Dale Chihuly | Chronology

1941  Born September 20 in Tacoma, Washington, to George Chihuly and Viola Magnuson Chihuly.

1957  Older brother and only sibling, George, dies in a navy flight-training accident in Pensacola, Florida.

1958  His father suffers a fatal heart attack at age fifty-one, and his mother has to go to work.

1959  Graduates from high school in Tacoma. Enrolls at College of Puget Sound (now University of Puget Sound) in his hometown.

1960  Transfers to University of Washington in Seattle, where he studies interior design and architecture.

1961  Joins Delta Kappa Epsilon fraternity and becomes rush chairman. Learns to melt and fuse glass.

1962  Interrupts his studies and travels to Florence to focus on art. Frustrated by his inability to speak Italian, he moves on to the Middle East.

1963  Works on a kibbutz in Negev desert, Israel. Reinspired, returns to University of Washington and studies under Hope Foote and Warren Hill. In a weaving class with Doris Brockway, incorporates glass shards into woven tapestries.

1964  Returns to Europe, visiting Leningrad and making the first of many trips to Ireland.

1965  Receives BA in interior design from University of Washington. In his basement studio, blows his first glass bubble by melting stained glass and using a metal pipe.

1966  Earns money for graduate school as a commercial fisherman in Alaska. Enters University of Wisconsin at Madison on a full scholarship, to study glassblowing in the first glass program in the United States, taught by Harvey Littleton.

1967  After receiving MS in sculpture from University of Wisconsin, enrolls at Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) in Providence, where he begins exploration of environmental works using neon, argon, and blown glass. Awarded a Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Grant for work in glass. Artist Italo Scanga lectures at RISD, and the two start a lifelong friendship.

1968  Receives MFA from RISD. Spends the first of four consecutive summers teaching at Haystack Mountain School of Crafts in Deer Isle, Maine. A Fulbright Fellowship awarded earlier in the year enables him to work and study in Europe. Becomes the first American glassblower to work in the prestigious Venini factory, on the island of Murano.

1969  Makes pilgrimages to meet glass masters Erwin Eisch in Germany and Jaroslava Brychtová and Stanislav Libenský and his wife, Jaroslava Brychtová, in Czechoslovakia. Establishes the glass program at RISD, where he teaches for the next eleven years.

1970  Meets James Carpenter, a student in RISD Illustration Department, and they begin a four-year collaboration.
1971 On the site of a tree farm north of Seattle owned by art patrons Anne Gould Hauberg and John Hauberg, the Pilchuck Glass School experiment is started. Pilchuck Pond, Chihuly’s first environmental installation at the school, is created that summer. In the fall, at RISD, he makes 20,000 Pounds of Ice and Neon, Glass Forest #1, and Glass Forest #2 with James Carpenter, installations that prefigure later environmental works by Chihuly.

1972 Collaborates with James Carpenter on more large-scale architectural projects. They create Rondel Door and Cast Glass Door at Pilchuck. In Providence, they have a conceptual breakthrough with Dry Ice, Bent Glass and Neon.

1974 Works with James Carpenter and a group of students at Pilchuck to develop a technique for picking up glass thread drawings and incorporating them into larger glass pieces.

1975 At RISD, begins Navajo Blanket Cylinder series. Kate Elliott and, later, Flora C. Mace fabricate the complex thread drawings for his artwork. He receives the first of two National Endowment for the Arts Visual Artists’ Fellowships. Becomes artist-in-residence with Seaver Leslie at Artpark, an annual arts program on the Niagara Gorge in New York State. Begins Irish Cylinders and Ulysses Cylinders with Leslie and Mace.

1976 An automobile accident in England leaves him, after weeks in the hospital and 256 stitches in his face, without sight in his left eye and with permanent damage to his right ankle and foot. After recuperating, he returns to Providence to serve as head of the Department of Sculpture and the Program in Glass at RISD. Henry Geldzahler, curator of contemporary art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, acquires three Navajo Blanket Cylinders for the museum’s collection—a turning point in Chihuly’s career and the start of the artist’s friendship with both the curator and the museum director then, Thomas Hoving.

1977 His Basket series—inspired by Northwest Coast Indian baskets he sees at Washington State History Museum in Tacoma—is first made at Pilchuck with Benjamin Moore as gaffer and exhibited at Seattle Art Museum. Continues teaching at both RISD and Pilchuck.

1978 Meets Pilchuck student William Morris, and the two begin a close, eight-year working relationship. A solo show at the Renwick Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, in Washington, D.C., is another career milestone.

1979 Dislocates his shoulder in a bodysurfing accident and relinquishes the gaffer position for good. William Morris becomes his chief gaffer for several years. Chihuly begins to make drawings as a way to communicate his designs.


