

MONA

Museum of Northwest Art



*Italo Scanga, Flora C. Mace, and Joey Kirkpatrick,
Pilchuck Glass School, c. 1980.*

Geppetto's Children: Italo Scanga at Pilchuck Glass School

February 18 - May 14, 2023

Geppetto's Children: Italo Scanga at Pilchuck Glass School, refers in its title to the Carlo Collodi novel, *The Adventures of Pinocchio* (1883), in which an impoverished woodcarver makes his own son out of a piece of wood and the puppet miraculously comes to life. Fortuitously, something similar happened to Italian-American artist Italo Scanga (1932-2001).



*Illustration from 1883 edition by
Enrico Mazzanti*

His mother often left him with the village cabinet-maker and woodcarver during the day while she worked in the fields. Over time, the carver and young Italo became close friends, with the former teaching the latter how to carve. Becoming de facto the woodcarver's "son," this was also the birth of Italo Scanga as an artist, forming his lifelong affinity to wood and paint, just as he had learned in the workshop in his native Italian village of Lago.

Thirty years later, when invited by his close friend Dale Chihuly to become artist-in-residence each summer at Pilchuck Glass School, Scanga suggested the Artist-in-Residence annual program. Through this program numerous artists, many unfamiliar with glass, were invited to come to work at Pilchuck, spending time with Chihuly and the new "Geppetto," Italo Scanga. In this way, the many artists featured in this exhibition became "Geppetto's Children."

Geppetto's Children: Italo Scanga at Pilchuck Glass School

features examples of Italo Scanga's work executed at Pilchuck with those of well-known artists invited to join him as Artists-in-Residence. These include Lynda Benglis, Deborah Butterfield, Buster Simpson, Laddie John Dill and Judy Pfaff. Their experiments with glass are accompanied by pioneer glass artists such as the first Italian maestri to visit the United States – Francesco Ongaro, Lino Tagliapietra, Fabio Fornasier, Pino Signoretto, Dino Rosin—and established artists such as, Benjamin Moore, William Morris, Mary Shaffer, Charles Parriott, Therman Statom, Walter Lieberman, Stanislav Libenský and Vera Brychtová. At Pilchuck Glass School, working with Scanga and Chihuly, glass was introduced into the mainstream of contemporary American art and history was made.



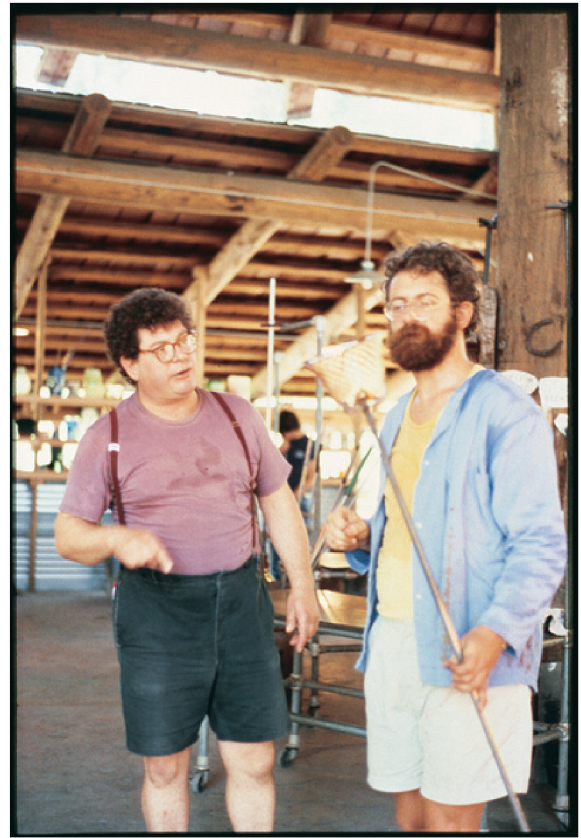
Left: Pilchuck hot shop as a tent in 1972. Right: The Pilchuck hot shop today. Images Courtesy of Pilchuck Glass School.

Geppetto's Children: Italo Scanga at Pilchuck Glass School

functions on two levels: it honors Scanga's contribution to Pilchuck Glass School in its fiftieth year anniversary, and exhibits for the first time many of the works made at the School, some expanding the material purview of the visiting artists and introducing them to glass; others obliquely demonstrating Scanga's influence and encouragement. Many of the artworks in the exhibition have never before been exhibited, or rarely so. For this, we are grateful to the artists, the lenders to the exhibition and to Pilchuck Glass School.

