Touch of Glass

IF YOU WANTED ONE OF the finest crystal sculptures ever made, you'd want the foremost designer of lead crystal, silver, and gold to do the creating. You'd want Peter Yenawine.

That's who Ronald Reagan commissioned to create a sculpture that was given to the people of Berlin in July to honor its 750th anniversary. Pope John Paul II, Margaret Thatcher, Princess Anne and Captain Mark Phillips, Frank Sinatra, and Liza Minnelli have acquired Yenawine's work for their own private collections, as well.

Yenawine, a master designer at Steuben Glass for seven years, is now president and chief designer of his own firm, Pynn Corp., in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania. His firm specializes in one-of-a-kind corporate gifts, though many of his creations also have been manufactured for retail sale by international crystal and art houses, including Baccarat, Daum Cristallerie de Nancy, Rosenthal, Orrefors, Swarovski, and Wedgewood.

Yenawine's designs take in a pretty penny, too. In July, nine of his new sculptures and four retrospectives were unveiled; prices ranged from $30,000 for limited edition pieces to $116,000 for a one-of-a-kind creation.

A 1969 industrial design graduate of SU, Yenawine became interested in crystal because, ironically, it was the only material he had not been exposed to in college. “I wanted to be a designer that knew all materials,” he says.

When Steuben Glass made a nationwide sweep of the country's top design schools and selected him—straight out of SU—as one of two new designers, Yenawine got his chance to learn about the material.

“It became my specific niche and one that most designers don't know a lot about,” he says.

Although crystal is his favorite medium, Yenawine says, “Every material has its beauty and its potential. I like to mix materials and design assignments. The requirements and processes with each material are very different, and I like to keep that challenge.”

LITTLE CRITICS

WHEN IT COMES to art in the classroom, Leilani Latiin Duke is promoting a lot more than finger paintings and clay ashtrays.

Instead, Duke wants the quality and status of art education in the nation's schools, grades kindergarten through 12, to improve—and to do so substantially at that.

Duke is director of the Getty Center for Education in the Arts, an operating entity of the J. Paul Getty Trust in Los Angeles. The Getty Trust, which is the second-richest foundation in the world, is a non-profit, private operating foundation—meaning it operates programs rather than providing grants. The Getty Center for Education in the Arts is one of the eight programs operated by the Getty Trust.

The Getty Center spent an entire year researching problems in art education (in 1981), says Duke, “We concluded that the content of art education is not substantive enough. School systems are looking at art as a frill,” she says.

Determined to change this, Duke and the Getty Center are advocating that art education in the nation's schools include art history, criticism, and aesthetics in addition to art production. She says the nation's educational decision makers present the biggest challenge to the center.

“We're trying to help them recognize that art is more than just arts-and-crafts kinds of projects. It is a knowledge-based curriculum with its own language. Most of us don't know how to read art,” says Duke. “We're trying to get educators to know that art has a lot to say.”

While promoting the professional development of teachers already in the field and those preparing to enter it, the center is also advocating the value of art education to the general public, developing an art education series, and promoting curriculum development for more substantive art education programs.

Duke, who wrote her political science master's thesis on the government's role in promoting the
arts, has been advocating that cause since she graduated from SU in 1968. Prior to joining the Getty Trust in 1981, she was executive director of the California Federation of the Arts, a statewide arts service organization responsible for mobilizing public support for state government’s funding of the arts. Duke worked for the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington, D.C., for seven years before moving to California.

Duke says she’s encouraged by the progress of the Getty Center but realizes that changes in art education won’t happen overnight. “For 200 years art education has been a hands-on kind of approach only,” says Duke. “Many feel art is only of recreational or therapeutic value. We’re trying to change that attitude.”

The Candidate

JULIE BELAGA ISN’T THE governor of Connecticut, but she’s still talking politics. The five-term former Connecticut state legislator, who ran unsuccessfully for governor of Connecticut in 1986, is the newly appointed chairwoman of the Republican Women’s Political Action League.

The league, headed formerly by Maureen Reagan, is a fund-raising organization for Republican women running for state and federal offices nationwide. Belaga, who was appointed to the position in September, says the organization supports women candidates at especially critical times in their campaigns.

“Statistics and research make it very clear that women have a hard time raising money early in their political careers,” says Belaga, “and nobody knows that better than I do.”

Belaga is also a recent presidential appointee to the National Advisory Council on Adult Education. The group evaluates the nation’s adult education programs and advises the president and the secretary of education on matters related to adult education. “As a former school teacher,” says Belaga, “I’m particularly interested in this.”

Belaga, who earned an SU bachelor’s degree in education in 1951, was also one of six people selected last spring as a fellow of Harvard University’s Institute of Politics at the Kennedy School of Government. A steadfast environmentalist, Belaga spent much of her semester there conducting a seminar titled “Clean Drinking Water: Is It a Luxury of the Past?”

“I had all of this experience—all of this knowledge about the system, and a friend of mine at the Kennedy School encouraged me to put it to work,” she says. “The fellowship gave me the opportunity to meet a lot of savvy people and talk a lot about politics.” Belaga, who calls herself a political junkie, says it was a dream come true.

Last spring, Belaga almost found herself in public office again. Connecticut congressman Stewart B. McKinney died mid-term, and Belaga seemed the clear favorite to fill the vacant seat; she had spent six of her 10 years in the state legislature, for example, as assistant minority leader and two as deputy majority leader. But Belaga announced in May that she would not seek the nomination. A congressional campaign at that time, she says, would have interfered with her efforts to pay off her 1986 gubernatorial campaign debt.

