |
| 00:06:20 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
But I said if I could, I really wanna’ make paperweights and I need some equipment and this and that, so she said, “ya’ know, I can continue with the uh, laundromat routine, and take the money and buy the tools that you need for the, for the making paper weights. |
| 00:06:37 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
And it was simple tools, I mean, ya’ know? |
| 00:06:40 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
So I started uh, experimenting with paperweights and it was all new, I was, I was a scientific glassblower. |
| 00:06:48 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
And this might sound a little inside baseball, but I was a scientific glassblower who had mastered my skills using borosilicate glass. |
| 00:06:59 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
And so to paperweight making was done with soda lime glass. |
| 00:07:05 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
So I had to find uh, soda lime glass materials, and it was just hard to find, and to teach myself how to work soda lime glass. |
| 00:07:15 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
So that, and, and it was exciting because I was um, it was new, ya’ know, and I was tense. Tense in a good way, ya’ know? (Laughter) |
| 00:07:26 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
|
And I was like, I had all my attention focused on trying to uh, learn how to flamework the soda lime glass and then encapsulate a flower.

00:07:37 **PAUL STANKARD**
The first paperweights were like animals, I did a uh, I remember doing a, a Pegasus. Different uh, different uh, animals.

00:07:47 **PAUL STANKARD**
And then I, I, I made a um, a flower, a daisy.

00:07:53 **PAUL STANKARD**
And the next day when I took it out of the oven, it really touched me because the animals, they were imaginary and the scale was, ya’ know, there were little miniature representations of the animal.

00:08:06 **PAUL STANKARD**
But when I did the little daisy, it looked like it could be a daisy, and that excited me.

00:08:14 **PAUL STANKARD**
So I stopped making the animals and then I um, put a stem on, put a bud in there, and then two daisies, and I just, I just discovered um, I loved being innovative and I loved discovering new ways to interpret the flowers, and the daisy was my first effort.

00:08:39 **PAUL STANKARD**
And I tell my students, because I’ve taught at Salem Community College for quite a while.

00:08:44 **PAUL STANKARD**
I say, “ya know, really you have to solve one technical problem after the other.”

00:08:50 **PAUL STANKARD**
And, and pay attention, and, and follow ya’ know, and, and just follow what is interesting to you.

00:09:01 **PAUL STANKARD**
And I’d like to think that that daisy caught my attention, and I invented a botan—, a vocabulary to interpret nature in glass, and it’s, it’s personal.

00:09:18 **PAUL STANKARD**
And what’s interesting is, I’m, I’m interested in uh, what I care about is giving my glass designs organic credibility.

00:09:34 **PAUL STANKARD**
Now, they’re not real, they’re my interpretation of a, of a flower or plant, often times they’re referential, but people say, “oh, is that a real flower?” (Laughter)

00:09:47 **PAUL STANKARD**
I say “well no, because it was just disintegrate with a t- t- twenty three hundred degree temperature!” (Laughter)

00:09:55 **PAUL STANKARD**
So I think that that curiosity, I tapped into my authentic interest I think, you know.

00:10:02 **PAUL STANKARD**
That’s what, ya’ know, it’s been a struggle ya’ know, I’m sitting here, I appreciate having this opportunity to share my career with you um, and with your audience as a um, senior artist, a mature artist, how do I say that?

00:10:21 **PAUL STANKARD**
As a, as an established artist.

Chapter title **Struggles Transitioning to Studio Glass**

00:10:23 **PAUL STANKARD**
And when I look back over the struggles, I’ve kinda’ edited them, I edited them out, so now I have my golden memories.

00:10:32 **PAUL STANKARD**
But it was a struggle ya’ know, and there was a lot of times the money was, there was difficulty with ya’ know, earning money.

00:10:40 **PAUL STANKARD**
Um, y’ know, all the usual struggles associated with establishing yourself as a uh, studio artist.

00:10:50 **CATHARINE TUCZEK**
Can you tell us a little bit more about obstacles that you faced?
Um, yeah, one of the things that um, I don’t wanna’ get into it too deeply, because it’s probably I’ve overcome it, but uh, I had uh, I had uh, serious anxiety problems.

And I had to seek uh, I don’t know if this is uh, you can edit it out if you don’t think it’s worth it, but I um, I had a nervous breakdown and had to seek uh, counseling, which helped me a great deal.

And uh, the thing that fascinate, the thing that um, when I look at my, my career as a scientific glassblower, I wanted to master my craft, I wanted to do well.

But when I, when I felt that I was uh, stymied in that job, I’d quit and go get another job.

But when I became uh, self-employed as a studio glass artist focused on paperweights, when I became stymied, I just took a nap. (Laughter)

Ya’ know, I just, I stayed with it, and I went back to the paperweights, I didn’t run, I didn’t fin- I didn’t try and find a new job.

I didn’t take myself out of uh, of a situation that I felt was causing tension.

So it’s interesting how um, how I uh, with, with my early days working in, in my studio which was a utility room, I found myself uh, excited and stimulated by the creative side.

I wanted to be on the creative side.
And when I was working in industry, I knew that um, that’s where I belonged.

00:12:44 **PAUL STANKARD**  
And how do you know that, I’m, I’m not sure. I just would be excited to see things that were uh, were about beauty and uh, decorative and whatever.

Chapter title **Schooling & Overcoming Dyslexia**

00:12:57 **CHARLES SABLE**  
Can you talk a little bit more about your schooling?

00:13:00 **PAUL STANKARD**  
School was a challenge for me, I mean um, ya’ know, I um, I know it’s, I know it can be fashionable for people to talk about their being dyslexic and ADD, and all of the above.

00:13:15 **PAUL STANKARD**  
And I, I experienced uh, a difficult time in school with learning disabilities.

00:13:22 **PAUL STANKARD**  
If uh, if I was not- if I didn’t have learning disabilities and, and got straight A’s, I’d be just as well off! (Laughter)

00:13:33 **PAUL STANKARD**  
Probably bet, (laughter) I don’t want to say it, to be successful, you’ve got to be screwed up!

00:13:37 **PAUL STANKARD**  
I don’t want to say to be successful you have to be dyslexic or ADD is, is a challenge. Success isn’t predicated on difficulties.

00:13:49 **PAUL STANKARD**  
Success is predicated on uh, having a passion for what you do and persevering.

00:13:56 **PAUL STANKARD**  
And the thing that’s interesting for me as a dyslexic uh, I didn’t know I wasn’t stupid.

