

# GLASS NETWORK



JULI BOLAÑOS-DURMAN

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# FLAMEWORKING PAST AND PRESENT

BY ROWAN VAN DER HOLT

Recently gaining a new recognition in the contemporary glass art scene, lampworking is appreciated by artists and collectors alike for its expressive detail and skilful precision.

Commercially, it has been used in the production of scientific lab ware, and scientific glass blowers have been called upon to help conceptual artists create their vision.

Historically, a number of artistic lampworkers, such as Hungarian Istvan Andras Komáromy, started out making scientific apparatus, but his creative figurative work was so outstanding that he was invited to Britain as a celebrity glass artist. His creations were collected by Queen Mary, were given as a wedding gift to our current Queen, and were supplied through Harrods. In 1937 he married an English woman, but was widowed in 1950. With three small children to raise as a single parent, he had to curtail his creative aspirations for work that he knew would sell.

Lampworking glass in Britain has its roots dating back to the alchemists and early scientific exploration. In a Dublin 1740 newspaper article, the talents of a Mrs Johnson are described, who made 'human figures, birds, swords, ships, and other glass items.'<sup>1</sup>

In 1851 the catalogue at London's Great Exhibition gives an indication of the range of wares the Blaschkas brought to show the Victorians: 'BLASCHKA & SONS, Liebenau,

Bohemia – Manufacturers. Paste (jewellery), for artificial precious stones, beads, glass buttons, lustre pendants...'<sup>2</sup>

The Blaschkas have an on-going influence on contemporary glass artists. Currently Rachel Elliot has received an award of merit for her 'fused glass powder' submission: 'Fragile Entomology: Quiet' which is part of an exhibition called 'Lifeforms', inspired by Blaschka's flower debut at Pittsburgh glass centre.

Originally, following his father's jewellery and flameworking business in the Czech Republic, Leopold Blaschka went on, in the 1850s, to hone his skills as a goldsmith and explore his passion for natural history. This he did by making detailed studies of orchid specimens in glass. Leopold created the clear glass components, which were painted, glued and wired to create stunning visual objects.

A local aristocrat, Prince Camille de Rohan, heard of his work and commissioned him to create 100 glass models of his orchid collection. This attracted the interest of the Dresden Natural History Museum, which commissioned a series of marine invertebrates in glass.

Currently the Blaschka glass models are listed as one of the twenty-two important 'Treasures' in the Natural History Museum in London. They acquired 185 models between 1866–1889, which are held in the 'Treasure' Cadogan Gallery. With his son Rudolph, their work inspired Victorian

glass makers to spin glass ships and floral assemblies displayed under domes. The Blaschkas' body of work, artistically, creatively and technically, still amazes and inspires. Their creations of detailed botanical models of common and exotic plants from Europe and North America are on view at Corning Museum in the USA.

Contemporary lampworking in the UK owes its current influences to those across the 'big sea'. A number of British lampwork artists have trained in the USA, or have trained with visiting American lampworkers. The Americans have seen a huge development in the use of hand torching or flameworked glass within the creative sector over the last couple of decades. The ability to manipulate glass in the flame has evolved as the creative visions of artists have challenged the medium. This is due to the development of new glass formulations, a huge palette of colours, tools that make handling hot glass manageable, and torches that are specialised for the needs of the artist. Until recently, it has been difficult for British flamework artists to acquire these newer tools and glass materials domestically.

ROWAN VAN DER HOLT



◀ BIRD AND BEETLE ROWAN VAN DER HOLT

flameworked glass figures with a tapestry of colour, alchemy (the occasional found bird foot) and manages to add in the drama of the hot shop with her mythical sand-casts.

The differing skills held by technical and artistic flameworkers are now beginning to be exploited fully. Whether artists construct their artistic vision collaboratively using skilled technicians, or interact directly in the unique symbiotic relationship with the flame, one thing is certain – the magic of flameworking offers unlimited effects for glass work.

<sup>1</sup> Corning Museum Of Glass research article: <http://www.cmog.org/article/breaking-glass-ceiling-women-working-glass>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.cmog.org/article/blaschkas-glass-models-invertebrate-animals-1863-1890>

<sup>3</sup> Luke Jerram is speaking at the CGS CONFERENCE in October. See page 10

Rowan van der Holt started flameworking in 2004. She juggles torch time between a young family's needs and treks up the garden path to her studio. [www.rowanvanderholt.co.uk](http://www.rowanvanderholt.co.uk)

Personally I love the use of colour and very unscientifically dabble and layer the palate of coloured rods like a painter. I create my work with a love of the details; the fingers and toes on a figure, the folds on a petal as if caught in the wind. Flame working has allowed me to capture these details, but is also the alchemist within the artist that enjoys the energy and excitement of creating new forms from fire. The heat, the danger, but a Zen quiet as well.

This is evident in the ground-breaking performance art of Carrie Fertig. Her 'Torcher Chamber Arkestra' performed 'Torcher Tailor' at the 2012 International Festival of Glass in Stourbridge. Fertig and fellow flamework artists – Diana East, Zoe Garner, James Lethbridge, Sabine Little, Yi (Pearl) Peng, Ayako Tani and Sean Taylor – build a glass dress for a bride, all the while accompanied by music based on the sounds made by glass.