That doesn’t mean, however, that Belaga is closing any doors on a future campaign for governor or another office. “At this point, I honestly don’t know,” she says. “But I do love public office and found running for statewide office both exhilarating and challenging. I wouldn’t say no to running for office again.”

Riding the Rails

THE DELAWARE OTSEGO Corp. (DOC) is a 550-mile regional rail system that operates in New York (including the New York City metropolitan area), New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. It employs some 200 people and for the second consecutive year has more than doubled its net income ($3,205,877 in 1986).

At 41, Rich has been in the business more than 20 years. He helped found the DOC while studying for his bachelor’s and law degrees at SU in the mid-1960s.

He says the industry still has some challenges to overcome. “Railroads must adapt to a new global economy. I think private companies are doing a good job of it. The major problem is that the industry is very capital intensive. We’re competing with other industries that have a quicker return. We’re faced with stiff competition from trucking companies, barges, and other industry.”

But Rich is optimistic. “Since the 1980 economic deregulation of the nation’s transportation systems, the railroad industry has started to turn around. And because major railroads are abandoning branch lines, there is a need for smaller commuter lines to provide service to smaller communities,” he says. “And this need is growing.”

Rich plans to capitalize on this opportunity. To keep DOC trains puffing down the track, he says, “We’ve got to provide what the customers want today, not what they wanted yesterday.”

https://surface.syr.edu/sumagazine/vola/iss1/10
Refugee Rights

HAITIAN REFUGEES emigrating to Florida rarely stood a chance of receiving political asylum in the United States until Ira Kurzban began his crusade for aliens' rights more than a decade ago. Today, thanks to Kurzban and a handful of other Miami lawyers, the odds have changed.

Since he began defending the plight of Haitian boat people, Kurzban has successfully litigated seven major class action lawsuits for aliens' rights. His celebrated cases resulted in Supreme Court rulings that freed some 2,000 Haitians from detention camps and supported Kurzban's contention that the Immigration and Naturalization Service could not use race or national origin as criteria for incarcerating aliens.

"The victories not only benefit the Haitians," says Kurzban, "but they have an effect on all refugees."

Last year Newsweek took note of Kurzban's work with the refugees and selected him as one of 100 American Heroes in the 1986 "Sweet Land of Liberty" special issue. "Ira Kurzban...practices law by day for money, he says, so he can work nights helping people who can't afford him. In his pro bono night life," Newsweek reported, "he represents some of the newest and poorest immigrants to America—peniless boat people from Haiti—against an unwelcoming federal government."

Kurzban's honors don't stop there. Esquire magazine named Kurzban in its 1985 Register of America's New Class, a group of 100 men and women under 40 who are changing the nation. He was also the first recipient of Florida's Tobias Simon Pro Bono Award, which recognized Kurzban's legal services to the poor.

Kurzban, who received his B.A. in political science from Syracuse in 1971, is a partner in the Miami law firm of Kurzban, Kurzban, Weinger, and Holtsberg. It handles immigration cases for major corporate clients, although immigration law isn't the only kind of law the firm practices. It also handles commercial litigation, medical malpractice cases, real estate cases, and product liability litigation, among other legal matters.

Kurzban is also an adjunct professor and litigator for two Florida law schools and the newly elected president of the American Immigration Lawyer Association (AILA). He says it's AILA that keeps him busiest now. He regularly provides testimony for Congress and meets with members of national and international organizations to discuss and promote immigration law.

"I am the son of a Jewish immigrant myself," Kurzban says. "I've always tried to work in the civil rights area. I believe that we have a legal system and constitution that was designed to protect freedom of minorities and I strongly feel that the constitution and the founding fathers felt there should be protection against the tyranny of the majority. And it's the lawyer who holds the unique position to defend [minority] rights under the law."

Places to Go, Things to Do

IN 1976, ANDREW PETKUN became president of Allen Furniture, one of the finest furniture stores in the country. By supervising all phases of the Boston-based company, Petkun has since turned the store into a multimillion dollar operation, more than tripling its sales.

House Beautiful magazine, Good Housekeeping, National Retail Merchants, National Home Furnishings, and Boston Magazine are among the many publications and organizations that have presented awards to Allen Furniture for its merchandise, floor designs, and advertising.

That accomplished, Petkun is now pursuing his interest in television broadcasting and delegating much of the store's daily operations to his staff.

His first project, about several remote, 60-year-old beach shacks built into the sand dunes of the Cape Cod National Seashore, was produced in conjunction with the NBC affiliate station in Boston. Last spring, CNN aired one of Petkun's pieces about the plight of the right whale. His most recent work, about the pirate ship Whydah that sank in 1717, aired on CNN in September.

But broadcasting isn't the only interest Petkun pursues with fervor. In September, the 1970 liberal arts graduate climbed to the summit of the Matterhorn in the Swiss Alps. "It is exceedingly difficult, wonderfully exhilarating, and terribly frightening," says Petkun, who trains for the now annual event by climbing ski mountains. "You find yourself facing life in the most significant way. Everything trivial drops away."

Petkun, who was selected by Cosmopolitan magazine as bachelor of the month a few years ago, has also done some modeling. In addition to posing for Allen Furniture advertisements, Petkun has appeared in Time, Newsweek, Fortune, and on the cover of Boston Magazine, to name a few.

When he's not broadcasting, modeling, traveling (to places like Tibet and South Africa), climbing mountains, or running his furniture business, Petkun spends his time at home—a place entirely surrounded by the National Seashore on Cape Cod. He's spent the last two years totally renovating what he says "was once a beach shack itself..." Architectural Digest was so impressed with the renovations, it's featuring his home in an upcoming issue of the magazine.