00:14:04 **PAUL STANKARD**  
I was failed the grades and I was put in with a group of people who were in the slow class and uh, thank god I was creative because I used to
Paul Stankard Oral History Transcript (Complete Interview)

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| 00:14:21 | *Paul Stankard*  
That was just you know, my dad was a chemist; my mom and dad were both educated people, and so they were keen on their children uh, getting uh, a good education. |
| 00:14:35 | *Paul Stankard*  
Growing up in North Attleboro the second oldest of nine the uh, it was important to be a good Catholic. |
| 00:14:44 | *Paul Stankard*  
And be, next would be to educate yourself and be a good student in school in that order. |
| 00:14:50 | *Paul Stankard*  
So, so I faked being a good Catholic (laughter) so you can scratch that. |
| 00:14:57 | *Paul Stankard*  
But um, I had a teacher in High School, my, my dad was transferred from Massachusetts to New Jersey and I was enrolled in uh, uh Pitman High School as a Sophomore. |
| 00:15:12 | *Paul Stankard*  
And I was with uh, I was put in a group, I think they called it the general category, it had four levels or something. |
| 00:15:20 | *Paul Stankard*  
And so uh, Mrs. Reed, bless her heart, used to read out loud to us, it was so sweet. |
| 00:15:30 | *Paul Stankard*  
And that was the first exposure that I had to books, she would read the books. |
| 00:15:39 | *Paul Stankard*  
And uh, she didn’t read it every day, but most days. And what was so interesting about Mrs. Reed’s English class, I had Mrs. Reed in the same group of people, we were grouped together, and we were Sophomore, Junior, Senior, and Mrs. Reed for English. |
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| 00:15:57 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
One of the books that really entertained me was *Silas Marner; Silas Marner* by George Elliot.                                                                 |
| 00:16:06 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
It was a struggle, and, and I think that as a Dyslexic, your- I- you don’t give up. You don’t know that you’re just overcoming obstacles.                                                     |
| 00:16:21 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
ADD, you know you’re, you know, I’m, I’m talking to you and I’m thinking about something else and you know, it’s just…                                |
| 00:16:30 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
And, and you can har- and what I did when I left industry to focus on the paperweight, the diff- the tight parameters of my aesthetic allowed me to focus.                                      |
| 00:16:44 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
And I think being dyslexic, you had to focus on the written word, and you had to focus on the numbers so that they would be correct.                                                                 |
| 00:16:56 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
And I think that uh, an, an, and the, and the, and the dys- ADD, you learn to just focus.                                                                                                               |
| 00:17:09 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
And that focus really allowed me to bring a whole new level of detail to my work, which was kind of interesting.                                                                                       |
| 00:17:20 | **CHARLES SABLE**  
Can you expand upon that with your work and take us a couple steps further?                                                                                                                             |
| 00:17:24 | **CHARLES SABLE**  
Some of the things I know you’ve talked about with your work in terms of focusing on detail.                                                                                                           |
| 00:17:28 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
Well ya’ know uh, when I left industry to uh, to do it full time to my floral paperweights, because I had been doing ‘em part time for three years.                                                      |
| 00:17:40 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
So from the, from the giftware to floral paperweights over three years I made uh, wonderful progress. |
| 00:17:49 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
And I would go to the antique shops and show 'em my work and they would buy 'em for twenty dollars, twenty-five dollars. |
| 00:17:56 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
And they were very, very uh, supportive, “oh, that’s wonderful!” |
| 00:18:01 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
And um, I’d like to tell the story that when I was in industry, I was a master at scientific glassblowing. |
| 00:18:09 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
Elaborate, complicated equipment, and I would work hard for days to, to build apparatus to meet the uh, PhD chemist requirements. |
| 00:18:22 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
And I’d bring it there with a lot of pride and they’d say, “oh Paul, thanks so much!” “Great job, thanks a lot!” |
| 00:18:30 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
And then, in my spare time I would make a little bird, or a horse, or an elephant, and I would bring that to people and they’d go, “oh Paul, you’re an artist! Wow, that’s great!” (Laughter) |
| 00:18:43 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
And I’d, I got a lot more mileage out of the little gift, the little animal than I got out of this elaborate scientific glass instrument! (Laughter) |
| 00:18:56 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
And that, that, that response, it was very upbeat; it was wonderfully satisfying for me. |

**Chapter title**  
**Maturing & Coming to Terms with Dyslexia**

| 00:19:05 | **CHARLES SABLE**  
Can you talk also about how you matured as a paperweight artist? |
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<td>00:19:08</td>
<td><strong>PAUL STANKARD</strong></td>
<td>Ok, yeah, thank you.</td>
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<td>00:19:10</td>
<td><strong>PAUL STANKARD</strong></td>
<td>Charles, you’re doin’ a good job, keep me on track.</td>
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<td>00:19:12</td>
<td><strong>CHARLES SABLE</strong></td>
<td>I’m, you go for it. (under Paul)</td>
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<td>00:19:13</td>
<td><strong>PAUL STANKARD</strong></td>
<td>Ok (laughter)</td>
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<td>00:19:16</td>
<td><strong>CHARLES SABLE</strong></td>
<td>Because that’s a fascinating story of...</td>
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<td>00:19:18</td>
<td><strong>PAUL STANKARD</strong></td>
<td>Well, I left, I left industry to devote full time to the paperweights, and um, I enj...</td>
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<td>00:19:27</td>
<td><strong>PAUL STANKARD</strong></td>
<td>In my ut- in the utility room, I could l- I had the radio, and I could listen to Phil Donahue had a daily talk show program, and it was on at 9 o’clock in the morning.</td>
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<td>00:19:38</td>
<td><strong>PAUL STANKARD</strong></td>
<td>I listened to Phil Donahue interview Bruce Jenner the Olympic decathlon.</td>
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<td>00:19:45</td>
<td><strong>PAUL STANKARD</strong></td>
<td>And he was talkin’ about as a child how poor, what a poor student he was because he was dyslexic.</td>
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<td>00:19:52</td>
<td><strong>PAUL STANKARD</strong></td>
<td>And he was talkin’ about his inability to read well; how he focused all of his energy into sports to compensate for his lack of success in academics.</td>
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<td>00:20:04</td>
<td><strong>PAUL STANKARD</strong></td>
<td>And he’s talking about dyslexia in a very personal way and I’m thinkin’, “my god, this guy’s talkin’ about me!”</td>
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<td>00:20:12</td>
<td><strong>PAUL STANKARD</strong></td>
<td>And uh, I was startled, and I can remember running in the, you know, the utility room was here and pat’s in the house.</td>
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<td>00:20:20</td>
<td><strong>PAUL STANKARD</strong></td>
<td>I said, “Pat, Pat, hey, I’m not stupid!”</td>
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| 00:20:24 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
She says, “I know you’re not stupid!” |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------|
| 00:20:26 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
I said, “well, I’ve listened to Bruce Jenner talkin’ about dyslexia!” |
| 00:20:34 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
And that was the first time that I heard that. |
| 00:20:36 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
I, my, my sis- my sister, Margaret, talked she was in Special Ed, and she mentioned it but it went over my head. |
| 00:20:44 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
She said, ya’ know, I- she asked me to read something, I, I, let me go back and say I was visiting Mom, my sister was home from college, and the newspaper was on the table, kitchen table. |
| 00:20:59 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
And I started stumbling over the headlines. |
| 00:21:02 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
And Margaret said, “Paul, read this paragraph.” |
| 00:21:08 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
Now, I’m twenty, 26 or 27, so I’m reading the paragraph and havin’ a hard time with it, and our mother says, “oh, Paul was always a poor reader.” |
| 00:21:18 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
And then Margaret says, “well Paul, you may be dyslexic,” which surprised me. I didn’t, I had never heard that word before. |
| 00:21:26 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
So that was then, and then- in ’72 with Bruce Jenner, it pulled it all together. |
| 00:21:33 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
And you know what was such a blessing? When I understood that there was a reason for my inability to read well, and there was a reason for my uh, confusing numbers. |
| 00:21:50 | **PAUL STANKARD**  

Uh, I gave it a little bit more thought and um, and r- and really related to Mrs. Reed reading out loud.