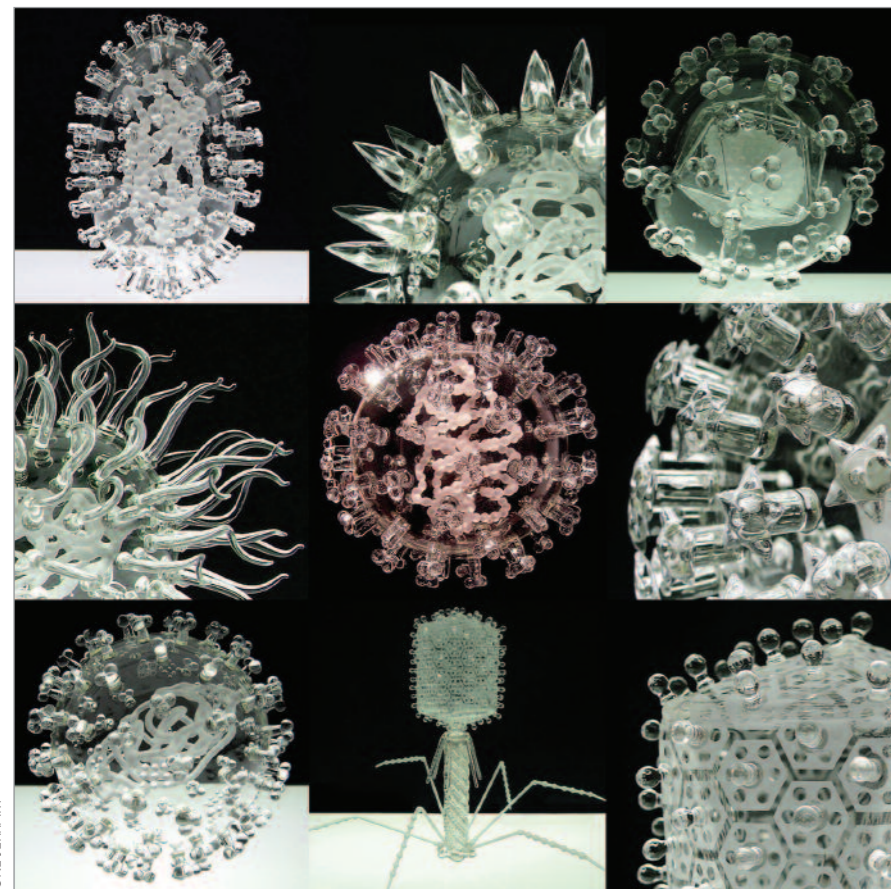
'Torcher Chamber Arkestra's' newest work, 'Flames and Frequencies', will be featured at the Craft Council's 'Real to Reel', a touring exhibition to be held at London's Design Festival. Carrie Fertig has also been very busy creating 'Homing' for Chichester Cathedral, an impressive pair of individually made feather dove wings that span the North Transept.

Other media-grabbing flameworked sculptures include the large studies of micro-organisms in clear scientific glass by Luke Jerram. Working with virologists from the University of Bristol, Jerram created bacterium and viral models which were made in glass by commercial/scientific glass blowers Kim George, Brian Jones and Norman Veitch. This work is in a number of collections and can be seen at the National Glass Centre until September 2013.

Also working with scientific glass and bridging artistic vision and design with function is James Lethbridge. His flameworked glass chandeliers are on my wish list!

Julie Anne Denton finds a way to combine her beautiful

▶ ARBORETUM CHANDELIER (SAMPLES) JAMES LETHBRIDGE



LUKE JERRAM

▲ GLASS MICROBIOLOGY SCULPTURES (COMPOSITE OF 9 IMAGES) LUKE JERRAM<sup>3</sup>

▲▲ COVER MIX & MATCH SERIES (GROUP) JULI BOLAÑOS-DURMAN, 2013



JAMES LETHBRIDGE

# COLDWORKING PART 1 PREPARATION

BY JACQUE PAVLOSKY

An elementary guide for coldworking small-scale cast glass with a minimum investment in machinery.

One can easily invest a fortune in coldworking machinery. Thankfully, there is a great deal that can be accomplished with a modest investment in a few small versatile machines and basic hand tools.

The range of techniques of coldworking is vast and can transform your work. Two useful books are *Coldworking Glass Without Machines* by Paul Tarlow, or Johnathon Schmuck's, *The Joy of Coldworking*, available through Warm Glass.

Firstly, save time and effort through proper preparation of the model and mould. Using the best materials can make an enormous difference to the quality of your cast and save you hours of coldworking. Goldstar Crystal cast in conjunction with ceramicast plaster is a very good mould mix. Green casting wax from Tiranti's gives crisp detail. The type of glass you use can have a significant effect on the quality of the cast. Harder glass types (without lead) tend to cast 'cleaner' and therefore require less coldworking to achieve a smooth surface, such as Bullseye glass, but will be more difficult to coldwork because of they are harder.

It is far easier to perfect a wax or clay model than it is to coldwork glass. For wax models white spirit is a good smoothing material and the Versatip heat tool by Dremel is useful in conjunction with metal tools for shaping.

Be sure your mould is clean and with no loose bits. Varnishing the interior of the mould (thinned with meths) provides a cleaner, more stable surface and improves the surface quality of the cast.

Hoover the kiln. Put glass into the mould in the kiln to avoid damage. Level the mould on the shelf with a spirit level to avoid lengthy flatbedding. Use spacers between flowerpot reservoirs and moulds to avoid problems. Leave glass for a day or two in the kiln after casting and before coldworking to avoid shocking the glass.

