

Currents

Glass Act: Chrysler Museum's Massive Glass Studio Expansion

by Rachel Reiss | Mar 21, 2023



For over a decade, the Chrysler Museum's Perry glass studio has invited the public to experience the magical, molten elements of glassblowing. The over 9,000 square foot space was initially established "to nurture the growing glass community in Norfolk," as described by Glass Studio Manager and Program Director Robin Rogers, and pays tribute to the Chrysler's internationally-acclaimed glass collection, which boasts over 10,000 pieces spanning 3,000 years.

Since its inception, the studio has served as a hub for creating and teaching, offering various demos, performances, and classes to the public. With the glass studio running at capacity, its unprecedented growth has necessitated a larger space to accommodate the demand for education, exhibitions, and programming. Now, an effort is underway to expand the glass studio to over three times its size, which will allow for new opportunities to engage the community and the Chrysler's academic partners in the glass arts.

The glass studio expansion project is part of the larger **Campaign for the Chrysler**, an initiative that strives to celebrate the Chrysler's legacy through ongoing transformation. Initial exploration into potential expansion began in 2016 when the museum partnered with Norfolk-based WPA, an architecture, urban design, and interior design firm. Together, they devised a concept that will triple the size of the studio, enabling it to continue as an incubator for glass artistry.

Take a look at the renderings and prepare to be astounded; WPA and the Chrysler have envisioned a cultural campus that blends innovative techniques and immersive experiences at scale. This includes the addition of 5 workstations (for a total of 8), a

flameworking area doubled in size, a dedicated amphitheater for glass-blowing performances, and event, retail, classroom, and catering space. The real architectural feat, however, is the expansion's incorporation of sustainable design. Situated in a notorious flood zone, the studio will be elevated to fend against repeat flooding and include on-site water storage and cisterns to collect rainwater. Newly landscaped areas with native, salt-tolerant plantings will soak up excess water and serve to educate the larger community on coastal resilience.

In addition to enhancing the visitor experience, the increased capacity of the studio will expand its community impact through additional programming and deeper partnerships. The Studio's programming spans a range of free classes for beginners to a competitive Assistantship Program for practicing artists. They also support the undergraduate fine arts curriculum at Old Dominion University, Norfolk State University, Tidewater Community College, Virginia Wesleyan University, and the Governor's School for the Arts. The facility is set to establish the Endowment for School & Teacher Programs, supporting a key position within Chrysler's Education Department and all related activities, including school tours, curriculum development, and teacher professional development workshops. This additional work with key institutions will expose art to a new generation.

Plans for expansion began to materialize last summer with a ceremonial groundbreaking event, which doubled as a fundraising effort. The \$50 million capital campaign rests upon the generous gifts of donors, whose contributions support not only the expansion of the glass studio but other museum priorities, as well. Early campaign donor Joan Brock recently made a \$34 million gift to the museum, including 40 works of art from the Macon and Joan Brock Collection, which will support the expansion efforts. Other early donors include David R. and Susan S. Goode and their daughters, Christina and Martha, who made a \$2.5 million donation.

The revitalized studio space is planned to debut in two phases; one in the first half of 2024 (the 21,000-square-foot expansion) and one in the second half of 2024 (the renovation of the existing studio). With those dates inching closer, a stroll through the NEON district will soon reveal that efforts for the Perry are a work in progress. Museum guests are likely to see construction fencing and a shift in parking procedures in the coming weeks, and will soon be able to follow construction updates on the Chrysler's website.



Perry Glass Studio - SD - 10.28.2021

WPA



Rachel Reiss

Talbot Park, NFK

Rachel Reiss moved to Norfolk in 2021, and, true to her native Floridian roots, has been enjoying life near the beach. Since her day job as an HR Program Manager has gone remote, it offers her the flexibility to explore the area's rich history, culture, and diverse food scene in her spare time. She is also a passionate pianist, aspiring yogi, and self-proclaimed health nut who loves to cook. Rachel lives near Talbot Park with her husband, Phil - a CHKD resident - and their Maltese, Minnie.