00:22:01 **PAUL STANKARD**
Well, a few weeks later, I got in the mail; The Franklin Mint which was a, a marketing company with metal and ya’ know, giftware, mementos.

00:22:12 **PAUL STANKARD**
They offered 100 of the greatest books ever written o- on a cassette.

00:22:20 **PAUL STANKARD**
It was, it was abridged.

00:22:23 **PAUL STANKARD**
And over the course of a few years, I listened to these classics, and I loved it.

00:22:30 **PAUL STANKARD**
And I thought, “Wow, ya’ know?”

00:22:33 **PAUL STANKARD**
So that was um, the platform that I stood on as I continued to listen to books on tape.

00:22:42 **PAUL STANKARD**
Now I’m downloading on my iPhone, prior to that it was a cassette or a CD, and ya’ know, technology has really changed.

00:22:52 **PAUL STANKARD**
But hi- another blessing that occurred early in my career, I’m listening to WHYY on public radio, and they were talking about excellence in the arts.

00:23:08 **PAUL STANKARD**
And the professors who I believe the Professor was Temple University, she was talking about excellence, and she said if you wanna’ do excellent work, you have to know what excellence is.

00:23:20 **PAUL STANKARD**
And you have to know what excellence is in the, in painting, in sculpture, in writing, in poetry, in architecture.

00:23:28 **PAUL STANKARD**
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<td>00:23:35</td>
<td><strong>Paul Stankard</strong>&lt;br&gt;And I thought, “my god, that made sense to me!” Ya’ know, I could feel it!</td>
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<td>00:23:35</td>
<td><strong>Paul Stankard</strong>&lt;br&gt;So Pat and I with the kids in tow would go to museum shows and seek out, go to galleries, and seek out works on, of art and uh, and it was about self-directed learning.</td>
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<td>00:23:51</td>
<td><strong>Paul Stankard</strong>&lt;br&gt;And um, hopefully the end of this year you’ll have a book that I’ve authored.</td>
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<td>00:23:57</td>
<td><strong>Paul Stankard</strong>&lt;br&gt;Title is <em>Studio Craft as Career, a Guide to Achieving Excellence in Art-making.</em></td>
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<td>00:24:04</td>
<td><strong>Paul Stankard</strong>&lt;br&gt;And I, I overview fifty artists who are makers, uh, craftspeople.</td>
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<td>00:24:12</td>
<td><strong>Paul Stankard</strong>&lt;br&gt;And then I talk, that’s, it’s just one section, and another section is my journey that um, that is all about self-directed learning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:24:23</td>
<td><strong>Paul Stankard</strong>&lt;br&gt;Because artistic maturity is uh, essential. I mean, you don’t have to go to art school, you don’t have to graduate from High School!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:24:33</td>
<td><strong>Paul Stankard</strong>&lt;br&gt;But it’s essential that you know what good is, and most professional people are competing with the past.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:24:42</td>
<td><strong>Paul Stankard</strong>&lt;br&gt;And so when I started making paperweights, I took er- my, my Pat and I, the children in the backseat, we went up to the Corning glass museum, and I saw the antique French paperweights.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:24:53</td>
<td><strong>Paul Stankard</strong>&lt;br&gt;Went to Wheaton Village which it was a Wheaton Village now, it’s Wheaton Arts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:25:02</td>
<td><strong>Paul Stankard</strong></td>
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</table>
So we really enjoyed learning, I enjoyed familiarizing myself with uh, with what was being done.

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<th>Transcript</th>
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<tr>
<td>00:25:12</td>
<td><strong>PAUL STANKARD</strong></td>
<td>I wanted to do good work, and I felt that if I was gonna’ be successful as a studio artist, I’d have to do excellent work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:25:23</td>
<td><strong>PAUL STANKARD</strong></td>
<td>It really is about excellence for me, and originality. I had to make it personal.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:25:29</td>
<td><strong>PAUL STANKARD</strong></td>
<td>And by um, so by making one way that I made it personal was I referenced the native flowers of my youth.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:25:38</td>
<td><strong>PAUL STANKARD</strong></td>
<td>But it was about um, pulling in contemporary experiences into my work.</td>
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**Chapter title**  
*Artistic Inspirations*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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<th>Transcript</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>00:25:45</td>
<td><strong>PAUL STANKARD</strong></td>
<td>I would go to museums, this is a sweet story um, I was in New York City delivering my work to a dealer, and I went over to the uh, Whitney Museum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:26:00</td>
<td><strong>PAUL STANKARD</strong></td>
<td>And the Whitney Museum had a show of Morris Graves.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:26:04</td>
<td><strong>PAUL STANKARD</strong></td>
<td>It was a retrospective, Morris Graves was a, I believe, Seattle, Washington painter. He does flowers and birds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:26:14</td>
<td><strong>PAUL STANKARD</strong></td>
<td>And I, I was so touched by the spiritual dimension, the ethereal dimension of his flowers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:26:25</td>
<td><strong>PAUL STANKARD</strong></td>
<td>I was more than touched, I was inspired by this painter, painter’s interpretation of flowers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:26:32</td>
<td><strong>PAUL STANKARD</strong></td>
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</table>
And uh, I wanted to not only interpret nature in glass uh, making it personal, but I wanted to make it poetic.

00:26:44 **PAUL STANKARD**
And I wanted my work to, there was a spiritual dimension to my work, because I believe significant objects has that aura, that ethereal aura that floats above it.

00:26:59 **PAUL STANKARD**
And, and people that are, wow, it’s hard to explain what that is.

00:27:05 **PAUL STANKARD**
But I uh, so I was developing my flowers as botanical portraits.

00:27:13 **PAUL STANKARD**
And as I uh, as I educated myself to um, to literature, to painting, to art, I started to bring in symbols that I incorporated into my flowers.

00:27:30 **PAUL STANKARD**
And in the late ’70s, one of the symbols was um, human forms.

00:27:38 **PAUL STANKARD**
It started out as an anthropomorphic root.

00:27:41 **PAUL STANKARD**
I was at um, I was at uh, in the library and I looked up flowers and there was a book on medieval herbals.

00:27:48 **PAUL STANKARD**
And I opened up the medieval boo- I opened up the book and here are these um, human forms suggesting, referencing roots.

00:27:58 **PAUL STANKARD**
And then there were woodcuttings, and then there were uh, stamens uh, human forms were coming out of the flower s- re, referencing stamens.

00:28:10 **PAUL STANKARD**
So I um, I liked the idea of, of uh, from botanical portraits to floral designs that I incorporated
symbols into the designs led to a wide array of different approaches.

### 00:28:32
**Catherine Tuczek**
I wanted to ask um, when you were learning both to be a scientific glassblower and also when you learned um, to do your art.

