

401 CounterCulture: A Smoker's Pipe

A smoker's glass pipe means the world to him. Ask a smoker — they'll tell you. It's a beloved vessel of mental sacrament and a cherished friend. When one day we stand too soon without a lap check, we both mourn the loss and eagerly await the replacement run to the smoke shop. Ah, the smoke shop, where your friendly neighborhood hippie and a counterculture version of an ancient trade brought both cannabis consumption and psychedelic art to amazing and breathtaking levels of possibility and imagination.

Today, social media is jammed with tens of thousands of modern American glass blowers producing some of the most intricate and beautiful art in the world in the form of glass pipes made for cannabis consumption. Piggy-backed onto the daily growing social acceptance of cannabis use in our country, glass has become an opportunity to cherish a creative purchase for both its beauty and functionality. What was very recently sneered at as paraphernalia — and whose possession can be dealt with harshly in some less enlightened areas of our great country — has blossomed into an ever-growing, mainstream-approved form of pop psychedelic art. The options are dazzling to say the least. From tiny one-hitters shaped as flaming eyeballs to giant complex dragons with a host of fangs and claws, all fully functional, we have certainly entered a golden age of consumption options for those keen to explore them.

For centuries, glassblowing remained a noble artistic endeavor, initially a staple of the elite and eventually graduating to the widespread uses we enjoy today. In the 1960s, something very special happened and glassblowers created simple smoking devices for gleeful smokers tired of joints. Glass is clean and enables cannabis taste enjoyment that is difficult to match in another form. The development of standardized joint sizes for water pipes was a breakthrough that gave us much of modern pop culture conception of the stoner: glass bong in hand and smile as wide as the sky.