

Turn left in Loafer's Glory, off of Highway 226 N, follow Toecane Road about a half mile to an old two-story brick storefront sitting in the deep curve of the road, and there, most days, you can find Judson Guérard working in his glass studio. It's possible that you'll be greeted by a couple of neighborhood dogs and the studio cats. The glass equipment is toward the back of an old dry goods store which the glass artist has kept mostly intact. Guérard and his wife happened upon the building when they were searching for a suitable studio location in the early 1990s. The tiny hamlet of Toecane where the studio is located, with an active freight train track and a slow, shallow river, has the feeling of a place time forgot. It was just the right feeling to Guérard when he established his studio.

Guérard came to blown glass art via the route of his background in philosophy and aesthetics and his practical bent of wanting to create with his hands. At a certain point in life, after considering possibilities as disparate as hang gliding and building solar homes, the allure of the beauty of glass prevailed. A weekend glass blowing class in Denver seemed like magic and the other possibilities no longer were of interest. It took the beginning glass artist a couple of years to arrive at Penland School of Crafts to study glass full time. There he used his savings to take long concentration classes in glass blowing and he was able to barter with the School to use his carpentry skills in exchange for continuing to study glass until he reached the skill level to become the School's glass studio coordinator.

Once Guérard felt ready to develop his own studio, he and his wife Sally Morgan Guérard, first purchased the old store in Toecane for him to develop his individual studio, then moved, along with their llamas, cats and dogs to a home that sits above the studio with a view of the NorthToe River. Much of Guérard's work references the dynamism of his environment; the sky, the clouds, the river, and the mountains find expression in the fluidity and beauty of his glass.