

# Collector Editions

\$2.50

WINTER 1978

Quarterly



**Mettlach—**  
the grand old  
name of steins is  
back, plus a  
collector's view of  
the parent company,  
Villeroy & Boch

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**Dear Reader,**  
**Due to serious delays in production and printing, we have decided to combine the Fall and Winter issues of Collector Editions. We apologize for the delay. This is the largest issue in the magazine's six-year history. All subscriptions will be automatically extended by one issue.**

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# Paul Stankard's Amazing Paperweights

His botanical weights are so meticulously crafted they create the illusion of real plants floating in perfectly clear glass.

PAUL HOLLISTER

Paul Stankard's approach to paperweight making begins where the great paperweight lampworkers of the nineteenth century left off. Using a more versatile modern gas torch but similar, timeless tools, he has transferred the old lampworkers' skill at suggesting fanciful flowers to the meticulous requirements of nature itself. The fifteen paperweights in Stankard's one-man show at Habatat Galleries, 1820 N. Telegraph Road, Dearborn, Michigan, Nov. 11 through Dec. 4, 1978, show how far he has come in the eight years he has been struggling to subjugate natural forms.

The glass that encloses Paul Stankard's naturalistic flowers is limpid as Lake Louise. The glass formula he worked out — which he says almost caused him a nervous breakdown — is so clear he seldom places a color ground beneath the flowers. The colored backgrounds in some of illustrations for this article are unnecessary





and misleading: the flowers simply float in purity. Stankard's paperweight flowers are unlike anyone else's in the illusion of reality they create. Stankard says, "I've done an American floral series, an orchid series, a berry series, a medicinal herb series; and each series defines things for me and helps me to direct my work."

Paul Stankard has studied wild and domesticated flowers as if they were members of his own family – indeed they grow in the woods behind his house and hang in botanical posters on his studio walls. He knows all the Linnaean terms for each part of each flower, and he reinterprets what he sees through the strict rules of glassmaking chemistry and manipulation. Stankard's *Spider Orchid* (*brassia caudata*) (1) of which he has so far made only fifty out of a limited edition of 75, is named after John Brass, an English botanical illustrator. Thinking the orchid is a spider, the insects polli-

nate it by trying to kill it. Stankard has reproduced the flower's unusual coloring, long sepals, and the mottling on its petals. "I try to be true to nature, and this is one of my most serious pieces," he says. The orchid retails for \$350.

In his first attempt at a floral bouquet (2), priced at \$660, he tried to show a top view of the bouquet, as if it had just been picked from the field and held in the hand. Included are a brilliant array of bunchberries, meadow wreaths, forget-me-nots, and St. Anthony's Fire in brilliant primaries. A subtler color medley is seen in his *Field Arrangement* (3), an edition of only 25 which Stankard had priced at a spanking \$800. He says, "The idea came to me when we vacationed in Maine and the fields were exploding with blossoms. I picked a bouquet for my wife and we put it in water in the cabin and it *made* the cabin all week. When we came home I worked a

week, developing the design." Expensive as the weight was, the edition sold out right away, and rumor has it that one collector has already offered another \$1500 for the weight.

*Cattleya* (4), the second in Stankard's orchid series, priced at \$350, also sold out. So did a delicate *Carolina Rose* (5) he made for the Smithsonian Institution in early 1978 in a limited edition of 50. I was allowed a peek at another weight he's making for the Smithsonian, a *Strawberry*, in a limited edition of 100.

Prices for Paul Stankard's weights range from under \$300 to \$1200, according to complexity of design and the work involved in achieving it; and not necessarily based on whether the edition is limited or open. In fact, Stankard emphasizes that "from here on I'm not going to make more than 150 paperweights of any one subject. This means that what I have been calling *Open Editions* will be limited to



Fig. 1: Stankard's "Spider Orchid" (*brassia caudata*), a limited edition of 75 weights, retails for \$350. Stankard considers this one of his truest interpretations of a flower as it appears in nature.

Fig. 2: This explosion of color was the result of Stankard's first attempt at a floral bouquet. It is priced at \$660.

Fig. 3: "Field Arrangement," an edition of 25 weights which sold out at \$800 apiece, was inspired by a bouquet of field flowers that Stankard picked for his wife while they were vacationing in Maine.

Fig. 4: "Cattleya" is the second weight in Stankard's orchid series. Priced at \$350, it sold out quickly.





150; while the *Limited Edition* weights will number no more than 50 to 75 of each design. In some cases I may make only 25, or 10, or even 2." It scarcely needs pointing out that even 75 is a very small number in paperweight circles.