Removing the mould mix from the glass can be a challenge. Use a flat bladed screwdriver or an arrow shaped metal tool to gently pry the mould away from the cast a bit at a time. You can soak the mould off in a bucket of water and scrub with a washing up brush and a toothbrush. For stubborn areas try pressurised water sources such as dental waterpics or pressure washers. Soak glass in limescale removers such as Viakal or Cillit Bang grime and lime, which has the added benefit of giving a sheen to lead-based glass. Or scrub your glass with a toothbrush or a Scotchbrite pad and smoker's toothpaste.

An invaluable item to custom make for your sink is a slatted wooden shelf. This provides an area where you can work safely on your glass with water, as the wood will not damage the glass. The bracing slats underneath can be made to fit the inner dimensions of your sink, which serve to hold it in place.



▲▼ HAND TOOLS



Make wedges of wood and press them between the slats to anchor your glass while coldworking.

Connecting a 60cm or so length of hose pipe to your tap will allow you to rinse your glass without worry of knocking it against the metal tap.

With a piece of flexible armature wire you can rig up a drip feed support to slot the hosepipe into when coldworking.

Glass artist Jacque Pavlosky is the tutor of kiln-formed glass at Bucks New University. She welcomes glass artists to share her kiln-formed glass studio in Buckinghamshire. [www.jacquepavlosky.com](http://www.jacquepavlosky.com)

## EDITORIAL

As the CGS Glass Skills 2013 builds up to its conference crescendo in October, I'm led to thinking about the year so far. Two massively successful exhibitions – both in terms of footfall and sales – were staged in Cumbria and London. Numerous online gallery exhibitions – some with invited curators – and a wonderful series of shows and events featured in *An Unbroken Line*.

Here in the magazine, we've spotlighted casting, hot glass and now, in this issue, flameworking. Rowan van der Holt takes the main stage on page 2 with her exploration of flameworking past and present. There's an ingenious re-working of an egg-whisk for those of you who like to make your own tools. And, in a brand new column 'Inspired by ...', Anna Skibska tells us about her influences. Or lack of them!

Let's not forget *New Designers*. Once again CGS has organised a Glass Prize, and once again there is new student talent worthy of the prestigious award. We wish them all success.



PAULA FITZPATRICK

◀ MILLY FRANCES, EDITOR, GLASS NETWORK



CONTEMPORARY GLASS SOCIETY  
% BROADFIELD HOUSE GLASS MUSEUM  
COMPTON DRIVE, KINGSWINFORD  
WEST MIDLANDS DY6 9NS

tel 01379 741120

e-mail [admin@cgs.org.uk](mailto:admin@cgs.org.uk)

[www.cgs.org.uk](http://www.cgs.org.uk)

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Newsletter contact [editor@cgs.org.uk](mailto:editor@cgs.org.uk)  
Copy Editor **Jayne Booth**  
Design and typesetting **Roger Kohn**  
Website Co-ordinator **Nicola Schellander**  
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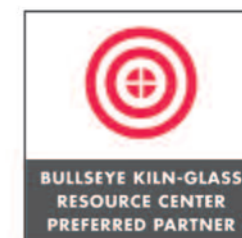


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# BACKDROP POWER TO THE PEOPLE

BY VICTORIA SCHOLES

Arts-wise, the UK is not a pretty sight at the moment. Opportunities are drying up, organisations are slimming down, and services and facilities that we used to enjoy are quietly disappearing. And it's not just because people aren't getting funding from the Arts Council, it's the knock-on effect of councils feeling the pinch, rents going up and belts being tightened in all sectors. Will the private sector ride in on a white horse wearing a shiny suit of armour? More likely to ride in on a flying pig.

I believe that the Arts will always survive, but there is no doubt that things will look different. Maybe the answer is less radical than we think.

'Membership is the future' – so said Susan Jones and Jo Wilson of *a-n*, The Artists' Information Company, the other day in the course of conversation, and something clicked into place. *a-n* is one of the UK's largest visual arts membership organisations, so they know a thing or two about this. We can't rely on the government and individual enterprise to save the Arts (not that we should take the pressure off, though!). If we want to create stable, sustainable futures, then collective funding around a shared interest will be key. And that is precisely what the

CGS does. Our membership enables us to deliver quality, consistency and excellence. We see this too in the growing success of crowdfunding in terms of one-off projects, although this is a bit more volatile. Membership organisations are crowdfunding projects grown up.

The CGS survived our loss of regular Arts Council funding last year because we have members. We are not out of the woods yet in terms of being self sufficient, but we can feel positive about the future because we have an underpinning of membership that enables us to offer something of great quality that will be here tomorrow. Only 200 more members and we are cooking on gas!

I had an e-mail from an artist who rather pointedly said the CGS fees were too much and she was going to pursue *free* (I imagined her typing that bit with special emphasis) options to promote her work. I don't think those free options will be around for very long. Which is why I think that what we do at CGS is an exemplary model for ongoing funding of the Arts. Membership is indeed the future.

Victoria Scholes is Chair of the CGS

# CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

BY HELGA WATKINS-BAKER

The Glass Hub is a new glass facility that offers short courses and masterclasses in hot and warm glass. Set in a beautiful riverside setting in Wiltshire, The Glass Hub has ambitions to become a national and international centre for glass education and creativity.

It is the brainchild of Helga Watkins-Baker and KT Yun, recently seen on Channel 4's *'Man Made Home'*, where they melted glass from sand in a field and proceeded to make a window for Kevin McCloud's shed! With many glass factories, colleges and studios closing, KT and Helga are more determined than ever that they should keep these fantastic processes alive – and people's enthusiasm for the material is what inspires them and fuels their own passion.

