# JAMES HOUSTON: A RETROSPECTIVE
## PRICE LIST

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FOREWORD

In the late summer of 1959, I flew north into the Canadian eastern Arctic, accompanied by a party of seven. The government of Canada had advised me that if I wished to see Eskimo art at its best I should journey to Cape Dorset on West Baffin Island. There I would find its civil administrator, James Houston, who had been living and traveling in his vast district of 65,000 square miles for the past nine years. It was Houston who encouraged Eskimos in their ancient art of stone carving, brought their work to the attention of collectors and museums, and introduced them to the modern art of printmaking. He brought prosperity to the Eskimos and new forms of art to the civilized world.

After chartering a large flying boat from James Bay, a thousand miles to the south, we arrived at Telikjuak, a small tent camp set up by Houston on a deep fjord. Houston proceeded in the next fortnight to introduce us to his friends, the Eskimos, their way of life, and their art. Houston's talent and imagination prompted me to offer him a place in our Steuben design department in New York.

In the next three years I heard little from Houston – not surprisingly, perhaps, since he received his mail but once a year. Then, unexpectedly, word came from him that he felt the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative, which he had organized, was working well and that he was prepared to come to New York.

I thought the incredible change from his icy Arctic solitude to a steaming summer in Manhattan would surely discourage Houston. But no, he stayed on, relieved from time to time by going back and forth into the Canadian Arctic. During the past twenty-five years he has been one of Steuben's most able and prolific designers.

By nature, Houston is an energetic man and a delightful companion. He has written more than twenty books for adults and children, among them books about Eskimos and about the west coast Canadian Indians. A first-rate lecturer, he is much in demand as a speaker on Eskimo art and culture. He has created large sculpture commissions for museums and has also had numerous exhibitions of his Arctic and African game...
drawings. He holds the Order of Canada, his country's highest award. He is a world traveler with an insatiable curiosity about life.

By the end of this year, Houston will have created almost seventy major Steuben pieces. Many of these are outstanding works, now in museums and private collections. Steuben is honored to give a major retrospective exhibition of the glass designs and drawings of James Houston.

Arthur A. Houghton, Jr.
Past president of Steuben Glass

NIGHT OWL (cover)
From an anonymous collection
Width 7¼" · 1975
Growing up in Canada, I particularly remember my family and friends, my outdoor life, and my art education, all of which seemed aspects of pure pleasure. Arthur Lismer, one of Canada's best-known artists and a member of the famous Group of Seven, was my earliest and most influential teacher.

Following my nineteenth birthday, when I was old enough to volunteer, I joined the Toronto Scottish Regiment and went off to serve in World War II for five years. After the war, I attended L'Ecole Grande Chaumiere in Paris, studying art with a special interest in life drawing.

In 1948, I returned home, still looking for excitement and adventure. I made drawings among the Swampy Cree Indians and by a piece of luck found passage north into the Canadian eastern Arctic. Forty years ago, that was a wild and little-traveled vastness. Then, as now, it appealed to me. I planned to stay there for a matter of days, but the Inuit-Eskimo seemed so much the kind of people I was searching for, that I remained among them for more than twelve years.

At Cape Dorset, we had experimented with stencil and stone-block prints. Wishing to learn more about printmaking, I decided to use my long accumulated leave to travel to Japan. There I studied under the great print master, Unichi Hiratsuka, and returned to Arctic Canada in 1959, confident that I could aid the Inuit with the technical help they needed.

Arthur A. Houghton, Jr., who was president of both Steuben Glass and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, having seen an exhibition of Eskimo art in New York City, came north in 1959 and visited West Baffin Island where he viewed the extraordinary Inuit artists and their carving and printmaking. Following that visit, he offered me a position in the design department of Steuben Glass. He thought of this as an experiment, he said, assuring me that the slightest brush with big city life would probably send me rushing back to the Arctic.

I had just helped the Inuit form the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative and was eager to see it increase its signs of progress. When that had
been accomplished, I gave away to Inuit friends my parkas, rifles, sled, and dog team, and journeyed south in the spring of 1962.

I did grow restless in Manhattan, as Arthur Houghton had predicted, and the following spring, when the geese flew north to nest in the Arctic, I followed them. But, like the geese, I returned south again. I married a wonderful girl named Alice, and we settled into city life in mid-Manhattan and country life on a sheep farm in Rhode Island.

