

Indianapolis Museum of Art
Jeff Rothenberg

1 For me, as a glassblower, it all started about twelve
2 years ago, when I had a week that three infants that I was
3 caring for died in labor. And I try never to bring work
4 home, but I came a little depressed, and you asked me what
5 happened, and the next thing I knew you ran out and bought
6 me a class in glass. I think you got that for me 'cause you
7 knew I working with my hands, and as a surgeon I'm kind of
8 tactile anyways[sic]. And at the same time, seeing you as
9 an art therapist doing therapy and art for patients I
10 realized that it could help both sides.

11 I think specifically in medicine, both for patients
12 and healers, we deal with some really complex and difficult
13 situations—often life and death—that go beyond verbalizing,
14 and having another way to let your feelings out...kind of
15 emotional catharsis...is very, very helpful. For our
16 learners in particular I think...you know I'm a professor
17 and a teacher at the university...it's important for them
18 to embrace the humanistic side of medicine because medicine
19 is not a science. It's a lot more of an art, and I think
20 they can really bond with both patients and other providers
21 alike if they have something else in common—something that
22 they can talk about that is outside of medicine. And so, as
23 you know, we've both together as a couple been pushing the

1 arts and humanities within the education of the medical
2 school. And we've had, you know, far more positive response
3 to that.

4 The beauty of art for me is it's enabled me not only
5 to explore myself creatively but it's allowed me to come up
6 with some products—namely, all these pieces of glass that I
7 make—that I can then share with other people. When I give
8 someone a piece of glass, at first it was hard for me
9 because I was so proud that I'd made something. But then
10 later, when I started giving it and seeing how people
11 responded, I got such a feeling of satisfaction. But in all
12 honesty, what people don't realize is I'm really doing this
13 more for me than for them. And I think that's why I've
14 stuck with it so much. That's why I've also been reticent
15 to go commercial and sell my work. Because I think that it
16 would really change the way that *I* see art in *my* life,
17 since I'm not an artist—I'm really a physician who does
18 art. Although as time goes on I'm starting to see myself
19 more as an artist.

20 When my son brought a bunch of friends—camp
21 counselors—into the house, and he didn't know I was in the
22 room next door and he said, you know, as he was showing
23 them the house, he was like "All the art on the walls is my
24 mom's, and all the glass is my dad's. He's a gynecologist,
25 but he's really a glass-blowing artist." And I was

1 [laughs], I think, prouder of that than I was of what I've
2 achieved at the School of Medicine.

3 And I would say that this never would have happened
4 without the support and encouragement that you've given me,
5 not just as a husband and father, but really as an artist.
6 I often tell friends and colleagues that you're actually my
7 biggest supporter and my biggest critic, and I love you for
8 that.