### 00:28:42
**PAUL STANKARD**
Yes.

### Chapter title
**Influences & Maturity**

### 00:28:43
**Catherine Tuczek**
What did you have to learn about how- the science of how glass works and how did you learn that, did you...

### 00:28:49
**PAUL STANKARD**
Yeah.

### 00:28:50
**Catherine Tuczek**
Take classes or did you...

### 00:28:51
**PAUL STANKARD**
I, I went to um, I graduated from Salem Community College, it was a two-year program. I ended up with a scientific glassblowing diploma.

### 00:29:00
**PAUL STANKARD**
And they would, they, it was flow- it was uh, they had courses, foundation courses, and then lab. We, they call, they called it lab

### 00:29:09
**PAUL STANKARD**
where every day for three hours I would practice, I would uh, work on my techniques and practice making uh, laboratory equipment.

### 00:29:22
**PAUL STANKARD**
This is kind of a funny story, yeah I loved it, I loved it!

### 00:29:26
**PAUL STANKARD**
All of a sudden ya’ know, I’m working with my hands, I’m making in the flow- fires.

### 00:29:33
**PAUL STANKARD**
Exciting, controlled risk, you learn not to burn yourself real quick, (laughter) but I loved it.
And so um, the end of the first year I got uh, the instructor. He said, “Paul, you have to go to the director’s office, he wants to talk to you.”

Ok, I had no idea what that was about.

Went to the director’s office, “Paul Stankard, you failed your scientific glass course and you failed algebra.”

“I think you should leave Salem and join the army.”

I’m thinkin’, “I don’t wanna’ join the army, I wanna’ be a glassblower!”

I was determined, I was a quiet kid I didn’t ya’ know, I...

“Well, ok, we’ll put you on probation.”

I got a summer job, I worked forty hours a week, sometimes overtime, and went back the following September and I was good.

I knew that that full time experienced honed my skills, and I knew that I could do it.

So I had to go to night school for Algebra (laughter) and uh, knew that uh, this is what I wanted.

Cuz’ I was you know, I wasn’t academic, learning a trade was important, so I, I worked hard to master that craft.

And then when I left industry, I would ask, I would meet other artists at Wheaton Arts, glass people.
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>00:31:09</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>And I would meet Mark Peiser, Jon Kuhn, different people who, who had graduated from my school.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:31:26</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>David Pye was an English woodworker.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:31:29</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>And it really was fascinating because it, it, it addressed the workmanship of certainty versus the workmanship of spontaneity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:31:38</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>And in the book which was, ya’ know, it expanded my, my reference.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:31:45</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>And that’s when I started to look at my process and, and divide what was certain and protect the quality of that work versus what would complement my designs with a certain spontaneity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:32:04</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>Ya’ know, and I just kept on going uh, another wonderful book was <em>The Story of Art</em> by um...</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:32:11</td>
<td>CHARLES SABLE</td>
<td>Ernst Gombrich.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:32:12</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>He was knighted. (Laughter) It was a beautiful book; I understand why he was knighted.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:32:19</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>I met an artist who, who recommended Gombrich, and Gombrich wrote a number of books.</td>
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<td>00:32:23</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>So it’s like, I loved learning about art.</td>
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<td>00:32:28</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>I, I realized the more exposure I had to these wonderful ideas that in fact I could translate ‘em into my floral paperweights.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Paul Stankard Oral History Transcript (Complete Interview)</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:32:38</td>
<td><strong>Paul Stankard</strong></td>
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<td>And I wasn’t interested in making great large scale</td>
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<td>sculpture or any-…</td>
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<td>Chapter title</td>
<td><strong>Poetry</strong></td>
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<td>00:32:43</td>
<td><strong>Paul Stankard</strong></td>
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<td>I believe that, like Walt Whitman, who I’m a</td>
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<td>wonderful um, fan of his work, Walt Whitman said to</td>
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<td>um, his, his, <em>(indiscernible)</em> is about celebrating</td>
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<td>the ordinary as extraordinary.</td>
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<td>00:33:00</td>
<td><strong>Paul Stankard</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>And I can- and people would say, “you’re making</td>
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<td>paperweights?” <em>(Laughter)</em> “Paperweights?”</td>
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<td>00:33:07</td>
<td><strong>Paul Stankard</strong></td>
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<td>And I, and I used to think, “well, you know, well,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>you know?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:33:12</td>
<td><strong>Paul Stankard</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>But as I matured, I realized that a paperweight</td>
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<td>could be a work of art as extraordinary as anything</td>
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<td>else, and it was my job to make it that.</td>
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<td>00:33:24</td>
<td><strong>Paul Stankard</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>So it’s, it’s very complicated, I mean, it’s a journey.</td>
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<td>00:33:28</td>
<td><strong>Paul Stankard</strong></td>
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<td>Um, it was difficult but I, I did, I did I think that</td>
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<td>being dyslexic and, and trying to do well um, stayed</td>
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<td>with me.</td>
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<td>00:33:41</td>
<td><strong>Paul Stankard</strong></td>
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<td>And then when technology came along, and uh,</td>
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<td>audibles, text, ya’ know, uh, books on tape, I had</td>
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<td>access to all this information.</td>
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<td>00:33:52</td>
<td><strong>Paul Stankard</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>There’s a wonderful sentence in <em>Song of Myself</em> by</td>
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<td>Walt Whitman, the narrowest hinge of my hand</td>
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<td>puts to scorn all machinery.</td>
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<td>00:34:03</td>
<td><strong>Paul Stankard</strong></td>
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<td>I loved workin’ with my hands, and I read that in</td>
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<td></td>
<td>the mid ‘80s.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:34:09</td>
<td><strong>Paul Stankard</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Transcript</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:34:19</td>
<td>I thought, “wow!” In the mid ’80s, I hit this invisible wall that I didn’t feel like I was making artistic progress, I just felt stymied.</td>
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</table>
| 00:34:26 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
And you know, an artist knows when the work’s not evolving. Eh, I, ya’ know, nothing’s happening. |
| 00:34:31 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
But I, I started writing poetry, and I started reading poetry. |
| 00:34:31 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
If I, trust me, if I’m gonna’ write poetry, let’s go find out, let’s go experience great poems!  
(Laughter) |
| 00:34:40 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
So I, I, I read somewhere that Walt Whitman was America’s greatest literary genius. |
| 00:34:48 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
So I started reading poe- uh, Whitman’s poetry. |
| 00:34:50 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
I got in uh, I started reading an, an Anthology, and was exposed to a lot of poems. And Whitman’s poems touched me. |
| 00:34:59 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
And after reading Whitman’s poetry, I, it, it really, it really allowed me to have more creative freedom. |
| 00:35:10 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
I was experimenting with a honeybee and um, I wanted it incorporated into the flowering plants, and I wanted it to symbolize uh, pollenating. |
| 00:35:23 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
I think of my flowers as a lifecycle of nature, er, growth, maturity, decay. |
| 00:35:33 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
And um, I read in one of Whitman’s poems, “the hairy wild bee hankers and murmurs up and down”. The hairy, wild bee? |
So I went outside, it was in the summertime, and I got a bee off of a dandelion.