Alongside an on-going programme of courses in core techniques, they invite visiting artists to come and share their specialist glass expertise. The Glass Hub has recently hosted masterclasses with high profile glass artists such as Fiaz Elson, Max Jacquard and Scott Benefield.

Helga and KT have many years of teaching practice as well as a mass of experience and glass knowledge. Both were part of the original team that established the Liquid Glass Centre, one of the first independent glass schools to offer short courses in hot and warm glass all the year round. They went on to pursue their own interests for a few years, Helga writing her book *Kiln Forming Glass*, and KT developing her own range of portable furnaces, the *Minimelt*, which has revolutionised access to hot glass facilities for individual/small-scale operations.

Recently they decided to return to teaching, and inviting inspirational glass artists to share their passion became a key aim. 'I have always believed that glass is one of the most exciting and stimulating mediums to work with,' says KT, 'and we want to communicate the excitement of this amazing material to both new and developing artists.' They aim to bring leading glass artists to come and share their expertise, communicating their passion for making and extensive experience to new generations of glass artists. Helga says, 'Since we first started teaching many years ago, we have seen an explosion in the range of courses and information available to those interested in glass making... we want to now open up the possibilities of learning to include a focus on the contemporary skills of UK and international glass artists, so that we can all share our knowledge and passion for the material.'

The Glass Hub offers unique facilities, encompassing all types of hot, warm and cold glass making. Techniques currently on offer include glass blowing, kiln casting, fusing and slumping, sculpture, jewellery, glass printing and lampworking. Highlights coming up include masterclasses with Angela Jarman and Louis Thompson.

Information on all The Glass Hub's courses can be found at [www.theglasshub.co.uk](http://www.theglasshub.co.uk) or tel 01225 768888



▲ *STRANGE BREW II & III* LOUIS THOMPSON  
▼ *OCULUS* ANGELA JARMAN



ALAN TABOR

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▼ **SET 1** (MIX &  
MATCH SERIES)  
JULI BOLAÑOS-  
DURMAN, 2013



▲ **FULL GLASS SET** ERIN BARR

► **MARTINI GLASS** BY ERIN BARR



## PORTFOLIOS

### CGS NEW DESIGNERS GLASS AWARD 2013

For the fourth year running the CGS has sponsored the New Designers Associate Glass Prize for the most promising graduates at the annual London show. Winner Juli Bolaños-Durman and Runner up Laura Anne Reed, both from Edinburgh, will benefit from a prize package worth over £2,000.

Five commendations were made: to Olga Redondo (Glyndwr), Paul Baxter and Joanna Lloyd (Farnham), Elliot Walker (Wolverhampton) and Swansea School of Glass for their overall stand.

New this year is a prize for commitment to skill, won by Erin Barr from Sunderland. Sponsored by Simon Moore, Erin receives £250 in cash and four priceless one-to-one masterclasses in Simon's London workshop.

This year the prize will be especially significant as it forms part of the CGS's Glass Skills 2013 – a year of exhibitions, events and workshops that explore the fusion of art and technique.

Congratulations to all, and thanks to organiser and judge Karen Murphy, and judges Simon Moore, Katharine Coleman, Amanda Simmons and Peter Layton.

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and Simon Moore [www.simonmoore.uk.com](http://www.simonmoore.uk.com)  
Oh, and Alan J. Poole for his gift of books!

#### WINNER JULI BOLAÑOS-DURMAN

The primary theme within my creative process is the exploration of preciousness and play within the studio practice. Preciousness is not only the value or quality of the materials themselves, but more so what they *represent*. I find myself choosing and treasuring things that have a story and a link that represent emotional connections. Therefore, it is essential for the creative process to give the artwork the same significance, disregarding where it came from or how it was constructed. I want to create raw pieces that are put together intuitively through *play*, by exploring the different materials and inviting the viewer to become part of the journey.

The objective of this series is to communicate how the whole process is led by a 'reflective practice' of think and act, and links this practice directly to intuitive art: 'In this sense it is improvisational and relies on feeling, response and adjustment' (*Schön, 1983, pp. 780*). By analysing the process and by understanding the situation, as practitioners, the research is fundamental for the development of the concept and this is how the (Mix & Match) Series of twenty-five non-functional / sculptural vessels came to life.

#### SKILLS PRIZE ERIN BARR

I find myself preoccupied by skill and experimentation in glass. Working with hot glass, I try to redefine the context and inspiration so that my art work can speak for itself. My work expresses my own individual creativity, innovation and evolution unified by material and process understanding.

These pieces show a combination of traditional British glass blowing skill and contemporary technology. In this work I explore and express my own fascination with blown glass by experimenting with new processes. The process I practise aims to free blown glass from its original confines and preconceptions and give it a contemporary context. Through my experimentation with the water jet and, in particular, the printing and application process of decals, the surface of the glass proffers a new story.

The scenarios created in these stories make a visual map, aiming to share and chart personal journeys with the viewer.

<http://glassartist.wix.com/erinibarrglass>

#### RUNNER UP LAURA REED

INFECTIOUS CRUELTY SERIES

This series is an exploration of the cruelty of process. It explores those traditional ideals associated with studio glass making. My pieces are drained of colour, pulled, stretched and distressed.

Coming from a traditional studio background, I have deliberately broken my own rules and challenged my chain of thought. Confronting what is considered to be bad practice for a glass blower.

Creating symmetrical forms then distorting them by adding organic mounds of molten glass. Deliberately using colour in an infectious way to create bruising and discoloured patches. With blobmorphic, curved, living forms, the pieces are a juxtaposition struggling between cruelty and seduction.