Artists Featured in the Exhibition:

Lynda Benglis
Deborah Butterfield
James Carpenter
Laddie John Dill
Fritz Dreisbach
Kate Elliott
Fabio Fornasier
Ann Gardner
Jiří Harcuba
Robert Hendricksen
Andrew Keating
Joey Kirkpatrick and Flora C. Mace
Stanislav Libenský
Walter Lieberman
Josiah McElheny
Paul Marioni
Richard Marquis
Robbie Miller



Italo Scanga and Fritz Dreisbach
Pilchuck Glass School, c. 1975



Flora C. Mace and Joey
Kirkpatrick, *Walking
Nature's Seams*, 1994,
Blown glass, wood, paint and
steel, 48" x 22" x 16". Photo
Credit: Robert Vinnedge

Benjamin Moore
William Morris
Francesco "Checco" Ongaro
Charles Parriott
Jerry Pethick
Judy Pfaff
Dino Rosin
Joseph Rossano
Richard Royal
Italo Scanga
Mary Shaffer
Pino Signoretto
and Susan Stinsmuehlen
Buster Simpson
Therman Statom
Lino Tagliapietra
John Torreano
Bertil Vallien
Toots Zynsky

"Very early in my career, when I was still a student at the Rhode Island School of Design, I began a friendship with Italo Scanga that would last nearly thirty-five years, until his death in 2001. He was almost 10 years older than me and already an established and respected painter and sculptor, yet he invited me into his life, encouraged me in my art-making practice, and even allowed me as a student artist to make parts for some of his projects.

Italo was present for so many of my career milestones, and his honesty and encouragement made him my most trusted mentor and closest friend. For instance, Italo was with me when I first saw the slumped Native American woven baskets that would inspire me to create the Basket series. Several years later, when I struggled to find a name for the vibrantly colored vessels I was creating, I asked Italo for the Italian word for "spotted." His response became the name of the series: Macchia.

Knowing Italo meant knowing more than his work; he taught me a lot about how to live, how to relent, to slow down and relax when he thought I was doing too much. He taught me not to overthink art. He believed that art could be understood instantly, that trying to analyze art was a waste of time because the moment you saw a great painting or sculpture, you knew it. He was right.

This exhibition is dedicated to the man who helped me understand how to live as an artist: my mentor, my brother, Italo Scanga."

- *Dale Chihuly, Artist, Seattle*

"Dale brought his friends to Pilchuck from all over the country who were not glass blowers but would add to the company of the pioneer band up on the hill. Italo Scanga was an early visitor who was especially liked by this rain-soaked group for his artistic sincerity, good humor, and ability to whip up enormous pots of pasta. There also seemed to be unfounded quantities of wine that went with all this. Soon Italo was designing work that needed and used the talents of many other Pilchuckers. He was really the precursor of all the artists in residence that Chihuly brought to Pilchuck, and also the one with the longest lasting, closest ties to Pilchuck and its artists."

- *John H. Hauberg, Pilchuck Founder, Seattle*

Visual Thinking Strategies

Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) is a research-based teaching method that promotes aesthetic development, including critical thinking and communication skills. Here at MoNA, we use VTS to engage students and general visitors with art encouraging them to observe closely, think critically and discuss respectfully; however, VTS can be effectively used across curricula. VTS teaches participants to take the time to observe closely, describe what they see in detail and provide evidence for their observations. Students learn that their reflections and thoughts are valued and appreciated in this inclusive teaching method.

To facilitate a VTS discussion, you first encourage viewers to take a quiet moment to observe the work you are going to explore. Then you ask the following questions and paraphrase the responses without adding any of your own judgements. You can insert additional vocabulary and point to specific parts of the artwork.



VTS provides a structure with simple rules that open a world of possibility. Three VTS questions initiate an active process of discovery when looking at art. Listen carefully to and acknowledge every answer while looking at the image, pointing to details they mention and paraphrasing what is said. Facilitate the discussion as it progresses, linking converging and diverging opinions to help synthesize a variety of viewpoints. Encourage inquiry by keeping the process open-ended to stretch and search for information beyond first impressions.

These three VTS questions ask everyone to focus, become reflective, and to question - the basis for critical thinking. Answering the questions is engaging and fun because no one is going to be wrong.

What's going on in this picture?

What do you see that makes you say...?

What more can you find?

For more information about
Visual Thinking Strategies,
visit www.vtshome.org
or scan this QR code!



Generous support for the exhibition and education programs is made possible in part by the following:

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Special thanks to the Italo Scanga Foundation and our education partners:

Glass Art Society and Pilchuck Glass School.

Media sponsorship is provided by Cascade Public Media (KCTS9 & Crosscut) and Skagit Valley Living magazine.

Images courtesy of Chihuly Studio and the Dale and Leslie Chihuly Foundation.



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