The story of Northwest glass is complicated one. So in this short presentation I will give you only the most general overview. If I miss your favorite artist I apologize in advance.

I moved to Seattle in 1978, the budding glass scene was already underway here. I came to chase after my girlfriend Ginger. I had no idea I would stay for the next 40 years here working in glass.
The scene really started in earnest in 1971. Dale Chihuly a Tacoma boy returned to the Northwest and started the Pilchuck Glass School. (Describe Pilchuck). It started as a bunch of hippies blowing glass in the woods. Living in yurts, and tree houses, no shoes ,no underwear, rock and roll and all that went with that. It started as a glass Woodstock would go on to become the most celebrated and influential glass school in the world.
It essentially performed the same role as Black Mountain College, or the Bauhaus except in glass. It was both a cutting edge school and a cauldron for new ideas among professional artists. It attracted artists from all over the world. Many of those artists came to love the Northwest and would eventually settle here and open their own studios. These art refugees became seed stock for the Northwest glass community.
One of the early pioneers is Paul Marioni, a surrealist glass sculptor. He was a major figure in the early years and still looms large today. Paul by the way, is the guy of the left. He moved here from the Bay area and still lives and works here. Paul instrumental in spreading the word of glass as art medium. He has taught all over the world inspiring young people, very much including myself.
Dick Marquis another towering figure in the early Northwest glass scene. He brought us our first Venetian influences having worked on the island of Murano. Murano is a small island 3 miles Northeast of Venice where the Venetian glass industry is located. The glass scene here is hugely influenced by the Venetian glass tradition. There many, many other influential artists, but for the sake of this brief presentation I will mention just a few.
When I came to Seattle in 1978 there already a small, but enthusiastic glass community. It was centered around glassblowing. It was tightly knit both socially and artistically. None of them knew me before, but I was quickly welcomed in to the fold. This is our crew at small glass shop where I worked called the Glass Eye in the Pike Place Market. I believe that glass, till this day, is the most socially connected medium. Sometimes it’s more like a big clan then an art medium.
In 1979 the Pratt Fine Arts center an adult –ed crafts center built a glass studio. I was involved in building that studio as well as teaching there. This was a critical resource for budding glass artist’s learn their skills and for young artist’s to practice their craft. Glassmaking requires a lot expensive facilities and the Pratt made those facilities available to the local glass community. This was so important to the young emerging artists.
Freehand glassblowing in the US fell off in the 1940’s and 50’s. More and more things were made by machines and in molds. Very few people here in the US had the necessary hand skills or could find skilled teachers. In the 1960’s there was a flood of artistic energy, but we really lacked the skills to articulate our ideas.
Then in 1979 this guy came to the Northwest. Lino Tagliapietra, Venetian maestro and the greatest glassblower in the world. He was invited by a man named Benjamin Moore to teach at the Pilchuck School and that changed everything. Ben had been a Fulbright scholar working in Murano. His skills and work ethic enabled him to develop the necessary relationships with the masters. Murano had a tradition of secrecy and it was no small feat to get them to come to the United States and pass on what they know. I can’t stress enough the importance of Ben’s contributions. Over the next three decades Lino, along with other masters brought 1000 years of Venetian glass knowledge to the Northwest. They gave us the skills here to truly articulate our ideas. All the beautiful Chihuly glass you see would have been impossible to make with the 1970’s pre-Lino skill set.
This is a piece by Benjamin Moore a protégé of Lino’s. You can see the vast difference in the skill levels after the arrival of Lino. The 1980’s and 1990’s proved to be a boom time for glass art. Glass became the darling of the craft world. Galleries and collectors proliferated, prices soared and the level of craft went the roof. Many artist were now able to make a living from their craft.
In the 1990’s and 2000’s the scope of the glass art expanded greatly. All forms of glassmaking, casting, fusing, flameworking came into their own. Glassblowing was no longer king. Mixed media, and installations became equal players in the glass art community.

This is the work of Therman Statum. This is an instillation of painted glass that encompasses an entire room.
This is a sculpture by Nick Davis entitled “Mean Machine”
In the 2000’s younger glass artists are trending toward mixed media.. They were no longer constrained by only using glass in their sculpture.
No talk about Seattle would be complete with considering the enormous influence of Dale Chihuly. Many of you might be familiar with his work from exhibitions in your own home towns or seeing him on television. He is without the most well known of all the glass artists in the world. He lives and works here in Seattle.

His worldwide success opened doors for all the other glass artists. This was very much a case of “a rising tide lifts all boats.”
His over the top decorative sense was a huge hit with the public. Glass was very much considered a craft medium in the art world. People in the mainstream art looked down their noses at it. His success opened mainstream art venues such as great museums to reconsider glass as a valid art medium. He has shows at the Victoria and Albert in London and the Louvre in Paris.
His installations and displays of grouped objects widened the latitude for other artists. Glass art no longer had to be the single highly crafted object.
Another important institution is the Museum of Glass in Tacoma. They opened in 2003. They have a working glass studio. They offer residencies to artists from all over the world to work there. They have also opened their studio to up and coming young glass artist and many emerging artists have gained an important leg up from their time working there such as Jon Kiley and Preston Singletary.
One the best things they do is their Kid’s design program.

Kid’s Design is a contest. Any kid that visits the Museum can do a drawing. Once a month we pick a drawing and make it out of glass. We make two copies of each design. One for the kid, and one for the Museum collection. It has been a huge success. We done it for the past 11 years and have amassed a fabulous collection. Our glassblowing team is super skilled and are able to make a finely crafted object and still retain the “kid-ness” of the original drawing.
This is my work I started out as a glassblower and I now specialize in painting on glass. I use the traditional methods used to paint a stained glass window. The paint is made of ground glass and metal oxides. It is mixed with water and gum Arabic. It is painted on when the glass is cold and then fired on the surface like a glaze on a piece of pottery.
More recently I have been working with embedding digital imagery into glass. There is a process by which you can take any digital image, print it in ceramic colors and embed it into hot glass.

Thanks so much listening.