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# The Class of Glass

## The Works of Robert Kuster

by Aaron R. Fodiman

No, they are not Chihuly's. But, don't feel foolish. You are not the first to have assumed that these swirling hand-blown glass twists in luscious colors, pale shades or clear, that can be wall mounted or suspended as art, are the work of the man who brought glass to the masses. These are the works of artisan Robert Kuster, a 52-year-old American who owns Belle Meade Hot Glass in Hillsborough, New Jersey. He has only been blowing glass for fourteen years, since he took it up as a second career when he was thirty-eight years old. Prior to that, he built furniture and developed a company that built custom sanding equipment, but it was creativity that he craved. So, after building a glass studio, he began to develop his glass blowing skills and artistic ideas. He has studied at the Penland School, the Pittsburgh Glass School, Corning Glass and Urban Glass. He also visits Italian masters in Murano, Italy for inspiration.



*For special commissions, Kuster creates his artwork, such as this Bamboo in opal white glass, to fit the environment in which it will be placed.*



*Kuster's hanging chandelier  
in lava red, transparent orange  
and transparent yellow is three  
feet by three and a half feet.*



*Kuster created this glass campfire, which measures six feet by four feet, to be used outdoors.*



*Artist Robert Kuster with his team at the Seven Sisters installation.*



*The artist used emerald, cobalt and aqua glass in this five foot by three foot chandelier.*

*By using amethyst, apricot, clear and ruby glass, the artist created this stunning chandelier for a residential foyer.*



*Opal white glass gives this chandelier a ghostly appearance.*



*This Kuster wall sconce in amethyst and lime is three feet by five feet.*

His wife Sheila assists him at his studio in central New Jersey, where he allows his imagination to inspire his work. He has recently completed a major glass installation he calls *Seven Sisters*, since it includes seven large glass sculptures, for ACUIITY Corporation in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. The chandeliers in this work are each fifteen feet in diameter, with each sphere having 2,300 pieces of glass. In this area, his work is represented by Susan Benjamin Glass, etc. in Safety Harbor. Over the last three years, local collectors have been acquiring Kuster's work for installation in their homes and offices. ■

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*EDITOR'S NOTE: Susan Benjamin Glass, etc. is located at 247 Main Street in Safety Harbor, (727) 725-1808.*