#### COMMENDED JOANNA LLOYD, ELIOT WALKER, OLGA REDONDO, PAUL BAXTER



▲ **SHELTERED BY COLOUR** OLGA REDONDO

▼ **SEEP** FROM THE INFECTIOUS CRUELTY SERIES, LAURA REED



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ELIOT WALKER



▲ **SET OF CRACKED TUMBLERS AND CARAFE** PAUL BAXTER

## NEWS

### ROLL UP! ROLL UP!

No, not a smoking ad, but a plea for you all to join us at the **CGS CONFERENCE** on October 12 and 13. *Glass skills: exploring the fusion of art and technique* is being held at the newly refurbished National Glass Centre (NGC) and is packed with fascinating artists and glass specialists. I mean, *really* packed. You wouldn't know such fun could be had in a weekend. Download your booking forms from: [www.cgs.org.uk](http://www.cgs.org.uk)

### CGS RAFFLE

Did you know that you don't have to be at the CGS Conference to win one of the five amazing prizes? So when your ticket is pulled out of the hat, we guarantee to get the Colin Reid/Amanda Simmons/David Reekie/Peter Layton/Gillies Jones original masterpiece to you. There's another raffle book in this issue. Buy all the tickets yourself to maximise your chances of success. If you need more tickets, let Pam know on [admin@cgs.org](mailto:admin@cgs.org)

### GLASS GAMES BATON

Bruce Marks's Glass Games Baton has been accepted by Broadfield House for their collection. The CGS commissioned the work for last year's Olympic-themed glass celebrations.

### CGS AGM

I'm not going to pretend that our AGM is one of the Conference highlights, but it is your society, and your

▼ **CONVERSATION PIECE** SYLVIE VANDENHOUCKE, FEATURED IN THE CURRENT CGS ONLINE EXHIBITION SOFTLY, SOFTLY PART 2



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thoughts and votes are important to our continuing development. Come along and air your views at the NGC, at 4pm on Saturday 12 October 2013.

### CGS GLASS SKILLS 2013

*An Unbroken Line*, a year of exhibitions celebrating glass makers' skills is continuing apace. Still to come include *Constructions*, new work by Jeffrey Sarmiento at the NGC, *Contemporary Cast Glass* at London Glassblowing, and *Glasshaus V111* at Parndon Mill, Essex.

### CGS ONLINE GALLERY

Curated by Angela Jarman, the latest small, but perfectly formed online exhibition is a perfect gem. Click through from [www.cgs.org.uk](http://www.cgs.org.uk)

### SAVE YOUR FEES

Do you want us to spend your CGS membership fee wisely on furthering the cause of contemporary glass? Simple. All you have to do is read CGS eBulletins. To avoid postal costs of £360 for *each* letter mail-out, we are increasingly relying on eBulletins for sharing CGS announcements. But we have to be sure that you're receiving and reading them. To that end, we are putting PLEASE READ on those eBulletins that contain vital CGS announcements. Miss them at your peril!

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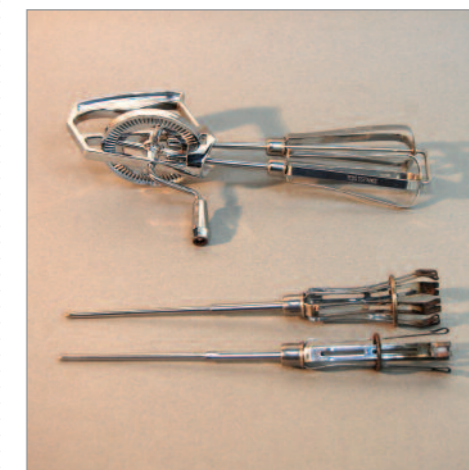
## TOOLED UP

BY AYAKO TANI

My lampworking teacher in Japan, Kiyoshi Matsumura, was very passionate about making his own tools, and he taught me tool making alongside glass blowing in his workshops. As he said, self-produced tools can satisfy a specific need, they are cheap, and above all, making them is fun. As an artist who loves making things by hand, I can empathise with the joy of making not only glass, but anything, including hand tools. I often find that I would have to import tools from the United States if I didn't make them myself. I prefer not to buy tools from that far away, avoiding customs and returns hassle. Instead of spending a long time waiting for my order to arrive, I would prefer making my own tools both for function and fun.

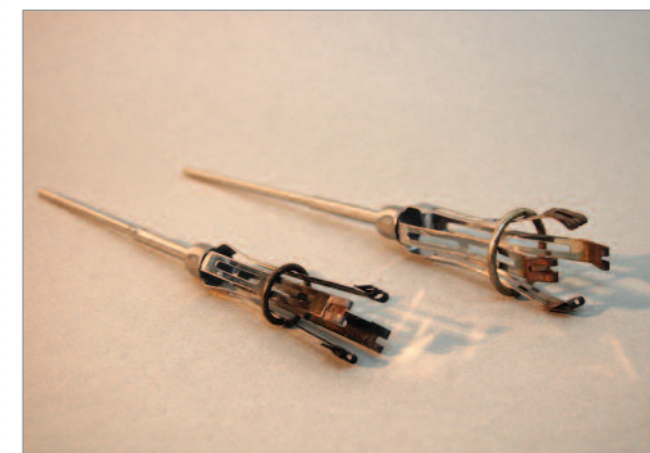
On this occasion, I would like to introduce holders, which I made with Matsumura's instruction. These 'claw' holders are used to support a hot piece of work in a flame. By sliding the ring, the claws open or close and grab the piece of work. They were transformed from a rotary egg whisk, which was made of stainless steel and has a strong stable axis. Regarding cost, the egg whisk holder can be made at less than half of the price of similar claw holders.

