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**NEWS**

# Mount Holyoke College acquires 12-foot glass sculpture by artist Dale Chihuly

Published: Aug. 30, 2013, 10:26 p.m.



By [Patricia Cahill](#) | [Special to The Republican](#)

SOUTH HADLEY – World-renowned glass artist [Dale Chihuly](#) has works on view in museums in countries from Iceland to France, and in public places in major cities from London to Honolulu.

And, now, he has a work on the campus of [Mount Holyoke College](#).

The public is invited when Mount Holyoke College unveils a 12-foot shimmering glass sculpture by Chihuly on Sept. 3 at 4:15 p.m. in the atrium of Williston Library on campus.

In 2001, the D'Amour Museum of Fine Arts in Springfield had a show of his colorful and voluptuous glass "Seaforms."



The sculpture at Mount Holyoke, titled "Clear and Gold Tower," was commissioned by an anonymous alumna for the purpose of donating it to the college on behalf of the Class of 1937.

It consists of hundreds of swirling, gold-sprinkled glass tendrils, some with bulges that suggest the bodies of birds, all emanating from a central post. The sculpture is already on view in the library in advance of the official unveiling.

"People are amazed by it," said John Stomberg, director of the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum. "It's dazzling and large and people find it hard to believe it's made of glass. It has lots of energy."

Chihuly has been working with the "tower" shape since 1995. His "Peacock Blue Tower," for example, stands in a plant conservatory in Chicago, and his "Saffron Tower" is in a San Francisco museum.

"The idea of a tower came to him from looking at a chandelier and imagining what it looked like upside-down," said Stomberg, who flew to Seattle to meet with Chihuly during the creative process.

The artist, a native of Washington state, became interested in glass in college, and eventually studied at the Venini glass factory in Venice. "He has a long-time connection to Venice," said Stomberg. "Venice has a centuries-old glass-making tradition on the island of Murano, and Chihuly has a long-standing relationship with many of the artists there."

Now 72, Chihuly is blind in one eye, wears an eye-patch like a pirate, and has used a "team" approach to glass-blowing since he dislocated his shoulder in 1979. Stomberg describes him as "a larger-than-life character."

To help Chihuly design the Mount Holyoke sculpture, representatives of his studio came to the campus to take photos. When they saw the sky-lit atrium and the 16th-century wellhead that would serve as a base for the sculpture, "they knew it was the perfect space," said Wendy Watson, curator of the Mount Holyoke Art Museum.

The wellhead (the part of a well above the ground) was the finishing touch when, in 1992, Cambridge architect Graham Gund re-designed the atrium of the library to resemble a Renaissance courtyard.

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By coincidence, said Watson, the hexagonal stone well-head came from Venice, and more specifically from the famous glass-making Venetian island of Murano. Carved with rosettes and images of saints, it was originally part of an old church that had been de-consecrated and demolished. It came to this country in the 19th century, and by the time Gund found it, it was in the possession of a family north of Boston.

Chihuly had his assistants in Seattle build a wooden replica of the wellhead so he could refer to it as he created his sculpture.

The unveiling ceremony on Sept. 3 will include a reception. Williston Library faces Route 116, with the entrance in the back. Mount Holyoke celebrated its 175th anniversary last year.



**When:**

Sept. 3, 4:15 p.m.

**Where:**

Williston Library atrium, Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley (library faces Route 116, but entrance is in back)

**Admission:**

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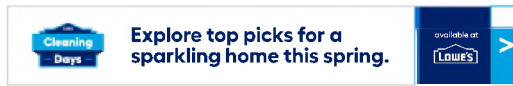
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