

# PRIMORDIAL SHIFT

GLASS, CORN, AND GENETIC MODIFICATION • BY MICHAEL “MICK” MEILAHN

PREMIERE: April 21–August 21, 2022, Bergstrom-Mahler Museum of Glass, Neenah, WI  
September 11, 2022–May 29, 2023, The John P. McGovern Museum of Health & Medical Science, Houston, TX

ADDITIONAL DATES AVAILABLE



Mick Meilahn with his Hot Glass Team



Detail, Bonanza Blue

*Primordial Shift* is an installation dealing with the implications of genetic modification of corn. It consists of 30 hand-blown glass ears of corn averaging 4' high suspended on stalks of cast bronze and blown glass, tethered with rope from the ceiling combined with audio and video projected as a backdrop to create an illusion of gentle swaying in the field. The creative force behind the project is Mick Meilahn, who like others of his generation, learned glassmaking as a university student in Wisconsin in the 1970's, and subsequently participated in the wave that became The American Studio Glass Movement.

"I recognize and thank the indigenous peoples of the Americas for their contributions to agriculture; particularly, the birth of corn. Some ten thousand years ago in Mexico, two grasses, Teosinte and Zea Mays were cross-pollinated. Since the time when communal survival depended on the development of the terrace method of farming, the corn plant has gone through staggering change and growth. . . . Over eons of time, corn and the staircase symbol have been as sacred to Native Americans as the cross is to Christianity. . . . [But] in the last 25 years, agriculture and science have advanced exponentially faster than social acceptability. . . . For me, the challenge is whether we can feed a billion more humans on a shrinking planet and at what price." — MICK MEILAHN

In the 20th Century, a paradigm shift occurred in genetics, when scientists discovered how to unravel genetic code; the genetic code itself, DNA; and the commodification of GMOs and the positive and negative implications for consumers.

As an undergraduate, Meilahn spent a quarter abroad working with glass legend, Erwin Eisch in Frauenau, Germany. After graduation, he spent a year as a Peace Corps volunteer in Bolivia, after which he earned a Masters degree in glass and sculpture under Joel Philip Myers at Illinois State University, Normal. Ultimately, his roots drew him back home to his family's farm in east central Wisconsin where he built a hot glass studio and operated the farm with his family. In time, Mick Meilahn's passion for art and farming became one-in-the-same as a form of creative expression. In recent years, his work has centered on corn as an icon, and all that it represents in culture, food, and science. Meilahn has taught at Penland School in North Carolina and The Archie Bray Foundation in Montana. His work has been exhibited in the annual Smithsonian Craft Show and is in the collection of Corning Museum of Glass, which has routinely featured Meilahn's work in its juried publication, *New Glass Review*. In 2008, The Figge Art Museum acquisitioned an installation from an invitational exhibition measuring 18'h x 40' x 40', which it frequently installs, and which has become a popular attendance-generating attraction. Mick Meilahn's installations, which are fundamentally about science and agriculture, will afford your museum a unique opportunity to focus on these and related themes to enrich visitor enjoyment, education, and experience.



*Primordial Shift*, Peninsula Art School, Door County, Wisconsin

“An ear of corn is the point of convergence for my dual careers in farming and art. Corn is not a typical subject in art. But for me, the lines, rows, numbers, higher prices, lower prices, color spectrums, mapping, information technology, air masses, and species have all combined to have unwittingly become a catalyst.”—MICK MEILAHN



*Bonanza Blue* at premiere of *Environmental Impact II*, James Museum, St. Petersburg, Florida

#### EXHIBITION SPECIFICATIONS

**CONTENTS:** 30 hand-blown glass ears of corn each averaging 4' tall suspended by synthetic cord on stalks with leaves cast of bronze, and projected video with sound to create an illusion of gentle swaying in the field; 6' tall bushel basket filled with approx. 30 multi-colored glass corn cobs of various size and 35 kernels and other small pieces; and title panel and didactic labels

**SPACE REQUIREMENTS:** Approx. 30'x 30' floor space with a 16' or higher ceiling and walls dark enough for video to be projected vividly; plus approx. 20'x 20' floor space for bushel basket

**SUPPORT MATERIALS:** Include exhibition DVD containing registration, retail sales, press, education information, and installation video in which the artist himself explains how to install and de-install the sculpture

**FEE:** Mid-range exhibit fee plus shipping and in-house and in-transit insurance

**AVAILABILITY:** Duration of eight weeks or longer

**EDUCATION:** Lectures, gallery walks, docent training possible pending scheduling

#### FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT

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