



**Pfizer Inc., Global Research & Development**  
Ann Arbor, Michigan

**summary**

Pfizer Inc., and GBT Interiors commissioned leading glass artist April Wagner to conceptualize and create "The Four Elements: air, fire, water, earth," a custom site-specific glass wall sculpture in four parts. This piece was commissioned for the Round Interaction Conference Room of Site Director and Senior Vice-President Dr. David Canter's Ann Arbor, MI Pfizer campus of Global Research and Development.

**introduction**

Founded in 1849, Pfizer Inc. discovers, develops, manufactures, and markets leading prescription medicines for humans and animals. Pfizer has 7 research and development facilities world-wide, including the Ann Arbor, MI based campus, which is one of the top 3 largest sites. Strong corporate citizenship ideals have led Pfizer Inc. to amass one of the largest, most prestigious art collections of its kind.

**challenge**

The Pfizer Ann Arbor, MI complex, under the vision of Dr. David Canter, has undergone extensive building expansions. In conjunction with Pfizer Global's corporate policy of community outreach, and art collecting, significant focal areas of the site's expansion were tagged for custom site-specific artworks.

Pairing ideas to expertise, Pfizer frequently relies on leading art consultant Gio Borrelli-Thomas, of GBT Interiors, to present significant pieces for the expanding art collection at the Ann Arbor site. With her guidance, Pfizer selects artists to create permanent site-specific custom installations. One of these sites was the Round Interaction Conference Room, which plays host to meetings of the top executives at Pfizer Global Inc.

The Round Interaction Conference Room was designed with a round cherry wood conference table, in the center of which are three recessed plasma screen televisions. This round table, which easily seats 30, was specifically designed so that all persons are equal in discussion, giving no one the hierarchal position. Designed to facilitate screen based presentations, the neutral fabric covered walls, and floating halogen-lit ceiling allowed no natural light to enter the round room. The rounded, fabric covered walls were designed with 4 - 3' wide x 6' tall x 18" deep niches.

Fueled by Dr. Canter's vision of building a meaningful corporate community, Gio Borrelli-Thomas was contracted to find local artists to create artwork for the 4 niches.



"I had never considered glass could capture so well the spirit of the four elements. We had faith in April Wagner's talents and enjoy her creativity every time we enter this room."

- Dr. David Canter





## strategy

Gio Borrelli-Thomas instantly knew glass was the perfect artistic medium to fill the niches; something reflective and transparent to break the heavy, mono-chromatic feel of the room. She turned to leading glass artist April Wagner for a project proposal, her only charge being that the 4 niches should in some way relate to each other.

After reviewing the nature of Pfizer's business, and more specifically the business that's attended to in the Round Interaction Room, Wagner proposed "The Four Elements: air, fire, water, earth," a sculpture in four parts. These equally weighted elements, necessary throughout many levels of life and science, specifically addressed Borrelli-Thomas' request, referenced the overall function of the company, and spoke directly to the room's occupants, and their pursuit of the business of science.

One of Wagner's objectives in creating "The Four Elements" sculpture was to enhance the work environment, yet not distract from the business process; to give impetus to the creative thinking via visual stimulation, engaging the viewer back into the environment/discussion instead of removing them from it.

Wagner's four elements concept provided her with ample artistic fodder to address the engineering challenges of creating hand-blown glass sculptures that would fit into the extremely narrow depth of the niches.

## results

Pfizer met its goal of commissioning custom site-specific, locally made, artworks that build a creative and inspiring corporate culture. Pfizer supported its community, and enhanced their reputation as good corporate citizens. They created a positive and stimulating business environment for their employees, boosting morale, discussion, and interaction between executives, which in turn leads to better business.



## about April Wagner

April Wagner and her partner Jason Ruff have owned and operated **epiphany studios**, a state-of-the-art glass-blowing studio in Pontiac, MI for over a decade. These world-class artists frequently collaborate and together show in over 300 galleries worldwide. April Wagner's signature custom installations like "The Four Elements" are featured in lobbies, atriums, and executive suites for numerous corporate collections.