And I’m lookin’ at it thinking, “my god, it’s hairy!” (Laughter)

So I started experimenting to, to put the, the little hairs on the back of the bee.

So it’s ya’ know, I mean, you pull it from, it comes, it comes to you in so many different ways.

Do you ever make mistakes when you’re working, or do you break a piece like, how do you deal with that?

I make mistakes all the time, all the time. Failures.

When I started out, I was destroying about twenty, twenty-five percent of my work because I was just interested in prese- having my best work represent me.

Was very, very I could make more work than I could sell.

So I edited down, I just selected the best and then put aside the, put aside the others.

And, and another thing that was interesting, I wanted the work, I wanted to build on the French paperweight tradition.

And then, once I started to advance my interpretation of nature with, with in the paperweights format, I repackaged my colored
glass flowers and developed what I call the botanical series.

00:37:06 **PAUL STANKARD**
In the botanical series, I thought, and I, I th- I believe is a continuation, it advances the antique French paperweight tradition.

00:37:17 **PAUL STANKARD**
And the botanicals, they allowed me to bring more visual information into the work.

00:37:23 **PAUL STANKARD**
I was caught up in the spirit of the studio glass movement, but I was committed to interpreting nature in glass in a way that hadn’t been, hadn’t been done before.

Chapter Title **Joining the Studio Glass Movement**

00:37:35 **CHARLES SABLE**
When did you first become aware of others uh, in the studio glass movement?

00:37:40 **CHARLES SABLE**
The first, the beginning, uh, um...

00:37:42 **PAUL STANKARD**
Well, I knew about the studio- eh, eh, that’s a good question, thank you.

00:37:46 **PAUL STANKARD**
When I was in Salem, when I was in the glass program at Salem, um, it was, I was in the glass program from ’90 uh, 1991 to 1993.

00:37:57 **PAUL STANKARD**
And the flamework, the scientific glassblowers were connected.

00:38:03 **PAUL STANKARD**
They were, they were organized in a way that they knew other scientific glassblowers.

00:38:09 **PAUL STANKARD**
And what’s not mentioned too often is Littleton’s workshop, when Littleton put the workshop together in 1962, there was a flameworker in that group, and he was demonstrating flameworking.

| 00:38:24  | **PAUL STANKARD**  
And the word came, the word got around the scientific glass-flameworking community, lampworkers they call themselves, that there’s this guy named Littleton who wants to teach glassblowing at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. |
| 00:38:41  | **PAUL STANKARD**  
And I’m goin’, “wow, that is fascinating.” |
| 00:38:45  | **PAUL STANKARD**  
And so I knew about the scientific - I knew about the Littleton’s interest in teaching a Master’s course in glassblowing at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. |
| Dina | Please see two typos in transcript below |
| 00:38:59  | **PAUL STANKARD**  
And it wasn’t until um, I think it was ’76 or ’77 at the Bergstrom Mahler Museum museum at Neenah, Wisconsin that I met Harvey Littleton. |
| 00:39:09  | **PAUL STANKARD**  
And I met Dominic Labino, and uh, uh a number of other uh, people. |
| 00:39:15  | **PAUL STANKARD**  
Around ’72, when I left industry to ’76, my work was improving. |
| 00:39:23  | **PAUL STANKARD**  
The work was attracting more attention, and the Bergstrom Modern Museum, which interestingly enough has a world-class paperweight collection. |
| 00:39:33  | **PAUL STANKARD**  
But they also are inter- they were also interested in contemporary glass. |
| 00:39:39  | **PAUL STANKARD** |
So they had an exhibition of contemporary glass and included me as a paperweight maker into the exhibit.

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<tr>
<td>00:39:48</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>So they asked me to go out and speak, and I was on a panel, and I, and, and Littleton was there with uh, his wife and Dominic Labino, and...</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:39:58</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>And they looked like they were havin’ a hell of a lot more fun than I was having as a paperweight maker. (Laughter) I’m thinkin’, “wow!”</td>
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<td>00:40:05</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>And they were, they were ya’ know, they were, they were energized, not that I wasn’t.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:40:11</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>But it wasn’t about the market for them, it was about the opportunity to express an idea.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:40:20</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>And, and so I was interested in expressing an idea about native flow- my, my love of sharing my interest in native flowers.</td>
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<td>00:40:29</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>So I connected, and I remember having Harvey Littleton looking at my work and saying, “that’s pretty good, kid.” (Laughter) Or something like that, he was very complimentary.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:40:38</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>And tuh-</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:40:40</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>So I early on knew about studio glass but it was very, there was very little going on.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:40:45</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>I mean, there were c- a couple of universities and they were networking among themselves, and...</td>
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<td>00:40:50</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
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</table>
But it wasn’t until like, uh, in the, in the ’72, ’73, ’74 that a couple of galleries uh, established um, uh, galleries focused on contemporary glass.

**00:41:04**  
**PAUL STANKARD**  
And they um, were became um, they became a gathering point for the artists, especially if they’re having surveys.

**00:41:14**  
**PAUL STANKARD**  
And one of the interesting things was I uh, Habitat Gallery here in um, Michigan, Dearborn Michigan had a uh, they called it a, I don’t know, they may have called it “The Great Paperweight Exhibit”.

**00:41:28**  
**PAUL STANKARD**  
And they invited Littleton, and Labino, and all the contemporary glass people to make paperweights to be in this paperweight show, because in the early ‘70s, there was a lot of vessels.

**00:41:41**  
**PAUL STANKARD**  
And all of a sudden you know, it, “eh, it wouldn’t make a paperweight.” (laughter)

**00:41:46**  
**PAUL STANKARD**  
So they were making paperweights, they were a little spontaneous.

**00:41:50**  
**PAUL STANKARD**  
And it, and so they were in this exhibit and there’s a critic from New York City, Paul Hollister, he flew in and reviewed the show for a magazine and talked about Stankard doing traditional work along with all the other contemporary work.

**00:42:05**  
**PAUL STANKARD**  
And um, so I met, I met Ritter, Kuhn, I met uh, I met a lot of people, and I had a lot in common with ‘em.

**00:42:13**  
**PAUL STANKARD**  
Interestingly enough, as a flameworker, as a lampworker, I had to name myself a flameworker at that moment.

