

Perfect Antidote to Seattle's Winter Grey Palette, New Chihuly Garden and Glass

Words and Pictures
By Janice Nieder

Iconic Seattle: Chihuly,
Space Needle and rain

Dale Chihuly at work



As soon as I entered the exhibition I thought that this is exactly how Alice must have felt after she tumbled down the rabbit hole into a fantasy world. This one is populated with surreal, kaleidoscope-colored glass creations ranging in size from minute, gem-like balls to a 1,340-piece, 100-foot long sculpture, hovering high overhead in the "Glass House", inspired by Dale Chihuly's two favorite buildings, Paris' Sainte-Chapelle and London's Crystal Palace. Done in vibrant shades of orange, yellow and red, it offers a warm sunrise/sunset glass-framed view of the Space Needle towering behind the building.

As you meander through the other eight galleries you'll encounter elaborate installations

grouped by theme such as Chihuly's "Glass Forest" filled with squiggly, glass stems created by simultaneously blowing and pouring molten glass from the top of a stepladder to the floor below, where the deflated bubble solidifies. You'll hold your breath in wonderment as you enter the magical, marine-blue "Sealife Room", filled with sculpted sea urchins, anemones, star fish octopus but sadly, no little mermaids. Look up at the "Persian Ceiling" to enjoy a Fourth of July firework finale anytime. Look, but don't touch, the 20 hand blown glass bowls that sprout up in the "Macchia Forest"

Chihuly has often said, "I want my work to appear as though it came from nature so if someone found it... they might think it belonged

there." Head outside to the garden and you'll see that's exactly what he accomplished. Chihuly's creations blend in seamlessly with the explosion of color provided by crimson camellias, scarlet daylilies, dogwoods, hardy fuchsias and handkerchief trees.

Collections Café

Many museum cafes offer convenience and little else. But the Collections Café is a genuine food find in its own right as well as offering a fascinating peek at Chihuly's whimsical collections which are displayed throughout the restaurant. Hanging from the ceiling is a myriad of vintage accordions. Wood shelves and 28 glass-topped tables double as show-cases for his eclectic collections of toy soldiers, transistor radios, antique inkwells, ceramic dogs, X-mas ornaments, Mexican silver ashtrays, fish decoys etc.

As a young boy, Chihuly loved scouring the Puget Sound shoreline in search of bits of beach glass and thus began a lifetime of collecting things that catch his eye for whatever reason. "I love to find the beauty in everyday objects," Chihuly explains.

Menu choices are as eclectic as the art collections ranging from local Grilled Pacific Octopus, Salmon Shrimp Cakes, Crispy Beecher's Cheese Curds served with Bourbon Tomato Jam to the Jidori 40 Clove Garlic Chicken paired with some tasty wines classified as Northwest Gems. The cafe is open the same hours as the museum.

Chihuly Garden and Glass

Address: 305 Harrison St, Seattle, WA 98109

Phone: (206) 753-4940

Hours: Weekdays 11-8 Weekends 10-8



Above: Macchia Forest filled with trademark Chihuly bowls

Right: How does Chihuly's garden grow?



Collections Cafe. pic by Collections Cafe

