

Ross Controls, World Headquarters
Troy, Michigan

summary

In June 2005, Ross Controls and E Art Consulting commissioned leading glass artist April Wagner to conceptualize and create 5 site-specific hand-blown glass sculptures with custom stainless steel mounts for the Boardroom of their new Troy, Michigan World Headquarters.

introduction

For over 80 years, Ross Controls, a global company, has designed and manufactured pneumatic valves and air control systems for industrial applications. With the move to their new World Headquarters, Ross Controls wanted to update their existing art collections with modern and contemporary artworks.

Based in Royal Oak, Michigan, Elana Sampson, of E Art Consulting, has assisted clients in selecting and installing art for corporate and residential environments since 1997.

For over a decade, April Wagner, artist and co-owner of epiphany glass studios in Pontiac, Michigan, has been creating custom site-specific installations for corporate and residential collections worldwide.

setting

With the help of Elana Sampson, Ross Controls outlined a strategy for the placement, purchase, and installation of artworks throughout the new World Headquarters. It was determined that the Boardroom, a focal point of the new World Headquarters, should be highlighted with special site-specific artwork. It was decided the artwork relate, in a yet-to-be-determined manner, directly to Ross Controls.

The Boardroom footprint is 18'W by 38'L. The walls and accents are muted metal tones. The Boardroom contains a custom cherry conference table with inlaid black triangles. The Boardroom is located at the center of the new building, and no natural light enters the room.

The wall in the Boardroom selected for the artwork is 18'L x 7'10"H. On the wall there is a black granite countertop and floor cabinets at 30"H, with an inset sink and coffee service area.

challenges

- to not encroach on the functionality of the countertop refreshment area
- to hang artwork without reinforcing the pre-existing structure of the wall
- to compliment pre-existing interior designs elements
- to correctly maintain visual impact whether artwork is viewed from close or far distances, and whether doors are opened or closed.
- to appropriately fill the allotted space while maintaining set budget
- to determine, then conceptually integrate, the essence of "Ross Controls" into the artwork
- to complete project and installation in 6 week time-frame



"We felt modernization was an important component of our creating our new world headquarters building, from the floor plan to the art and decorations. As we approached the completion of the project, we determined something was missing. That something turned out to be the work of April Wagner. With little or no direction, April created an unbelievable interpretation of symbols for fluid power diagrams, which represent the core of our business. April blew away our expectations with her artistic ability, creativity and professionalism."

- Jeff Hand, Chief Financial Officer, Ross Controls



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, Mich., for over a decade. These world-class artists frequently collaborate and together show in over 300 galleries worldwide. April Wagner's signature custom installations are featured in lobbies, atriums, and executive suites for numerous corporate collections.

www.epiphanyglass.com

strategy

Charged with the task of finding an artist, Sampson proposed the Ross committee review the work of several artists, including glass artist April Wagner. After strong interest was shown, Sampson asked Wagner to submit a proposal for the project.

In developing the proposal for the artworks, April researched the engineering and manufacturing roles of Ross Controls. Of all the facets of their business, April was most intrigued by the 'Graphic Symbols for Fluid Power Diagrams' that are used to create and explain their products. These symbols were ripe for artistic conceptualization and interpretation.

April felt 'symbols' would speak universally to all the potential viewers; the board members, shareholders, employees, clients, and vendors of Ross Controls. As a global company, the Ross Controls Boardroom would regularly host meetings for persons of multiple nationalities, and the artwork should be equally accessible to all viewers.

April deconstructed the 'symbols'; analyzing their line, form, curve, and function. She artistically interpreted these characteristics into hand-blown glass parts, making hundreds of parts in various colors, shapes, and sizes.

Taking into consideration all of the project's unique challenges, April determined that 5 individual sculptures, spaced 16" apart, was the perfect solution. Each piece would be different, but together would visually speak as one, with intricate detail at close viewing, and strong line quality that would read well at far distances. 5 pieces at 24"h x 16"w x 8"d each would also fill the space appropriately, while maintaining budget constraints, and the functionality of the counter area.

No extra reinforcement of the wall would be necessary, as the sculptures would individually be mounted into the existing studs. Custom 316 stainless steel mounts were hand-made for each sculpture. The mounts attach to the wall with internal stainless screws for a clean, flush look. The sculptures slip into the mounts and are held in place with three set screws. The sculptures can easily be moved should relocation ever be necessary.

results

Ross Controls attained their goal of commissioning custom site-specific, site-relevant artwork. By updating and anchoring their existing art collection, they gave their new World Headquarters a fresh perspective on the future. Ross Controls acquired artwork that eloquently spoke of their corporate mission and their identity as a global company. ●

