

Gardens of Glass

Dale Chihuly, Master of Glass, at Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

LONDON July 15: The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, will host a major solo exhibition of new glass sculptures and installations by the world-renowned artist in glass **Dale Chihuly**. It will be the first Chihuly exhibition to be presented in a UK botanical garden.

Gardens of Glass, 27 May 2005 to 8 January 2006, will present visitors with a series of spectacular installations within the historic garden landscape and great glasshouses. The glass sculptures will be specifically designed to respond to the living collections, listed architecture, and Georgian vistas of Kew. Most pieces will be set within the landscape – even within the huge pond – while some will be inside the Temperate House and Princess of Wales Conservatory. Dale Chihuly, who has enormous enthusiasm for the supreme glass structures of the Victorian age, is particularly inspired by the opportunity to site pieces against the setting of the historic Palm House.

“The Chihuly Studio creates glass sculpture on an unrivalled scale – a scale to match the majestic environment of Kew,” said Professor Sir Peter Crane FRS, Director of the Gardens. “Wherever Chihuly and his team work they create a fantastic sense of excitement. ***Gardens of Glass*** will be the un-missable exhibition of 2005, and we are thrilled to host it.”

Dale Chihuly is the most celebrated of contemporary artists in glass. His starting point is the great tradition of Venetian blown glass. In his hands, the complex fluidity of hot glass, as beautiful as it is dangerous, is transformed into astonishing sculptures, rich in colour, organic in form, and exuberant in nature. The exhibition will include examples of his best loved work, including the massive *Chandeliers*, as seen in a famous installation over the canals of Venice. His newest series, *Fiori*, will be shown in Europe for the first time at Kew. The forms known as *Macchia*, *Baskets* and *Reeds*, as seen in Jerusalem, Japan and Iceland, will also be on display, together with *Ikebana*, *Nijijima Floats*, *Onions*, and a *Boat Installation*.

This unique opportunity for the British public to see an indoor/outdoor, generously scaled exhibition of Chihuly's work follows the brilliant success of the Victoria and Albert Museum's Chihuly exhibition of 2001. On that occasion, Mark Jones, Director of the V&A commented “The technical barriers which the Chihuly teams have breached and the sheer skill, born of a combination of Venetian fluency with American bravado, are unmatched by any other maker”.

Gardens of Glass - Chihuly at Kew, sponsored by GlaxoSmithKline

Notes for Editors:

Dale Chihuly, born in 1941 in Tacoma Washington, occupies a special place in the history of 20th and 21st century glass. He trained with Harvey Littleton, the father of American studio glass, was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to study at the illustrious Venini factory in Venice, established the glass course at the famous Rhode Island School of Design, and became the founding artist of Pilchuck, the pre-eminent school of glass. He leads the avant garde in the development of glass blowing as a studio art. He has travelled widely and exhibited internationally. His work is held in over 200 museums throughout the world.

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