

September/October 2011

Omaha Home

Always Local, Always Beautiful

A Home For All Ages

Architect Steven Ginn's Innovative Residence



ROOM SPOTLIGHT

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Omaha Home: design profile

Photos by minorwhitestudios.com & courtesy of Julie Conway



Q: What has been your career path? What influences led you to become an artist?

A: My mom's career as a corporate art consultant influenced me most. I was raised in art galleries and brought onto art installation job sites as a kid. I have always been fascinated by hand-crafted details, and functional art and design. I was a jeweler before glassmaker, I did not go to glass school, but I studied as an apprentice with several glass artists in the U.S. and abroad. I have had the amazing opportunity to study with glass masters from Italy, Spain, France, New Mexico, California, Florida, Czech Republic, Japan and Seattle, Wash.

I have also been a teacher's assistant with glass masters at glassmaking schools in Murano, (Venice) Italy and Istanbul, Turkey. I studied glassmaking skills and traditional techniques from many different cultures and teachers. I apply what I've learned to create contemporary designs and installations of blown glass. As a professional artist, it is important to me to set an example for others, to build community, and act as a mentor for interns and young artists. Recently, I worked as a volunteer for Therman Statom's Native American kids' camp that included glassmaking and other art projects.

Q: How did your business, **Illuminata**, come about?

A: I am the artist, designer, solo-preneur, packer, shipper, bookkeeper and visionary behind **Illuminata**. Yes, I do it all-- but I am hoping to be able to expand my business

Q&A: Julie Conway Illuminata

THE AWARD-WINNING GLASS ARTIST tells us how she learned the unique glass art form, and what inspires her most.

Q: Tell us about your background. How did you end up in Omaha?

A: I was raised in Denver. I studied art abroad at the University of Avignon, France, and graduated from Colorado State University. Previously, I've lived in several European countries (I speak four languages), as well as in Santa Fe and San Francisco. I moved to Omaha in 2008. I was attracted to Omaha by Therman Statom, Jun Kaneko and the Bemis Center, and the opportunity to enjoy spending time with my grandparents and extended family, who are from here.

to employ others soon. Founded in Santa Fe, N.M. in 2000, I now have a local studio in Benson (2725 N 62nd St. Omaha- www.illuminataglass.com)

My ideal clients include designers and architects who are seeking a unique approach to art-glass lighting solutions and site-specific glass installations for interior spaces. My work also attracts individuals who desire to improve their personal space with functional custom artworks. The art-glass lighting not only can change mood and create ambiance in a room, but also become collectible artworks. I make centerpiece bowls, glassware, holiday ornaments, and jewelry as well.

My main passion and focus is to create unique lightworks of art glass. Creating a new experience of glass and light for my clients is a total joy. Low-energy LEDs have become a key component for my work...It's exciting that there are more options for efficient lighting solutions today. How lucky am I that I can use my skills to bring more light and beauty to the world?

Q: What drives your interest in design? What inspires you?

A: Nature is my biggest inspiration. I watch wildlife and study fauna with awe and fascination. I love how molten glass lends itself to organic shapes and fluid forms. I am attracted to clean, modern lines and simple gestures, such as those in calligraphy.

Q: Describe your own home. What do you love about it?

A: Well, I must say that I love the lighting! My own home is now small and efficient with minimal Energy Star® appliances and passive solar gain. Of course, I have added my own lighting feature to each room, creating a unique effect and ambiance. I have an eclectic collection of furniture and artwork -- a Noguchi Coffee table, an antique Chinese chest, a Red Grooms sculpture and Zulu baskets, and an art collection from contemporary colleagues. The other feature that I love is the outside deck, on which I sit every day possible. I have a huge canopy of tall trees over the deck and watch the sunlight dapple through the leaves as I meditate or ponder new creative projects. [CurtHofer.com](http://www.CurtHofer.com)



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