More of Matsumura's handmade tools can be found in his book *Flameworking With Borosilicate Glass* (2007, *Hot Shuppan*).



AYAKO TANI

ADAPTED WHISK



AYAKO TANI

# INSPIRED BY...

BY ANNA SKIBSKA

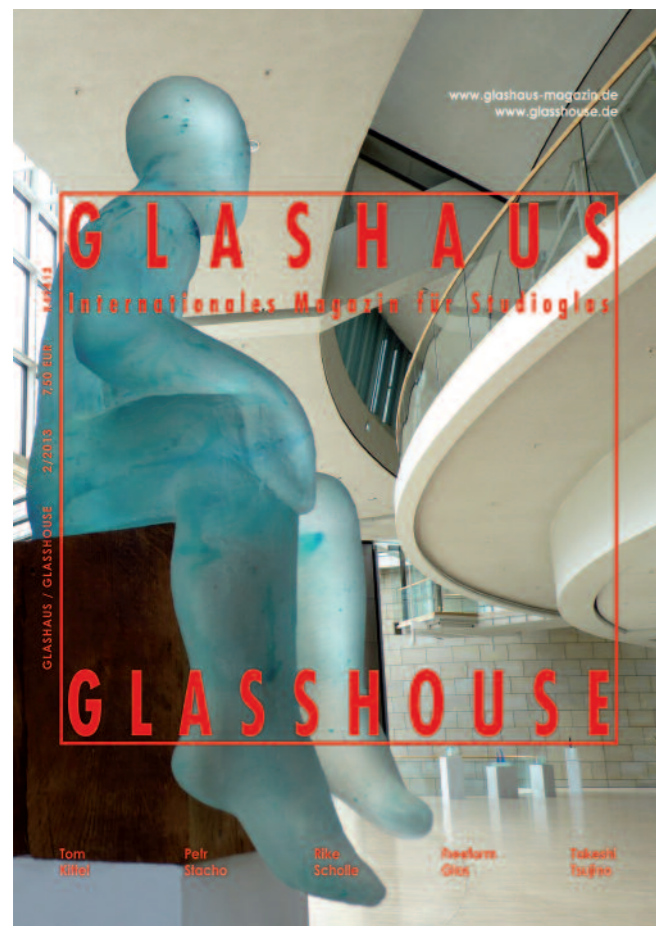
## NO HERO

A professor of graphics at the Academy helped me to descend from the pedestal of the fully, foolishly 'accomplished artist' and directed me on the path of the eternal student and seeker. Consequently, it was easy to develop the Anna Skibska Technique because I had a wealth of nothingness. I had to build myself from nothing but ideas at several stages of my life, and so I was obliged to acknowledge the quantity and quality of nothingness in my work. Also, I have developed the Anna Skibska Technique because I was too lazy to even look at any obscure and ancient techniques. I was bored beyond imagination, often by my teachers, who quite frequently knew less than I. Thus the Anna Skibska Technique was invented – through nothingness, impatience and laziness.

I developed the Technique as my own vocabulary because I had something to say but no extant artistic idioms could convey my thoughts. Broken glass had inherent symbolic value and was broadly available, which was also quite important for a person with modest financial means.

## MY WORLD – INSTEAD OF THE ENIGMATIC ENTITY – A GLASS WORLD

I know that I must go to my studio every day, to observe, register, establish and control myself, repeating the same



▲ **GOLDEN ALCHEMY** ANNA SKIBSKA, 96 ORBS INSTALLED, EACH MEASURING 30cm DIAMETER

▼ **A.S. ALCHEMIST** ANNA SKIBSKA



'performance' at my studio every day for years, becoming more fluent over time. No performance is identical; therefore, no day is pointless. To maintain the sparkle of soul that prevents one's work from becoming deadly routine or insufferable stubbornness, reinvention is necessary. For that matter, the whole world must be approached with personal humility and reverence for its possibilities, or else the same deadly routine creeps into all things.

## ART, TECHNIQUE, MATERIAL

I have always been interested in art. Neither technique nor materials offer enough appeal to devote my work (my life, I mean) to them.

## QUESTION AND ALCHEMY

A frequent request: Tell me about 'your glass'.

My answer: The glass that I use isn't mine. It was made by so-and-so. But the sculpture is mine.

Yes. My large-scale sculptures are frequently and erroneously placed in a 'genre' known as glass art. Have you ever heard of linden or oaken wood art? (Many great sculptures were made of that kind of wood.) The material seems to overwhelm so many people that they can see nothing but the material. My desire is to encompass space, trap light, cast shadows all plunged in time. I devote little time to discussing the material or the chemistry of it. I prefer the alchemy of it.

