

Meilahn's glass corn art is hand-blown, is up to 3 ft. long, and weighs up to 50 lbs. each.



Artist/Farmer Tells Corn Story With Glass

As a farmer and an artist, Michael Meilahn is on a mission to inspire people to think artistically about the advancement of science in farming through corn.

His immersive exhibition, *Primordial Shift*, captures the history of corn, from a hand-fabricated bushel basket spilling out giant

and colorful glass corn representing Native American culture to 28 larger-than-life glass ears of corn hanging from the ceiling. All are handblown in his Wisconsin art studio/farm shop. *Primordial Shift* is a traveling exhibit currently showing at the South Dakota Art Museum in Brookings, S.D., through mid-

July and is scheduled to be in Rochester, Minn., in 2025. Meilahn's work is exhibited and collected privately and in museums in the U.S. and internationally.

Until 5 years ago, his life revolved around four seasons of caring for and working 2,000+ acres while etching a pattern of winter creating, spring planting, summer art shows, and fall harvesting. Now retired from farming, he focuses on art, continues to create sculptures, and works at streamlining his traveling exhibition.

Meilahn's passion for glass-blown art began when he signed up for a ceramics/glass class in college while studying Ag Business at UW-River Falls. "When I happened upon the roaring hot glass-blowing lab on campus, I was captivated by the medium and changed my major to art. That was it," he recalls.

In 1969, Michael traveled to Europe on the Quarter Abroad Program to study glass history and technique. He spent 6 weeks in Germany with Erwin Eisch, a renowned glass artist and abstract art painter, at his family glass factory and studio. He also served with the Peace Corps and lived and worked with Indigenous peoples in Bolivia, sharing sheep management practices. Those experiences helped shape his approach to art.

For the installation, audio plays and video

images of the farm flash in the background, creating shadows cast by 3-ft. ears of corn hanging from the ceiling. Bronze-fabricated leaves and objects fastened to the ears add texture and dimension. For example, Meilahn adds dice decoration to many of the ears.

"The idea of risk is familiar to all farmers and comes in many scenarios, from weather, price, markets, economy, and seed choices, to name a few. I planned to design a visually engaging environment that brings forth thoughts of contemporary issues involving branding, bioengineering, new and safer practices, evolution, and survival of the fittest in today's complicated world," he explains.

Creating the ears of corn requires a team of skilled glass workers, including his son, to assist Meilahn with blowing and controlling the liquid glass, placing decorative elements, sharing the weight bearing, and maneuvering 50 lbs. of glass into a giant bronze mold.

As a farmer, Meilahn views it as capturing the spirit of agriculture and invites readers to watch the video on YouTube (search "The Arts Page Segment Farmer and Glass Artist, Mick Meilahn").

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Apple Forager Says There Are No Bad Apples

Matt Kaminsky is an apple forager. Also known as Gnarly Pippins, he searches the New England countryside for new varieties. His specialty is finding seedlings growing up wild and finding ways to use them. His book, "The Wild Apple Forager's Guide," teaches how to scout for, identify, harvest, and process wild apples.

"It's an introduction to wild apples," says Kaminsky. "There's a use for just about any apple, even those that don't taste good. Any fault assigned to an apple is only a fault because no one has identified its benefit."

For the past 4 years, he's hosted an Annual Wild and Seedling Pomological Exhibition. In 2022, there were 70 new apple and pear varieties entered. In 2023, the exhibition included displays and tastings of more than 120 varieties from around the country.

Kaminsky and photographer William Mullan documented the apples and pears in their *Pomological Series Volume 2 and 3*.

Pippin sells nursery stock (19 varieties) and scion wood (15 varieties of apples and one of pear) from trees he has found. His catalog is full of unusual names with descriptions of where the mother tree was found and its

characteristics. An increasing number from his collection are also available through other outlets like FEDCO trees. Uses for his apples include cider, fresh eating, long keeping, baking, wildlife, and more.