Stankard explains that of the flowers he sees in his woods and studies in his books and botanical charts, about a third grow in clusters of blossoms, which require massed groupings of tiny glass parts. In the evening after his day's production, he experiments with different color combinations and techniques of creating what he calls botanical illusions, that is assemblages of flower parts that suggest, though they may not duplicate, actual flowers. Then, after he has achieved this botanical illusion, he looks around for a real flower he can "plug the technique into." The resulting *Botanical Studies* are one-of-a-kind paperweights that will sell for \$300 to \$350. (6)

Another weight at Habatat, of which

Stankard has made only two so far (and will make no more than 150) is the *Aerangis Orchid* (7), a very complicated flower, the exposed roots of which are epiphytic, that is they hang downwards and cling to the tree on which the flower grows. The flower has irregular looking, bilateral blossoms in pale yellow that were very difficult to make. Stankard's *Violets*, on the other hand, come in two editions: a Limited Edition of 75 at \$385 (8), and an edition of not more than 150 at \$285. The hundred dollar difference is due to the fact that in the more expensive version the violets are done in compound technique, that is in two floral layers, the upper layer flowers casting their shadows upon the lower, which creates a strong sense of three dimensions. Curiously, Stankard has sold about an equal number of each edition.

*Triple Yellow Meadowwreath* (9), a fantasy flower, was the result of a

technical breakthrough in which Stankard succeeded in tipping the yellow stamens with black. These upright stamens cast their own shadows on the delicate, buttery yellow petals.

Other flower weights at Habatat include *Flax* (10), \$350, its soft, white petals faintly, almost invisibly striped with blue. As with many of his flowers, the buds here are three dimensional, revealing the stamens within – a feature that helped Olga Dahgren's antique lily of the valley paperweight bring \$20,400 at auction. Stankard is very fond of *St. Anthony's Fire*, and that is on view, as is Nature's Splendour, a gorgeous bouquet that includes the wild rose, forget-me-nots, and blue violet buds.

The tricks of lampworked glass are only part of what is involved in making a floral paperweight. Seen raw on the workbench, lampworked flowers are not impressive to look at. But enclosed in Stankard's clear, light-trapping crys-



tal, the highlights on the flowers disappear and they look remarkably convincing. I noticed that the profile shapes of his weights resemble no one else's; and this undoubtedly has a lot to do with it, for Stankard places his floral remembrances at just the right height from the base and distance in from the outer edge of the weights to complete the naturalistic illusion begun when he painstakingly forms the flowers and leaves.

Paul Stankard's assistant for materials and preparations is John T. Glass, who also cuts the gleaming, even facets on the few weights Stankard feels will be enhanced by faceting. Stankard says, "I tell John if I had his name I could really go places." Stankard has already gone to the top of contemporary paperweight lampworking. Meanwhile, he is mulling over other experimental possibilities that could possibly lead to a new concept in glassmaking. •

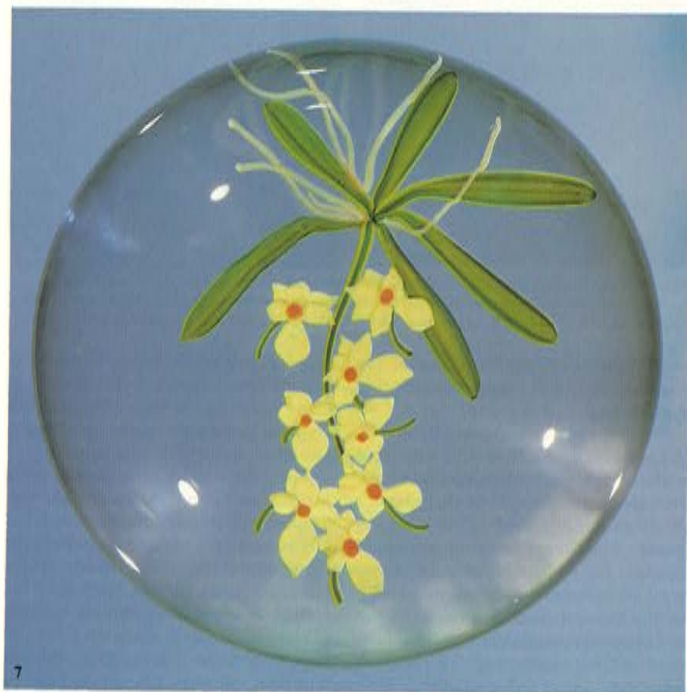


Fig. 5: The Smithsonian Institution commissioned Stankard to produce "Carolina Rose" in an edition of 50 early in 1978. It has since sold out.

Fig. 6: Stankard's "Botanical Studies," like this one, are one-of-a-kind weights that sell for \$300-\$350 each. The subject is usually not a real flower, but rather an assembly of parts, created with experimental techniques, that suggests a real flower.

Fig. 7: The "Aerangis Orchid" is an edition of 150 weights. The characteristic irregular yellow blossoms were very difficult to make according to Stankard.

Fig. 8: This is the limited edition version (75 weights) of Stankard's "Violets," which he has also produced in an open edition of 150 weights. The limited weight sells for \$385, the open edition weight for \$285. The price difference is due to the complexity of the design in the limited version.

Fig. 9: "Triple Yellow Meadowreath" is a fantasy flower in which Stankard tipped the yellow stamens with black — a technical achievement which was the result of his continual experimentation.

Fig. 10: "Flax," a delicate flower with almost invisible blue stripes in the blossom, sells for \$350. The bud near the blossom is three dimensional, revealing the stamens within.