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Fantasy [✳]

ARCHITECTURE

Master Glass

✂ For years, the chief cultural contribution from Tacoma, Washington's downtown — the part that's a former toxic waste site, next to a stagnant waterfront — was the famous "Tacoma aroma," a by-product of the town's paper plant. Here to the rescue: the ultra-incongruous Museum of Glass, dedicated chiefly to the work of glass artist — and Tacoma native — Dale Chihuly.

The spectacular building which houses his work, along with traveling exhibitions, is almost as arresting as the art inside its walls. Opened last July, it's the first American art museum for Canadian architect Arthur Erickson, who created a low-slung building that snuggles into the waterfront, save for dramatic flourishes like long, angular exterior steps that allow visitors to go to the roof to discover a few well-placed reflecting pools — plus

views of Mount Rainier. Its most iconic architectural statement is a tilted, 90-foot cone that houses a hot shop for glassblowing, while the striking Chihuly Bridge — a 500-foot path linking the museum to downtown Tacoma — houses three permanent Chihuly installations. Designed by Arthur Andersson and Chihuly, the bridge also features towers that look like giant, jagged ice crystals imported directly from the ice planet Hoth. The bridge provides a literal interpretation of the center's ties to oft-derided Tacoma; the museum is one of the first completed projects — along with a restored train station and a new modern art museum — that might take the coma out of Tacoma. "The museum is already a catalyst for change [in the Tacoma area]," says Museum of Glass director Josi Callan. And not a minute too soon.

ANDREW YANG



A new museum revitalizes a waterfront while providing a world-class home for a native son's glass art



Superglass: Two semi-enclosed pavilions shelter pedestrians and show off work by creator Dale Chihuly