**00:42:21**  
**PAUL STANKARD**
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<tr>
<td>00:42:26</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>Um, as a lampworker, I was a curiosity. And it was small scale and detail, so I uh, I shared my knowledge of flameworking and listened to their stories of blowing glass and became part of, I felt comfortable with ‘em.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:42:40</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>What do you think Kate, am I talking too much?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:42:42</td>
<td>Catherine Tuczek</td>
<td>No! (Laughter)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:42:43</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>Ok! (Laughter)</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:42:45</td>
<td>CHARLES SABLE</td>
<td>Can you tell me about the, the, the development of the art market? You’ve eluded to it ever so slightly, can you continue with that?</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:42:49</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>Yeah, I mean um, I had been uh, in ’72, left industry, worked with paperweight dealers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:42:57</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>And, and these people were good people, they were selling antique French paperweights for serious money.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:43:04</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>And, and I worked hard to attract, capture the attention of the antique French paperweight collectors to purchase my work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:43:14</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>And, and they, and I was, and they were very supportive.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:43:19</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>But um, it was, it was, I was por- my paperweights were put into a display case with ya’ know, fifty other paperweights. (Laughter)</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:43:30</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>And when I, when Habitat had that show, it was a whole new approach to marketing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:43:39</td>
<td>Here, I was marketed, I was presented as an artist, and this is his work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:43:45</td>
<td>And, and, and I noticed the galleries were more about promoting the artist and less about the work as a result of the creative efforts of the artist.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:44:00</td>
<td>And it wasn't about a color, or this, or that.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:44:05</td>
<td>So I, I realized that um, it was, I was attracted more to the gallery uh, marketing approach.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:44:15</td>
<td>And so I, so I, I had a very successful show at he-uh, Habitat, Ferd Hampson sold, I had five pieces in the show, he sold all five.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:44:25</td>
<td>See, he said, “Paul, would you like to have a paperweight show next year?” And I said, “sure!”</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:44:32</td>
<td>My brother lived in Dearborn, Michigan, so that was the reason I left New Jersey to come to, because I hadn’t seen my brother, John, in, in a couple years and I’m thinin’, “I don’t know anything about Habitat Gallery, Dearborn.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:44:45</td>
<td>But John lives in Michigan, Dearborn, so I’ll go do the show and visit John!</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:44:51</td>
<td>So anyway, my brother lived in Dearborn, so that was the ya’ know, I don’t wanna’ hurt (indiscernible) feelings, but that was the magnet.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:44:58</td>
<td>I did the show the following year, we sold out. It was amazing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:45:03</td>
<td>I was so happy, I met so many nice people that were curious about my work.</td>
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</table>
And then Doug Heller, the following year, Doug Heller calls me up and says, “Paul, would you like to have a show at the Heller Gallery in New York?”

And I knew who the Heller Gallery was.

And I said uh, “huh, that would be great!”

So Doug showed my work, and the gallery’s beautiful; on pedestals, we had flowers. We sold out.

I’m thinkin’, “wow!”

So it was, and you know, and I was still a starving artist because there wasn’t a lot of money to be made, but still, ya’ know, it was, we were moving in the right direction.

And what was interesting about the galleries, it was a challenge, artistic challenge, because you really had to come up with new designs. You couldn’t have five of the same thing, ya’ know?

And so that was a wonderful, I enjoyed that challenge of working in th- with a theme, medicinal herbs, ya’ know, edible plants. Things like that and um, uh, berries.

I was in two worlds. I worked with the paperweight dealers, sent them work, but I also uh, showed at galleries.

And the paperweight dealers, I, I kept the two separate which was uh, you know, I had five kids.
You know, I mean, it wasn’t about the money as much as the work, but we need money to live, ya’ know?

| 00:46:42 | **CHARLES SABLE**  
How was your relationship with galleries changed over time? |
|----------|----------------------------------|
| 00:46:45 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
They’re all a bunch of shits! (laughter) |
| 00:46:48 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
I dare you to leave that in. (laughter) |
| 00:46:51 | **BRADLEY EGEN**  
I’m leaving that. |
| 00:46:52 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
No, don’t ta- (laughter) |
| 00:46:54 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
No, I um, I, I, ya’ know, my relationship with the galleries today is uh, I’m at a wonderful spot, I’m in, I’m in a wonderful place with my relationship with the galleries at age 73. (laughter) |
| 00:47:10 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
I work with a few de- galleries, I enjoy, I enjoy the success, my work is experiencing, but I am not trying to prove anything. |
| Chapter title | **Current Work** |
| 00:47:22 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
I’m not, I don’t necessarily wanna’ do a show, I send, I, I, I work, my work rate now, I make these spherical forms, I call them meditations. |
| 00:47:33 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
I went through some oh, medical challenges and when I, after going through the medical challenges and being away from glass for a year, I started to, when I sat down, I started to think of how much I enjoy glass, and this thing’s coming to an end. |
| 00:47:52 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
So I started thinking of my work as meditations, as a prayer. My labor is my prayer. |
| 00:48:00 | **PAUL STANKARD** |
And um, I’m, I’m doing some, I think I’m, I think I’m doing the best work of my career right now.

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<th>00:48:09</th>
<th><strong>PAUL STANKARD</strong></th>
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<td></td>
<td>I really, I really am so interested in how at age 73, how I’m discovering new ways to learn about nature, new ways to learn about glass.</td>
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It’s almost this process teaches you how to be creative.

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<th>00:48:23</th>
<th><strong>PAUL STANKARD</strong></th>
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<td>Chapter title: Materials &amp; Working with an Assistant</td>
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How about materials? Let’s talk about changes in materials from early days to the present.

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<tr>
<th>00:48:28</th>
<th><strong>CHARLES SABLE</strong></th>
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<td>00:48:33 <strong>PAUL STANKARD</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Well, in the early days, material, there was difficult, it was difficult finding the materials to um, it was difficult finding compatible glasses.</td>
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And because of the huge numbers of creative people wanting to work in glass, industry, glass companies started to produce colored glasses and clear glass that would, that could allow the artist to do their work.

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<th>00:48:42</th>
<th><strong>PAUL STANKARD</strong></th>
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<td>00:49:01 <strong>PAUL STANKARD</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>In the ‘60s and ‘70s, it was difficult finding the materials that you could do good work with.</td>
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But then slowly, as more and more artists wanted to work in glass, there was a economic interest in these manufacturers to produce the colored glasses.