# REVIEW

THREE SOLO SHOWS – RICHARD MEITNER  
31 MARCH – 15 SEPTEMBER 2013, GLAZENHUIS, LOMMEL, BELGIUM

BY MICHAEL ROGERS

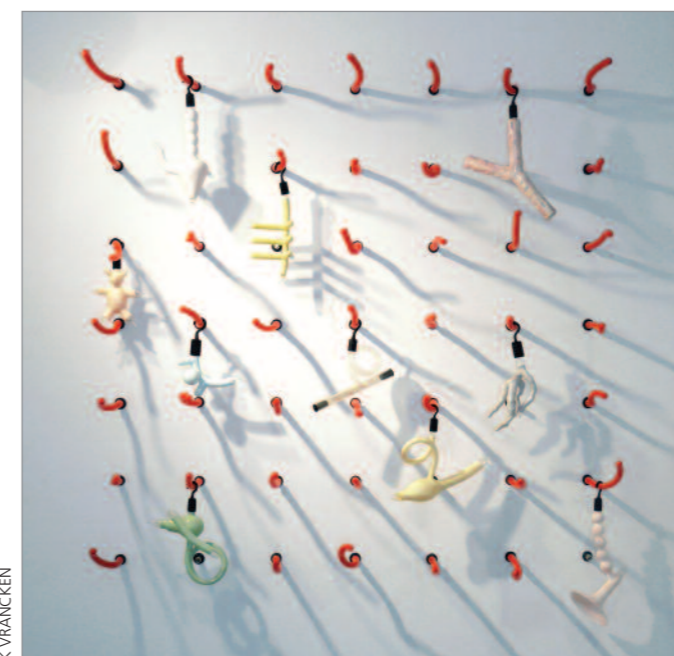
When viewing the work in Richard Meitner's latest exhibition subtitled 'Once Upon A Time', I immediately think of language, its potential and its limitations. The exhibition title suggests a story but what story is being told? In this case there is not one answer to that question. Art, after all, is a language unto itself. It picks up where other languages leave off. In this context Richard is a masterful visual poet. Poets refer to the space between the words, words arranged in unlikely pairings or combinations so as to become new inventions and associative triggering machines. In this way, what Richard creates appears to be objects to 'think' with. These works speak indirectly to the limitations of spoken or written language as we know it as Richard's art seems to 'speak' to aspects of experience, or interpretations of experience that are failed by words. Where words fail us appears to be his playground. Richard has chosen art as his language perhaps because of its greater latitude as a communicative tool, its lack of a dictionary, and strict rules imposed by others. In this way he addresses something universal and yet singular, something we all share but not in the same way, our uniqueness. Moreover, I think of his uniqueness, as should we all.

Richard's unusual works appear formed yet still are forming. By this I mean that they appear still life in transformation, arrested yet in the process of becoming, as if an apparition of a process more than an object. The multiple associations triggered tend to morph as well. This all appears very serious fun, there is something fleeting and whimsical about this work and ultimately something profound. I'm sorry I cannot provide the exact key to fully understanding

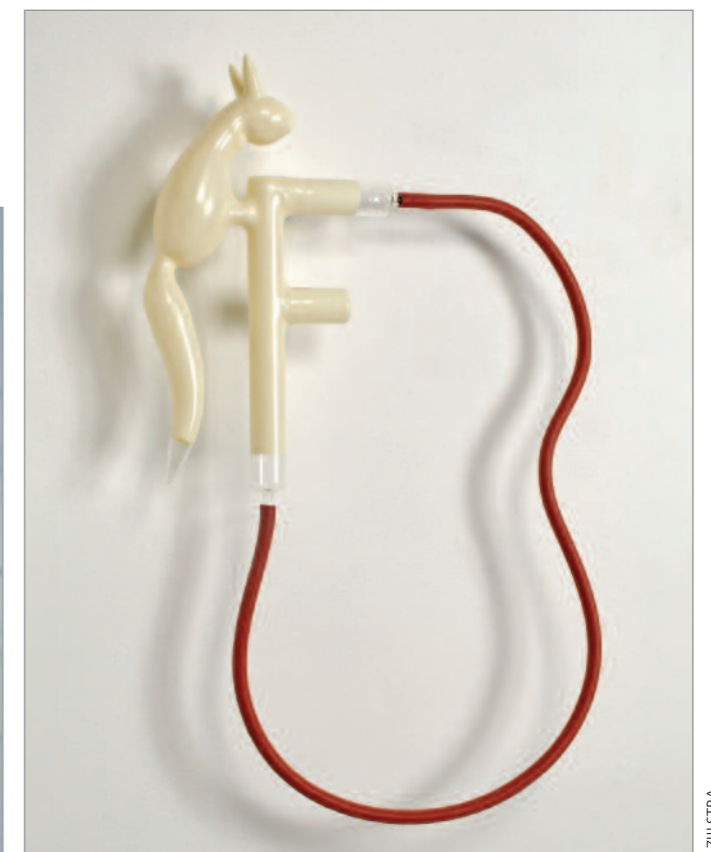
this work. That key is in the eyes of the beholder. Or it should be. The work is right out there, Richard has done his part, and the rest is up to the viewer.

I can, however, finish with the apt words of the artist himself: 'It is certainly true that a central aspect of almost all the work I make is the wish to maintain a pretty high degree of ambiguity in it. That is, there very definitely for me, is never any one central meaning or point the work tries to make. My interest is associative, I like trying to find and create useful, hopefully "beautiful resonances" in my work. Those are what interest me in life, those moments when one penetrating experience we have vividly conjures up other ones that seem very closely related, even though we normally think of them as very far distant. For me, that's what understanding really consists of. Quite some time ago, I decided that it wasn't individual things or categories that interest me at all, it's what can happen, does happen in what we imagine are "the empty spaces" BETWEEN those things and categories. For me, those spaces are FAR from empty. That's my "playpen"!'

