

McLean County Arts Center is honored to present works by internationally acclaimed artist Janusz Walentynowicz. Walentynowicz has been making sculptures that incorporate glass as the predominant material since the early 1990s. He mines the physical characteristics of glass – its fragility and fluidity, its reflections and refractions – to metaphorically and expressively comment on the emotional vagaries of the human condition. As Walentynowicz stated in a 1996 interview: “*Glass insists that we look into it, that we not stop at the surface of what is shown. The emotional states depicted here are points of easily disturbed equilibriums between inner and outer states. The traces of surface, color, and texture both hold back and reveal clues. You can look past these eternal details of identity right into the scars and stress of experience which are still evident and threatening internally though healed on the surface.*”

Janusz Walentynowicz came to Illinois from Denmark in 1982 to study with Joel Philip Myers, head of the glass program at Illinois State University. Since then he has established a home and studio in Clinton, Illinois. From this studio, Walentynowicz has created compelling sculptural works in glass that repeatedly garner national and international attention. For over thirty years, his works have been included in solo, group, and juried exhibitions at museums and commercial galleries and have been collected by major museums in the United States, France, Denmark, The Netherlands and Taiwan. The works included in MCAC’s exhibition *REFLECTIONS* date from 1998 to the present, and indeed reflect the consistent themes and formal considerations that are emblematic of Walentynowicz’s artistic concerns.

Walentynowicz identifies himself as a Danish artist who was born in Poland and resides in Illinois. He works most of the year in Illinois but returns to Denmark each summer to visit his family. These shifts between places and cultures both in real time and memories drive and inform his work. In the studio, he simultaneously works in a variety of styles using multiple technical approaches to formally construct sculptures that purposefully teeter between actual and conceptual, representation and metaphor. For instance, Walentynowicz’s thick and heavy *Chains* constructed from cast glass links conjoin perceptions of strength and security with fragility and fear. In *Armed Men*, from the series *Guns Save Lives*, nine black handguns aimed at the viewer by nine white hands signify the shattering violence potentially exacted by a world filled with weapons and anger. Walentynowicz counters the darkness of these works with a sense of humor and wonder in others. *Angel Soft* depicts stacked rolls of toilet paper, quite unusable but so comfortably cast in violet glass. And Walentynowicz’s evocative treatment of the female figure varies from realist depictions of a vividly remembered young *Amy* forever encased in glass to abstracted standing Danish women seemingly assembled from and held together by the varied elements of their experience. As viewers we respond both to the physical presence of Walentynowicz’s cast glass sculptures and to the poignancy of the restless ruminations so richly embedded in them.

**MCAC Hours:**  
Tuesday, 10am—7pm  
Wednesday—Friday, 10am—5pm  
Saturday, Noon—4pm

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## REFLECTIONS Janusz Walentynowicz

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*Sponsored by Jobie and Irving Tick*



McLean County Arts Center

