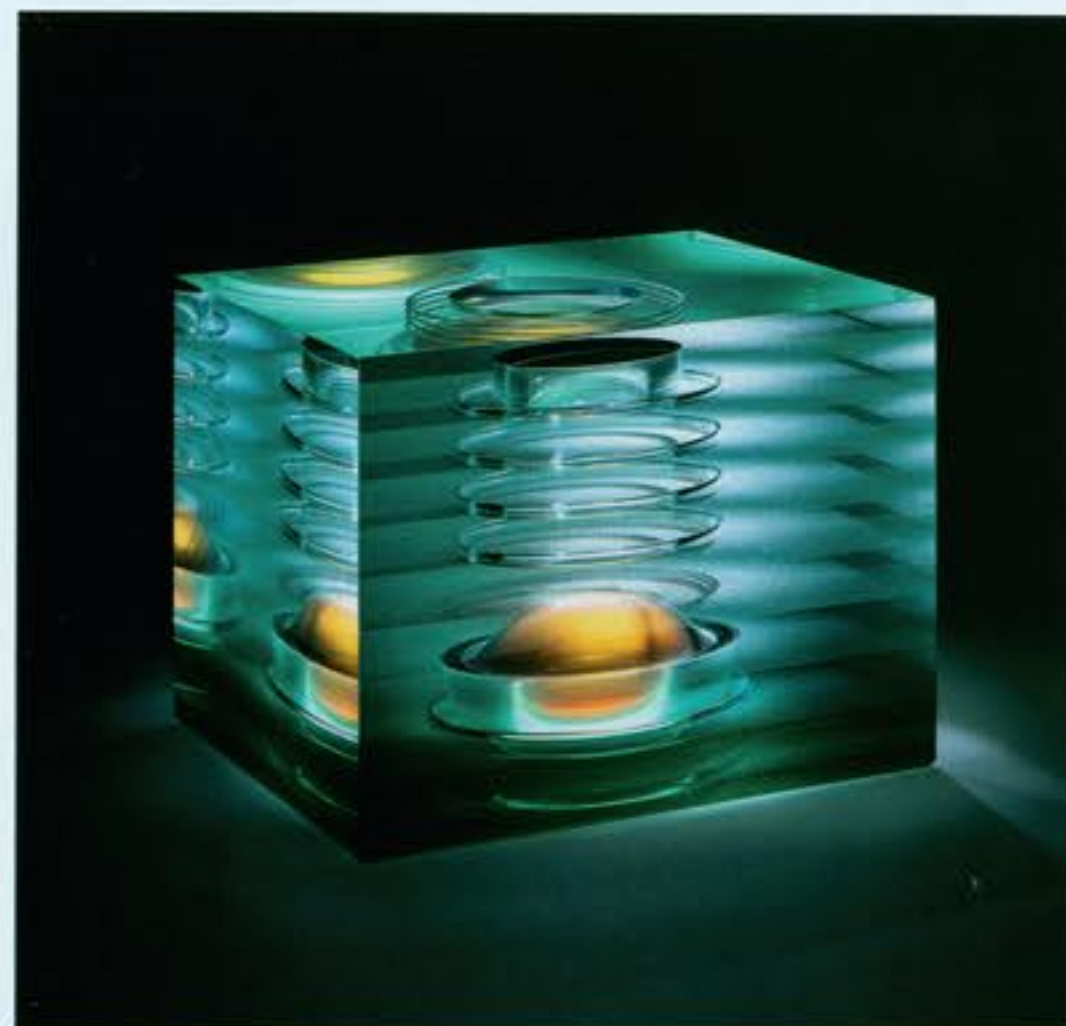


PREVIOUS PAGE **Tom Patti**,
*Solarized Ringed Lumina with
Orange and Green* (detail), 1993. H 5 3/8,
W 6 1/2, D 4 3/4 in.
COLLECTION OF MR. AND MRS. ARE BRENNER
PHOTO: GEORGE ERMI

OPPOSITE **Tom Patti**,
Black Lumina Echo, 1993.
H 4 11/16, W 6 1/16, D 4 in.
COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST
PHOTO: GEORGE ERMI



ABOVE **Tom Patti**, *Solarized
Ringed Lumina with Orange
and Green*, 1993. H 5 3/8,
W 6 1/2, D 4 3/4 in.
COLLECTION OF MR. AND MRS. ARE BRENNER
PHOTO: GEORGE ERMI

Tom Patti creates small, intense sculptures from flat sheets of glass. He has adopted as his medium the common type of glass used in homes, skyscrapers, and automobiles—glass that is present practically everywhere human habitations exist.

It is difficult to think of an ordinary material that is less visible than window glass. But for Patti, flat glass is a highly charged substance: "It's the thing we see all the time but never recognize." By compacting and condensing and subtly manipulating individual panes stacked into blocks, Patti highlights the compelling texture, weight, color, and shape of the glass. His sculptures, all of which can be held in the hand, celebrate this ubiquitous material and make its hitherto invisible aesthetic tangible.

In a characteristic sculpture, *Compound Chromatic Spectral with Black and Amber* (1996), more than a dozen sheets of flat glass of varying colors and thicknesses are stacked together and heated in a high-temperature oven. The intense heat causes the panes of glass to fuse together, as if they have been

welded, creating a structurally unified mass. While the glass is in its molten state, Patti introduces air at the top of the stack, forming a hollow bubble that expands down into the interior of the artwork and leaves a subtle dome on the top.

Chances are good that you have looked through thousands of panes of glass of the type Patti uses without thinking about any of them. Glass is meant to let light through, and the thinness of each pane contributes to its invisibility; it's only when the window is dirty that we pay attention to the glass itself, and then only in order to get out the squeegee and wash it. By stacking many thin panes together, Patti amplifies the hidden aesthetic quality of the edge in each pane of glass while creating works that possess a rich optical depth, as in *Starphire Spectral Contour with Red, Blue Amber* (1994-96). He has created an aesthetic using flat glass where none existed before.

But if all Patti did was draw our attention to the hitherto underappreciated aesthetic aspects of industrial flat glass, this achievement would be a narrow one. His broader artistic accomplishment lies in his creation of a series of sculptures that work both abstractly and metaphorically.

The Studio Glass Movement

By the time of World War II, glassmaking had become a highly industrialized process. The 1960s saw the emergence of the studio glass movement, defined by its ambivalent relationship to industry and spearheaded by the artist Harvey Littleton. Studio glass artists, dedicated to an at times radical aesthetic of experimentation, adapted industrial equipment such as furnaces to the more intimate setting of the artist's studio and worked to integrate glassmaking as a program of study into studio art courses at universities worldwide. During its most radical stage, studio glass artists adhered to the romantic ideal of the artist working alone in the studio without assistance, and the dictum "technique is cheap," attributed to Littleton, came to signify that ideas trumped glassblowing skill or conventional materials.

Patti also began to adapt industrial machines and materials to the needs and scale of the artist's studio. But in comparison to other studio glass artists, he steered a more moderate course. He has always respected the products of industry and is not averse to resorting to the factory if it can provide him with the