Over the years, I traveled frequently to Corning, New York, where our glass is made, and worked with Leonard Parker, Harry Phillips, Sammy Carlinio, and many other great glassmakers. I remember fondly those wintry night-shifts a quarter of a century ago when we used to broil venison on a blowing iron in the fiery glass furnaces called glory holes.

Making glass by hand is an ancient art that still demands instant decisions. Working molten glass is a quick, spontaneous action controlled in no small part by fierce heat and the constantly turning blowing iron. Unlike almost any other sculptural material, clear crystal is totally transparent. This reality will remain a thrill and challenge to every glass designer.

Today, I spend most of my winters in Stonington, Connecticut, on New England’s Atlantic coast, and the rest of the year traveling or living at our small cottage on the Queen Charlotte Islands, one hundred miles west of the Canadian-Alaskan border. There I usually write or draw throughout the misty mornings and fly-fish for trout or salmon in the afternoons. Standing beneath giant cedars in the very heart of nature with a glorious river flowing crystal clear around me, I try my best to make long casts, hoping to catch a record salmon or better still an original vision of some new glass design.

James Houston
January 1987
SALMON BOWL
Width 10¼” · 1985
SNIPÉ BOWL
Width 10" · 1975
SHORE BIRDS
Length 8\(\frac{1}{4}\)" • 1975
ROBERT FALCON SCOTT
From the collection of
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Orgill
Length 14½" · 1972
BAFFIN ISLAND
From the collection of
Mr. and Mrs. Gary Robertson
Length 9 ¼" · 1966
SEA SWORD
Height 8 3/4" · 1983
ELEPHANTS OF KILIMANJARO
Width 10½" • 1987
BLUE WHALE

Height 7 1/2" · 1980
EAGLE
Wingspread 12" · 1964
WOODCOCK
From an anonymous collection
Height 10¼" · 1974
SALMON
Length 14½" · 1975
ARCTIC FISHERMAN
Height 6½" • 1970
TROUT AND FLY
Height 9½” • 1966
EXCALIBUR
Height 8" · 1964
POLAR BEARS
From the collection of
Mr. and Mrs. Murray S. Katz
Height 5¼" • 1965
AUTUMN MOON
From an anonymous collection
Width 8" • 1972
RACCOON
Diameter 8½" · 1978

WILD TURKEY FLASK
Height 8½" · 1985

WATER DISK–BONEFISH
Diameter 12" · 1977

RHINO HORN
Height 10¼" · 1983

WILD MALLARD FLASK
Height 8½" · 1985

WATER DISK–MUSKELLUNGE
Diameter 12" · 1977

BEAVER
Diameter 8½" · 1979

GREAT HORNED OWL
Height 8" · 1985

WATER DISK–TROUT
Diameter 12" · 1977
ICE PENGUIN  
Height 6¼"  ·  1982

BROOK TROUT  
Length 8"  ·  1982

SALMON POOL  
Width 6½"  ·  1973

ICE BEAR  
Length 6"  ·  1970

SEA OTTER  
Length 8¾"  ·  1978

ARCTIC EXPLORATION  
Height 7¾"  ·  1981

ICE HUNTER  
Length 6¼"  ·  1972

ELEPHANT  
Height 7½"  ·  1964

DANCING CRANES  
Width 8"  ·  1986
JAMES HOUSTON

"I cannot imagine a material more representative of the Arctic landscape than Steuben glass. Its brilliance, clarity, and purity far surpass those of any other material I know. Steuben was a natural for me."

Author and artist James Houston's works in Steuben glass depict life in the far north and in the wilds. They reflect an intimate understanding and appreciation of wildlife and the native peoples among whom he has lived and worked. Houston spent many years with the Inuit-Eskimo and the Indians of Canada's West Baffin Island. "Their very different way of thinking, their perceptive way of seeing," Houston has said, "had a great effect upon my art."

Houston was a prime force in the recognition of Inuit art. He encouraged their talents in sculpture, introduced them to printmaking, and assisted with exhibitions of their work, which has become internationally known.

Houston’s own designs for Steuben Glass are in the permanent collections of many important museums throughout the world, including the Glenbow-Alberta Institute, Calgary, Alberta, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, the National Museum of Canada, Ottawa, and the Winnipeg Art Museum. He is also represented in many private collections.

As an author and illustrator, Houston has won international book awards. He wrote the screenplay for the Paramount Pictures feature adaptation of one of his novels. In 1981, he was featured in a Canadian Broadcasting Corporation film, "Fire and Sand: The Mysteries of Glass," working with craftsmen at the Steuben factory in Corning, New York.