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Richard Posner

Richard Posner made socially critical autonomous glass panels in the '70s, taking the symbolic figure tradition of medieval windows into contemporary political commentary. He gave that up to make public art works in the '80s; he moved to Europe on a Fulbright fellowship and largely disappeared from the glass scene. Posner (b.1948) studied sculpture and art history at California State University, Chico (1973) and then earned an MFA from the California College of Arts and Crafts (1976). In 1975 and '76, his political, witty, experimental works were widely reproduced, including one on the cover of *Craft Horizons*.

The Persistence of Vision (1975) presents a close-up exterior view of a simple building with white siding. But the view through the window shows a (photographic) view not of an interior but an outdoor environment—requiring the viewer to suddenly shift perspective. Adding to the spatial disjunction, Posner shows the corner of his window peeling upward to reveal another outdoor view. This work has been called an homage to Magritte because of these shifting layers of reality. Another work is mostly punning, showing the Pope surrounded by red birds and baseball players (i.e., Cardinals), while another spoofs the Watergate break-in using film noir conventions of a detective, shadows, a shaft of light from an open door showing a hand with a stopwatch, and a German shepherd.

The works of this period were technical explorations incorporating sandblasted flashed glass, Kodalith transparencies and copper-foil photographs, and they were also puzzles constructed for the enjoyment of the maker and the entertainment of the viewer. Engaging even if one doesn't know the story is *Another Look at My Beef with the Government* (1976). In the

background of the panel we see a man (a photograph) peering in a window at a room in which a partial figure lies in traction in a hospital bed; in the room, punning on the title are mechanized cows and wallpaper with butchers' diagrams of beef. The piece was motivated by Posner's back injury suffered during his 44 months of "alternative service" as a conscientious objector during the Vietnam War: he served his country by unloading a hospital dishwasher. Posner took "stained-glass windows" to an entirely new place.