1982 First catalog is published: Chihuly Glass, designed by RISD colleague and friend Malcolm Grear.

1983 Returns to Pacific Northwest after sixteen years on the East Coast.
1984 Begins work on *Soft Cylinder* series, with Flora C. Mace and Joey Kirkpatrick executing the glass drawings. Honored as RISD President’s Fellow at the Whitney Museum in New York.

1985 Purchases the Buffalo Shoe Company Building just east of Lake Union in Seattle and begins restoring it for use as a primary studio and residence.


1987 Donates permanent collection to Tacoma Art Museum in memory of his brother and father (adding works to the collection years later in memory of his mother). Marries playwright Sylvia Peto.

1988 Inspired by Italian Art Deco glass, begins *Venetian* series with Italian glass master Lino Tagliapietra, working from Chihuly’s drawings; Benjamin Moore also plays a very important role, including translator.

1989 With Lino Tagliapietra and fellow glass master Pino Signoretto, as well as a team of glassblowers, begins *Putti* series at Pilchuck. With Tagliapietra, Chihuly creates *Ikebana* series, inspired by travels to Japan and exposure to ikebana masters.

1990 Purchases historic Pocock Building located on Lake Union, realizing his dream of being on the water in Seattle. Renovated and renamed the Boathouse, it serves as studio and hotshop. Returns to Japan.

1991 Begins *Niijima Float* series with Richard Royal as gaffer, creating some of the largest pieces of glass ever blown by hand. Chihuly and Sylvia Peto divorce.


1993 With Lino Tagliapietra, begins *Piccolo Venetian* series. Creates *100,000 Pounds of Ice and Neon*, a temporary installation in Tacoma Dome.

1994 Creates five installations for Tacoma’s Union Station Federal Courthouse. Supports Hilltop Artists, a glassblowing program in Tacoma for at-risk youths, created by friend Kathy Kaperick. Within two years, the program partners with Tacoma Public School District.

1995 An international project, *Chihuly Over Venice*, begins with a glassblowing session in Nuutajärvi, Finland, and subsequent blow at Waterford Crystal factory, Ireland.


1997 Expands series of experimental plastics he calls Polyvitro. Travels to Japan to blow glass at Niijima Glass Art Center and creates several temporary outdoor Float
installations. Travels with his team to a glass factory in Vianne, France, and they work with local glassblowers to create new works, some using industrial molds.

1998 Participates in Sydney Arts Festival in Australia. A son, Jackson Viola Chihuly, is born February 12 to Dale Chihuly and Leslie Jackson. Creates architectural installations for Benaroya Hall, Seattle; Bellagio, Las Vegas; and Atlantis, Bahamas.


2002 Creates large-scale installations for Winter Olympic Games in Salt Lake City. Chihuly Bridge of Glass is dedicated in Tacoma; conceived by Chihuly and designed in collaboration with Arthur Andersson of Andersson•Wise Architects, it is a pedestrian overpass featuring three permanent installations of Chihuly’s work.

2003 Begins Fiori series with gaffer Joey DeCamp and creates first Mille Fiori, for exhibition at Tacoma Art Museum. A garden exhibition opens at Franklin Park Conservatory, Columbus, Ohio.


2006 Mother, Viola, dies at age ninety-eight in Tacoma. Between April and June, begins Black series; exhibits at Missouri Botanical Garden, St. Louis; begins Clear series; and exhibits at New York Botanical Garden. Chihuly in Tacoma—a weeklong residency featuring hotshop sessions at Museum of Glass—reunites Chihuly and glassblowers from important periods of his career.

2007 Exhibits at Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens, Pittsburgh. Creates stage set for Seattle Symphony’s production of Béla Bartók’s opera, Bluebeard’s Castle; the set will continue to be used in productions over the next several years, including Milwaukee, Nashville, and Buffalo, as well as Tel Aviv, Israel.

2009  Begins Silvered series. Participates in 53rd Venice Biennale with Mille Fiori Venezia installation. Returns to Franklin Park Conservatory, Columbus, Ohio, with new garden exhibition. Creates commission with multiple installations at island resort of Sentosa, Singapore.


2011  Holds exhibitions at Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and Tacoma Art Museum.

2012  Exhibits at Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden. Chihuly Garden and Glass opens at Seattle Center; the long-term exhibition of the artist’s work features gallery spaces, a sculpture garden, and a glasshouse designed by Chihuly. Exhibits at Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond.


2015  An exhibition of Chihuly’s drawings opens at Museum of Glass, Tacoma. The Toyama Glass Art Museum, in Toyama, Japan, commissions permanent installations of his work. Chihuly’s set for the opera Bluebeard’s Castle reappears in performances in Wichita, Kansas; and Norfolk, Virginia.

2016  Returns to Atlanta Botanical Garden. Exhibits at Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto.