Introduction

It was a few short years ago, around a dinner table in Omaha, when Walter Scott asked Dale Chihuly if there was any great artwork or project he’d always wanted to do—in effect, what was at the very top of his artistic “bucket list.” Chihuly thought for just a second, and then he said, “A chapel.” A sanctuary filled with wondrous Chihuly glass and light. A sanctuary that could provide both beauty and healing.

We, here at the Med Center, had already begun thinking about how we would implement an innovative Healing Arts Program, as we built the Fred & Pamela Buffett Cancer Center. But at that very moment, we knew we had just found its centerpiece: its sanctuary.

Our Healing Arts Program is based on the finding that scientists have now confirmed what humans have intuitively known for thousands of years: art is part of what makes us fully human. Art, in all of its forms, is a celebration of our best selves. Art can soothe, or inspire. It can strengthen, and can surely heal.

May your visit here bring you respite and peace, restoration and strength. We hope you find the Chihuly Sanctuary fulfilling.

JEFFREY P. GOLD, M.D.
CHANCELLOR, UNMC AND UNO
BOARD CHAIRMAN, NEBRASKA MEDICINE

Arts in health care constitute a diverse, multidisciplinary field dedicated to transforming the health care experience by connecting people with the power of the arts. We believe the arts can create a compassionate, supportive, and inspirational environment for our patients, their families, and staff. Through artistic and aesthetic experiences, the Healing Arts Program recognizes that the arts are intrinsic to wellness and healing.

The Chihuly Sanctuary, the cornerstone of the Healing Arts Program at UNMC/Nebraska Medicine, is the culmination of Dale Chihuly’s fifty years of experiments in light, space, and form. The building’s design is inspired by the free-flowing, organic form of Chihuly’s popular Macchia series, and it showcases ten site-specific art installations created to give patients, their families, and care providers a beautiful environment in which to find respite.

The Chihuly Sanctuary’s glass facade pays homage to the glasshouses of Chihuly’s Orange and Yellow Hornet Sconce Rising Sun Sconce Wall. Situated adjacent to Leslie’s Healing Garden, the transparent structure provides clear views into the verdant natural environment to create an experience reminiscent of Chihuly’s Garden Cycle, a series of exhibitions in conservatories and gardens.

“Glass is extraordinary because of its transparency and how it transmits light . . . . I’m always considering light, space, and form.”—Dale Chihuly

ABOUT DALE CHIHULY

Dale Chihuly is known for revolutionizing the studio glass movement and elevating perceptions of the glass medium. He employs a diverse array of materials to realize his creative vision through drawing, painting, and sculpture. Chihuly is renowned for his iconic glass sculptures, ambitious site-specific public installations, and exhibitions in historic cities, museums, and conservatories around the world.

Born in 1941 in Tacoma, Washington, Chihuly began his glass work as a student at the University of Washington and later moved to New York, where he apprenticed with glass artist Donald Carlson. He has since founded the Pilchuck Glass School in Stanwood, Washington, and established the Chihuly Studio Foundation, a nonprofit organization that operates the Chihuly Studio in Seattle. Chihuly, who continues to create art at his studio in Seattle, has received numerous awards and honorary degrees, and his work is included in more than 200 museum collections worldwide, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, and the Corning Museum of Glass.

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If you’d like more information on the Healing Arts Program at UNMC/Nebraska Medicine, please visit: www.nebraskamed.com/healingarts.
The Reflection Room, with its glass sconces, is a key feature of Chihuly's artistic expression. Composed of eight Sconces, it is the Hornet Sconce. Around the exterior of the Reflection Room, carefully positioned in a spiral layout, is a series of ornate, elongated, yellow and orange sconces, mimicking the natural world. In Chihuly’s sculptures, nature-inspired forms are often integrated into larger, more intricate compositions. Chihuly’s first Persian Ceiling series was created in 1986. Originally, he mounted smaller forms in pedestal compositions, focusing on the interaction of light, color, and form. In later works, he mounted larger forms, often with smaller shapes nested in larger pieces, creating a sense of depth and dimension. Chihuly's works are known for their vibrant colors and the way light interacts with them, evoking a sense of movement and transformation.

Chihuly's glass art is a fusion of traditional craftsmanship and modern innovation. His works, which often include Venetian glass, combine the beauty of nature with the precision of art glassmaking. Chihuly's glass creations are not only visually striking but also conceptually rich. They often comment on the human relationship with nature and the history of glass art. In 2003, he created Mille Fiori—“thousand flowers”—in 2003. Combining brilliantly colored, flora-like elements, he creates spectacular compositions. Chihuly's designs are known for their large scale and dramatic impact. He is renowned for his installation art, which often involves the transmission of light through transparent media. His glass sculptures are a testament to his mastery of the glassblowing process, since the sphere is the form he visited in 1989. In Chihuly's oeuvre, the glassblower's skill is a vehicle for Chihuly's creative expression, enabling him to create works that are both technically impressive and aesthetically compelling.

Chihuly's works are not just about the glass itself; they are about the experience of viewing them. His art invites interaction, revealing the surface of his creations and allowing the viewer to change the perception of his work. His installations are designed to be viewed from all angles, and the viewer's perspective is crucial to the experience. In the Reflection Room, Chihuly's glass creates a virtual pool of light that reflects and refracts throughout the day and night, making the room a luminous space. The soft, golden light that bathes the room evokes a sense of calm and intimacy, inviting the viewer to connect with nature and the beauty of glass art. It is a space where art and nature intersect, providing a serene and inspiring environment for contemplation and reflection.