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<th>00:49:08</th>
<th><strong>PAUL STANKARD</strong></th>
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<td>00:49:19 <strong>CATHARINE TUCZEK</strong></td>
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<td>Do you usually work with someone else who encapsulates your piece for you, or do you work alone? How does that work?</td>
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<th>00:49:25</th>
<th><strong>PAUL STANKARD</strong></th>
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<td></td>
<td>00:49:28 <strong>PAUL STANKARD</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yeah, that’s a good question, thank you.</td>
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Paul Stankard Oral History Transcript (Complete Interview)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Transcript</th>
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</table>
| 00:49:33 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
Uh, I’ve worked with assistants from, almost from the beginning. |
| 00:49:39 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
Uh, in 1974, two, two years on my own, then I hired an assistant.  
And what I found out was it was a blessing, because I could uh, I could delegate a lot of the material preparation to the assistant while I’m focused on developing new ideas or, or just doing more ambitious work. |
| 00:49:54 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
But I’ve worked with assistants for the course of my career, and um, my daughter’s worked with me for um... |
| 00:50:02 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
My one daughter worked for me for nineteen years and another for about sixteen years. |
| 00:50:07 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
Uh, and I have five children. |
| 00:50:09 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
My three daughters have worked in the studio with me and my son, Joe. |
| 00:50:13 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
My daughter, Pauline, er, manages the studio, and she works part time. |
| 00:50:17 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
Now, my children were happy to work part time. They preferred, they wanted to work part time. |
| 00:50:23 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
They wanted to be Moms, and then they, they came to the studio and worked. |
| 00:50:28 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
Sometimes it was a real blessing if they brought the grandchildren. (Laughter) |
| 00:50:33 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
‘Cuz typic- because uh, (laughter) I’d be able to play with the grandchildren. (laughter) |
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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Transcript</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>00:50:38</td>
<td>Paul Stankard</td>
<td>But anyway, it’s um, I’ve benefited from assistants and David Graeber has been, has worked for me for close to twenty-five years, and now works one day a week.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:50:50</td>
<td>Paul Stankard</td>
<td>And he’s on his own, he’s doing very interesting work on his own.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:50:55</td>
<td>Paul Stankard</td>
<td>Ya’ know, I look at the young paperweight makers, and I think they’re gonna’ have a challenge, the younger people in glass, the young artists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:51:02</td>
<td>Paul Stankard</td>
<td>They’re so much work has been invented, how do I say that?</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:51:07</td>
<td>Paul Stankard</td>
<td>The diversity of the contemporary glass landscape is, is broad and fascinating.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:51:15</td>
<td>Paul Stankard</td>
<td>With, so many people have been able to, to invent a personal vocabulary to uh, invent techniques that distinguishes a work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:51:24</td>
<td>Paul Stankard</td>
<td>And I look at the young people, and I think, “oh my god, they’re gonna’ have a har- they’re gonna have tough sledding to jump over what has been done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:51:34</td>
<td>Paul Stankard</td>
<td>Because it’s all about originality, it really is.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:51:41</td>
<td>Charles Sable</td>
<td>But don’t you think, let me throw this at you, a little counterpoint.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:51:44</td>
<td>Charles Sable</td>
<td>Don’t you think that on the shoulders of what is known as the Classic Phase, or (indiscernible) now calls the Classic Phase to do glass there will be new challenges and new weights?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:51:55</td>
<td>Paul Stankard</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Yes, yes, there’s all, you know, there’s two schools of thought.

00:51:59  **PAUL STANKARD**  
And when you look at the numbers of people who have distinguished themselves in glass art by doing great work, one school of thought is it’s gonna di-it’s gonna’ be difficult to advance that progress.

00:52:16  **PAUL STANKARD**  
But there’s another school of thought says that this opens up many more opportunities for more people to be engaged in um, in the field by being influenced by what’s been done.

00:52:33  **PAUL STANKARD**  
So it’s um, it’s a double, it’s ya’ know, it’s two different points of view.

00:52:39  **PAUL STANKARD**  
But it’s predicated on, I think it’s predicated on doing good work and making it personal.

00:52:47  **CHARLES SABLE**  
Can you go back to the issue of plants?

00:52:50  **PAUL STANKARD**  
Ok.

00:52:51  **CHARLES SABLE**  
How do you go about getting your ideas for plants for, for botanical motifs that you use?

00:52:59  **PAUL STANKARD**  
Well, ya’ know, this is an interesting statement that I’m gonna’ make because you’re interviewing Paul Stankard who has spent his adult life on the creative side encapsulating uh, referencing nature in glass.

00:53:17  **PAUL STANKARD**  
If you were to interview me in the first ten years of my s- my career, you would’ve had a totally different story.

00:53:25  **PAUL STANKARD**  
The second ten years, a different story.

00:53:29  **PAUL STANKARD**
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<th>Time</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>00:53:38</td>
<td>Paul Stankard</td>
<td>I'm evolving, and I love that. I'm a different person today than I was ten years ago.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:53:48</td>
<td>Paul Stankard</td>
<td>And so now, I’m interested in interpreting nature in glass as a metaphor: sex, death and God.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:53:58</td>
<td>Paul Stankard</td>
<td>So I went to my wife, I, I talked to my wife Pat, and I said, “hey Pat, I’m gonna’ interpret sex, death and God in my glass”.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:54:04</td>
<td>Paul Stankard</td>
<td>She said, “well Paul, what psychiatry book have you been reading?” “There’s nothing else.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:54:12</td>
<td>Paul Stankard</td>
<td>But I wanted to also uh, acknowledge how much support you, you have, you’re supported by the galleries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:54:26</td>
<td>Paul Stankard</td>
<td>First of all, I wanna’ acknowledge the support that I have received from my wife, Pat, uh, my assistants, my daughters and, and my son, Joe, and, and David Graeber and, and others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:54:26</td>
<td>Paul Stankard</td>
<td>But the galleries, they’re busi- they are business advisers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:54:30</td>
<td>Paul Stankard</td>
<td>The dealers, the galleries you, you know, you talk about you know, cuh- prices, um, marketing, they’re marketing your work.</td>
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<td>00:54:40</td>
<td>Paul Stankard</td>
<td>Right now it’s a different world because of the internet.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:54:43</td>
<td>Paul Stankard</td>
<td>You know you can uh, Doug Heller, I sent a- an orb, it was “A Meditation on the Healing Virtues of a Plant.” A very long title.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:54:53</td>
<td>Paul Stankard</td>
<td>He said, “that’s a long title. I said, “what can I say? It’s a long title.</td>
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<td>Time</td>
<td>Speaker</td>
<td>Transcript</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:54:59</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>(Laughter) “Meditation on the healing virtues of a Plant”.</td>
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<td>00:55:03</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>So he emailed that, he did an email blast, and he sold it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:55:08</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>I was like, “from, to a person in Australia!” Which, you know, it’s kinda’ cute.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:55:14</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>So it’s um, you- you know, change. Things change, society changes, your business you know, the museum world is reinventing itself.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:55:23</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>I think we’re all, we’re all eager to reinvent ourselves, and the creative side is especially keen on that attitude, come up with new things.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:55:35</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>The trick is I don’t want my work to be novel. I want my work to have uh, substance, I want it to be honest.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:55:45</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>I want my work to have integrity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:55:48</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>And these are very abstract terms, but they mean something to me and that’s what you know, that’s what you know, I’ve protected against. I’ve protected against the, I protect my quality.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:56:02</td>
<td>CHARLES SABLE</td>
<td>When did you realize you were successful? That’s a-</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:56:05</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>You know, I don’t think of myself as successful.</td>
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<td>00:56:09</td>
<td>CHARLES SABLE</td>
<td>You don’t?</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:56:10</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>No.</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:56:11</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
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I don’t because it’s not important to me. What’s important to me is to do great work.

00:56:16  **PAUL STANKARD**
And what’s important to me is reach my full potential.

00:56:20  **PAUL STANKARD**
Um, how do I answer that? People say, “oh, you’re very successful, Paul.” I say, “oh, ok.”

00:56:30  **PAUL STANKARD**
(Laughter) I’m not gonna’ change my life over it.

00:56:33  **PAUL STANKARD**
You know, I go to LA Fitness and work out. You know I, I hang with the same people, uh, I um, I’m proud of my accomplishments.

00:56:44  **PAUL STANKARD**
I’m very proud to be represented in the uh, I’m very proud to be represented in The Henry Ford Museum collection of glass, contemporary glass tradition.

00:56:55  **PAUL STANKARD**
Tradition, I’m, I’m proud to be positioned as a maker who has adva- who has impacted on American glass.

00:57:02  **PAUL STANKARD**
Now these are very sweet accomplishments.

