

# HEART OF GLASS

## MCLANE'S GLOBAL IMPACT

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She was almost at the top of the world when everything changed.

Shandra McLane discovered her calling to work in glass when she was hired as the print shop coordinator at Pilchuck Glass School in Stanwood, Washington, founded by Dale Chihuly. She was first drawn to the kiln-fused glass technique vitreography by pioneer Harvey Littleton, whom McLane cites as “a huge inspiration.”

“I was attracted to the medium because you constantly have to problem-solve,” McLane said. “Colors, patterns, how to design what’s in your head ... the outcome is rewarding but it can take 10 tries to get you there!”

Today, she lives in central New Hampshire, where she maintains Squam River Studios in a beautifully redeveloped former bank building in Ashland, N.H.; here she creates her experimental glass art. McLane completed a master’s of education degree in integrated arts from Plymouth State University, where she went on to become an adjunct faculty member. Finding ways to bring art and education together is one of her most passionate missions.

McLane finds that residencies involving travel give her an opportunity to make connections with other artists, expand her knowledge and refresh her creativity. In 2015, she boarded the *Antigua* – a wooden sailing vessel – along with 40 other international artists, and explored Svalbard, Norway, an archipelago just 10 degrees from the North Pole and home of the Svalbard Global Seed Vault. The trip changed her work, inspiring an interest in more monochromatic pieces as well as two on-going projects about the environment.

“I gravitate toward a more Scandinavian aesthetic,” McLane said, speaking of her striking abstract work that has been exhibited and installed around the United States. “But in recent years, I’ve been wanting to use that same design to educate through my work.”

As an active advocate for the STEAM initiative (which adds the “A” for Art to the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math of STEM), McLane seeks out opportunities to reveal scientific concepts through art. In January 2017, she had that opportunity as a member of the curatorial team behind the “Forecasting: Climate Change and Water Impact” exhibition at the Museum of the White Mountains in Plymouth, N.H. The exhibit brought together

artists and scientists to discuss and explore the ramifications of climate change and its impact on water.

McLane’s work in “Forecasting” included pieces from her “Oceans in Relief” project, a symposium of five ocean studies addressing regional issues with global impact. McLane also developed “Engineering the Glass Seed,” an interdisciplinary project that allows kids to design and create their own “seeds” in glass. McLane has taught this project at the Swedish Glass Museum and Dartmouth College’s Thayer School of Engineering, among others, and she has developed a booklet that outlines the process in simple and understandable terms. She already has two more international residencies planned for later in 2017, where she plans to develop these ideas even further.

“Glass as a medium is very versatile, so it can be decorative on a wall, or functional, or can transform an entire space,” said McLane. “One of the reasons I was attracted to glass is because it’s collaborative. Collaborating with scientists and other glass artists, the international community, working on projects and commissions – I like to stay open to all of that. The projects are always different, with opportunities to try new things with different people.”

Squam River Studio is open to visitors by appointment and can be found online at [squamriverstudios.com](http://squamriverstudios.com).



Shandra McLane working in her studio (photograph by Sarah Daniel-Campbell).

| Marcia Santore