



TOUCHING LIVES BY CREATING BEAUTY

Occasionally, a college art department ventures to do something with glass and tosses up a shed behind the main building, builds rudimentary equipment, and offers some glass-blowing classes as sort of a step child of the art department, says USA visual arts chair Jason Guynes.

Not so at USA. A complete glass program is being established, and a state-of-the-art glass studio is under construction. The new building, which is located behind the art complex, is designed to be the focal point for the north end of campus's new interior ellipse. Large garage-style doors will give passersby a view of artists at work.

"Walking through the campus should be a cultural experience," says Guynes. The new building will allow "a better understanding of the artist and the human experience in general."

When the new glass studio opens, USA will be the only public university in the South offering a program with both hot and cold facilities in a new climate-suitable building.

The \$1 million, 5,000-square-foot building will include both a hot glass studio for the familiar process of blowing glass and a kiln-formed studio for cold glass, in which the artist arranges the components of a project while they are cold, then melts them in a kiln to create the piece, which may be manipulated again when it cools.

Glass programs are few and far between in the South, says Guynes, because it's just too hot. That's why the new climate-controlled facility will be such a plus. USA has been working with consultant David Keens from the University of Texas-Arlington to plan the facility. Now the national search is on for faculty.

Guynes foresees the program as a catalyst for even more interaction among the University, the community and the art community – with ties to the excellent art glass collection at the Mobile Museum of Art, and the opportunity for community classes, workshops, presentations and more. He hopes downtown Mobile's Space 301 contemporary art center, where he's a board member, will consider bringing in visiting glass artists to help promote the interconnections.

The glass facility will house an art program as well as a craft program, he emphasizes.

"What draws people is the beauty of the material," Guynes says. "People often overlook the message of the art. That's the conundrum of glass."



USA is dedicated to advancing the art of glassmaking.

Facing page: Jason Guynes, chair of visual arts, on the second floor balcony of USA's Health Sciences Building lobby, overlooking a large chandelier by glass artist Marty White Elk Holmes. The work was donated to USA by Jack and CoCo Hays.

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