"All the varieties on my website are those I have discovered as wild seedlings," says Kaminsky. "My favorites are Old Fertile, Ed's Winter, and Nailbiter."

Ed's Winter was an exceptionally healthy tree discovered in a New Hampshire hayfield. It produces heavy crops of apples. The taste is "bittersharper" with strong notes of key lime and a nice tannic background." Kaminsky notes that the fruit is extremely pleasant to eat and stores for several months without refrigeration.

Old Fertile, found in a drainage ditch in Vermont, produces yellow, honey-sweet apples deemed suitable for cidemaking and long-keeping.

Nailbiter was found near a stand of white pine and aspen. Kaminsky describes the fruit as "firm bittersharper flesh." It's already winning awards as a cider apple.

Kaminsky describes wild seedlings as "real" apples. "The apples you find in a

grocery store are a disconnect from what real apples are," he says. "Anytime a tree grows from a seed and survives, it's doing something without any intervention by man."

He collects scion wood from seedling trees and grafts it to rootstock. While he grows some rootstock from seeds, a favorite is Budagovsky 118, an old rootstock. It's very disease tolerant, drought resistant, and brings grafts into production quicker than other rootstocks.

Once grafted with rootstock planted in air-pruning beds, intervention is limited. None of his trees are sprayed.

Sometimes being removed to an orchard setting produces an apple with different characteristics from the mother tree. Grafts of Old Fertile produce apples larger than the mother tree and higher in Brix values (sweetness).

Kaminsky prices his dormant and bare-root nursery stock at \$34 for Grade A stems. Scion wood is priced at \$5 to \$6 per stick or in bundles.

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Seedlings in air-pruning beds that promote strong root systems.

When you grow Corn Cob F1 yourself, you can expect an upright squash that's a unique sunshine yellow and heavily covered with large warts. "It's an excellent new warty pumpkin," says Hoffman.



Corn Cob Pumpkins Catching On Fast

Outstanding Seed Company, LLC, of Beaver Falls, Penn., has a new decorative pumpkin variety, the Corn Cob F1. It's a medium-producing pumpkin that matures over 95 days and averages 10 lbs. But what makes these pumpkins stand out is their unique

color and hard warts resembling individual corn kernels.

"The Corn Cob F1 Pumpkin is the progeny of two unique breeding lines," says Jamie Hoffman, founder, owner, and breeder at the seed company. "Each breeding line is the

culmination of an initial backcross project, then 10 years of pedigree selection to develop uniform breeding lines with desirable traits."

Outstanding Seed Company began in the late 1970s as Hoffman developed a passion for growing pumpkins. He earned a Bachelor of Science in horticulture from Pennsylvania State University and spent the next decade working for a large vegetable seed breeder.

Hoffman started his company soon after. It was incorporated in 2005 and moved to its current location in western Pennsylvania in 2019. Today, this family-owned and operated seed production company offers over 50 self-produced pumpkin varieties. It specializes in hybrids with high germination, strong plant vigor, fruit durability, disease resistance, high yield potential, and early maturity.

All Outstanding Seed Company pumpkin varieties are produced through controlled hand pollination. "This is accomplished by bagging male and female flower blossoms the day before they open, then re-bagging the female after pollen transfer to ensure purity that day, and lastly, removal of the bag the following day," Hoffman explains.

"Every summer, we make thousands of hand pollinations. All for the development of breeding lines and also hybrid test crosses. The goal is the development of unique jack-o-lantern, specialty, stacking, and mini pumpkin hybrids."

These careful breeding practices can result in some gems, such as Corn Cob F1. Says Hoffman, "This new variety requires the same cultivation practices as other pumpkins. The plants have a semi-bush habit and moderate resistance to powdery mildew. The rind is a hard shell, so the fruit has good potential to hold over time."

When you grow Corn Cob F1 yourself, you can expect an upright squash that is a unique sunshine yellow and heavily covered with large warts. "It's an excellent new warty pumpkin," says Hoffman. "Truly a one-of-a-kind hybrid."

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