Michael Rogers is a professor in the Glass Program at The Rochester Institute of Technology and a practising artist. See his work at [www.codexapparition.com](http://www.codexapparition.com)



▲ **ONCE UPON A TIME** RICHARD MEITNER, 2013, 170 x 170 x 31cm, BLOWN GLASS, EPOXY, GLASS LACQUER



▲ **NUTS** RICHARD MEITNER, 2013, 82 x 52 x 17cm, BLOWN GLASS, RUBBER, ALUMINUM, GLASS LACQUER

▲ **EMOTIONAL LEAK** JEFFREY SARMIENTO AND ERIN DICKSON▲ **ARCHIVE OF DNA MARKERS** LOUIS THOMPSON

## REVIEW

### COLLECT 2013

10-13 MAY 2013

#### SAATCHI GALLERY, LONDON

BY JUSTIN MOODIE

This year marked COLLECT's tenth anniversary and, when asked to write a review of the show, I thought it would be interesting to talk with makers, collectors and admirers about what they saw, liked and loved.

As a reminder, COLLECT is an international art fair for contemporary objects, organised by the Crafts Council and held annually. Founded in 2003 it was originally housed at the V&A but the show has recently moved to the Saatchi Gallery on the King's Road. This year the fair featured thirty-two galleries from ten countries with almost half representing a glass artist. Some, like the Plateaux Gallery, showed glass exclusively. In addition there were eleven project spaces featuring work from specific artists covering the range of media at the show including glass.

Universal opinion was that the Saatchi Gallery is a wonderful venue for the show in general and on the tenth anniversary in particular. While there was an undeniable charm at the V&A, the new space offers a substantial improvement in most respects. Heike Brachlow comments, 'I think the Saatchi Gallery is a great venue, lovely setting with plenty of space and high ceilings.' And this improvement has been noticed, with eight new galleries appearing this year.

When asked about their favourite piece at the show, everyone was quick to offer praise for the quality, thought and originality of all the pieces on show. Particular praise was reserved for a few works though.

Alan J. Poole was taken with Louis Thompson's *Archive of DNA Markers*, represented by The Gallery at London Glassblowing, describing it as 'stunning'. Louis is a British

maker with over twenty years of experience and a Jerwood Prize to his name. His work focuses on repetition, sequence and multiples, as can be seen in *Archive*. The work is eighteen pieces of hot-sculpted glass housed in a wooden case with specific lighting.

Steffen Dam's intricate and detailed work, shown at Joanna Bird, caught Bruno Romanelli's eye, 'His work is all about detail, infinite worlds inside finite spaces... They vibrate with life, even though they are "still", a wonderful paradox.' Steffen, from Denmark, has been working in glass for twenty-five years and tries to, as he puts it, 'describe what's not tangible and understandable with our everyday senses.' His traditional technique is blowing glass but other forms, like casting, are also present.

The surprise of the show seems to be Jeffrey Sarmiento and Erin Dickson's massive floor-to-ceiling installation, *Emotional Leak*. Made at, and represented by, the National Glass Centre at Sunderland. The work is dozens of layers of waterjet cut float glass on a steel and rubber base. The piece flows and swirls and pours from the ceiling as though a spigot were turned on. A special version of the piece was prepared to accommodate the 4m ceilings of the Saatchi Gallery.

My thanks to Alan J. Poole, Bruno Romanelli, Heike Bracklow, Louis Thompson, Jeffrey Sarmiento, Erin Dickson and Stephen Prendergast for their time, thoughts and comments.

Justin is a committee member of the CGS and long-time collector and follower of British glass.

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## LISTINGS

### CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

#### CGS CONFERENCE

Explore the fusion of art and technique along with Luke Jerram, Kéké Cribbs, Wendy Fairclough, Geoff Mann and others.

12-13 October

National Glass Centre, Sunderland

To book go to [www.cgs.org.uk](http://www.cgs.org.uk)

#### SYMPOSIUM: CASTING BRILLIANCE

Looking at contemporary artists' practice. Speakers include Colin Reid, Felicity Aylieff, Annie Cattrell and Andrew Lacey. 9 November 2013. Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum.

Full details available at

[www.cheltenham.artgallery.museum](http://www.cheltenham.artgallery.museum)

#### EXHIBITION

Dan Klein and Alan J. Poole Private Collection – Selection From The Glass Collection

29 June 2013 – June 2014

National Glass Centre, Sunderland.

tel 0191 515 5544.

website [www.nationalglasscentre.com](http://www.nationalglasscentre.com)

#### CASTING BRILLIANCE: GLASS BY COLIN REID

Cheltenham Museum and Art Gallery

5 October 2013 – 5 January 2014

Exhibition celebrating the thirty year career of Colin Reid. Includes new work, a commissioned film and process artefacts.

For more details, visit [www.cheltenhammuseum.org.uk](http://www.cheltenhammuseum.org.uk)

#### GREAT NORTHERN CONTEMPORARY CRAFT FAIR

10-13 October 2013

The sixth annual mixed media fair with 150 designer-makers, including Rachel Elliot and Janine Partington.

Spinningfields, City Centre, Manchester M3 3AQ.

e-mail [enquiries@greatnorthernevents.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@greatnorthernevents.co.uk)

website [www.greatnorthernevents.co.uk](http://www.greatnorthernevents.co.uk)

### CALLS TO ENTRY

#### NEW GLASS REVIEW 35

Corning Museum of Glass (CMOG) is looking for work created from 1 October 2012 – 1 October 2013 for its annual survey of glass in contemporary art, architecture, craft and design. Deadline 1 October 2013.

CMOG encourages online applications at:

[www.cmog.org/research/publications/new-glass-review](http://www.cmog.org/research/publications/new-glass-review)

Artist: Micheal Behrens



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