00:57:06  **PAUL STANKARD**
Uh, but I don’t want my life to change, I just want to be a maker, and um...

00:57:14  **PAUL STANKARD**
I wanna’ share the reason I’m here, to share my experiences with the young people.

00:57:19  **PAUL STANKARD**
By sharing my experiences with the young people, I want them to know that uh, it’s about doing something well and, and, and persevere.

00:57:30  **PAUL STANKARD**
And uh, I love the idea of uh, s- uh, quote that’s attributed to Joseph Campbell.
Joseph Campbell said, “by following your bliss, opportunities will become available to you.”

And that’s a sweet idea, and I believe that.

I mean you know, I’ve been, I’ve been in some pretty tough situations throughout my forty-five years as a studio artist.

But um, by just saying, “ok, it’s really tough, money’s tight,” but I go right back to focusing on my work.

But one of the sweet um, success is a very, very um, personal experience.

I was honored to receive two honorary doctoral finance degrees.

And it’s a little abstract.

My brother has a PhD from the University of Pennsylvania, so I called up my brother, Martin, and I said, “hey Martin, I’m a uh, I got a doctorate.

He said, “yeah, but you didn’t earn it.” (Laughter) Typical brother’s response.

But uh, success to me is being, right now success is being a good grandpop.

I wanna’ be a good grandpop. If I can be a good grandpop, I’m golden.

And I’m working at it, I love, I love takin’ the kids out and buyin’ them a toy.
Now the toys are getting a little expensive though, god almighty I...

| 00:59:00 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
The boy wanted a um, Mac watch. It was 350 bucks or something or... So he had to pay half. (Laughter) |
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 15</strong></td>
<td><strong>Personal Collecting</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 00:59:10 | **CHARLES SABLE**  
One last question and then we’ll let you go, ok? |
| 00:59:12 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
Yeah. |
| 00:59:13 | **CHARLES SABLE**  
Uh, what kind of glass do you collect and why? |
| 00:59:17 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
Well, while I was um, this is interesting, this is, this is um, maybe a psychiatrist could figure this puzzle out. |
| 00:59:30 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
But as a paperweight maker, and as I was emotionally involved in advancing the tradition, expressing myself through native flowers and, and inventing my own personal um, body of work, I was not competing with the other contemporary glass collectors. |
| 00:59:55 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
So I would, I would see great contemporary glass and purchase it. |
| 01:00:00 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
I wasn’t, I didn’t, emotionally, I wasn’t in that mindset. |
| 01:00:05 | **PAUL STANKARD**  
Uh, uh, how do you say it Charles, I wasn’t, I wasn’t part of, I mean, I wasn’t a part of the studio glass movement but I didn’t come up with the tradition of... |
| 01:00:13 | **CHARLES SABLE**  
Correct. |
| 01:00:14 | **PAUL STANKARD** |
I was an outsider that had, I was an outsider within the con-

01:00:21  CHARLES SABLE
You were in...

01:00:22  PAUL STANKARD
I was on the periphery of the studio glass movement, but my work was attracting serious
attention in the sh- in the contemporary glass um, con- in the contemporary glass context.

01:00:35  CHARLES SABLE
M-hm.

01:00:35  PAUL STANKARD
But I enjoyed collecting contemporary glass, and I ended up uh, donating uh, quite a bit of it to Salem
Community College and also Wheaton Arts.

01:00:44  PAUL STANKARD
Uh, I’m slowly ya’ know, at this stage of the game it’s important to um, g- give it away and ya’ know,
you have to uh, you have to shrink it down a little bit.

01:00:59  CHARLES SABLE
Yes, the term is downsize.

01:01:00  PAUL STANKARD
Downsizing, that’s it, yeah.

01:01:02  PAUL STANKARD
Ok, you guys got some good stuff.

01:01:05  CHARLES SABLE
Did I hear something just ding?

01:01:07  PAUL STANKARD
My ding, my phone that was my phone maybe, er?

01:01:09  CHARLES SABLE
Oh, that was your phone?

01:01:10  CATHARINE TUCZEK
(Laughter)

01:01:11  BRADLEY EGEN
I listened to you all day long, and I watched you all
day long.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01:01:14</td>
<td>BRADLEY EGEN</td>
<td>Before I knew you were coming here, I looked ya’ up and read about ya’</td>
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<tr>
<td>01:01:17</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>You realized that I’m a bull-shitter.</td>
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<tr>
<td>01:01:19</td>
<td>BRADLEY EGEN</td>
<td>No I didn’t…</td>
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<td>01:01:20</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>(Laughter)</td>
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<tr>
<td>01:01:21</td>
<td>BRADLEY EGEN</td>
<td>Every one of those...</td>
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<tr>
<td>01:01:21</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>Yup.</td>
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<tr>
<td>01:01:22</td>
<td>BRADLEY EGEN</td>
<td>To me is a story.</td>
</tr>
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<td>01:01:24</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>01:01:24</td>
<td>BRADLEY EGEN</td>
<td>And when I got to know about you so far is that you’re a storyteller.</td>
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<tr>
<td>01:01:27</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>Exactly.</td>
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<td>01:01:28</td>
<td>BRADLEY EGEN</td>
<td>And you chose to tell your stories by trapping a moment of you inside of a solid object.</td>
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<tr>
<td>01:01:36</td>
<td>BRADLEY EGEN</td>
<td>And I’m really curious about the expression of a story. It’s almost a snapshot, it’s a three-dimensional photograph, but it’s a picture that came out of the autobiography of you. It didn’t come out of nature.</td>
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<td>01:01:49</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>Alright, but uh, that’s a good question.</td>
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<td>01:01:51</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>Let me say that um, I care about what I do, I wanna’ do it well. I found my niche, I found a way to work in glass.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Speaker</td>
<td>Transcript</td>
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<td>01:02:01</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>Allows me to um, enhances my sense of self-worth.</td>
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<tr>
<td>01:02:05</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>I think that as a dyslexic, I, the first twenty-five, twenty-seven years of my life was ya’ know, I can’t do this, I can’t do that. I was always embarrassed if somebody when I worked in industry...</td>
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<tr>
<td>01:02:21</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>One of the reasons I left was because I was always petrified that I’d have to fill out a form, I have to write something down.</td>
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<tr>
<td>01:02:28</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>And I, and when I did it was just, it was like, anxious and ya’ know, misspelling all the words.</td>
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<td>01:02:35</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>There’s something very satisfying about doing something well.</td>
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<td>01:02:39</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>And, and by uh, trying to uh, share with the viewer what I care about and, and bring myth, symbolism and spirituality into my glass, that’s me.</td>
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<td>01:02:59</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>And is ya’ know, if you give it to, if you, if the viewer takes the time to engage the object into a visual dialog ya’ know, there’s, there’s a lot for the viewer to, to um, absorb.</td>
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<td>01:03:14</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>And they’re not gonna’ get it at the first take.</td>
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<td>01:03:17</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>I would like to think my, my work reveals itself uh, over uh, time.</td>
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<td>01:03:23</td>
<td>PAUL STANKARD</td>
<td>(Laughter)</td>
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END