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National College Of Art And Design
Craft Design/ Glass

Textured and non- reflective
contemporary glass: a discussion.

By
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Submitted to the Faculty of History of Art and Design
and Complementary Studies in candidacy for the degree
of Bachelor of Design 1999.

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Introduction.

Glass is known as an essentially western craft with the exception of the work of the near eastern glass makers of the early and Medieval period. The first records of surviving glass came from Mesopotamia in the 17th century BC, but Egyptians had been using vitreous glazes for coating stone beads before the year 3000 BC.(Klein, Lloyd, 'The History Of Glass' Orbis publishing, London, 1992) Vast commercial manufacture of glass had been established in Sidon by the turn of the first century BC. It was here in Sidon that glass blowing was invented to perfection. It was not possible to experiment with all the properties of glass until blowing was invented. It was glass's plastic qualities that inspired its employment in imitation of semi precious stones. Glass is fragile and elegant, so rocklike that only unique tools can penetrate its surface. Opaque, impulsive, spontaneous, and personal, of all the vast array of materials which surround us in everyday life glass is surely the

most oracular. Transparent, translucent, smooth, tactile, black as coal and every colour between, glass is strong enough to support huge structures, yet flawless enough to allow us to see through it. It can be smooth as silk or sharp as a blade. Lead glass, also known as flint glass to which lead was added, was first discovered in Roman times but for all practical proposes it is said to have been invented by George Ravenscroft in England during the 16th century. Who can compare the gliding earthiness of sand with the beauty of transparent crystal. The general quality of glass being transparent is certainly true. It is, after all, the only material that lets light pass through it. The Romans saw carving and engraving as the most important aspect of glass and the development of glass throughout the centuries has never broken away from function and utilitarianism. Bowls, tumblers, lusters, paperweights, decanters are still being produced even if aesthetics and design may have altered more than function. One of the greatest achievements in glass has been the ability of 20th century contemporary studio

artists, such as Dale Chihuly, to illustrate the continuing schizophrenic character of the material. The artists I will discuss now recognize and take advantage of the fact that glass does not have to be clear, useful or traditional. It can in fact, imitate clay, stone, slate, flesh, shell etc. Formed by the fusion of silica and an alkali which is either soda or potash, and lime or lead oxide, glass provides numerous possibilities for artistic interpretation, without considering function to be necessary. Modern technology such as sophisticated tools and equipment, combined with private spacious studios, has enabled the artist to concentrate on meaning, and content in their work and the concepts behind their pieces.

CHAPTER 1.

This is a brief description of the glass techniques used by the five contemporary artists I have chosen to discuss the non-reflective qualities of glass. Discovered around the 8th century BC, casting is a term used for firing glass within the confines of a mould. Glass casting evolved from adapting metal casting techniques. In order to make a glass cast, a positive of the desired shape is made from another material such as wax Styrofoam or clay. This form is cast in a plaster mould. By removing the positive, a cavity remains which then can be filled with chunks of glass. This glass is fired to a high temperature until the glass becomes molten and this then takes the form of the cavity. When the glass has cooled the plaster is removed, revealing a solid glass form. Glass inclusions can be added and many surface textures can be introduced. The quality of glass can be changed by varying the size of the chunks of glass used.

Frit is tiny particles of glass, which have been made by gathering a gob of glass and dropping it into a container of cold water. The glass shatters into hundreds of minute pieces due to the thermal shock. Frit is used to make *Pâte-de-verre*. *Pâte-de-verre* literally means paste of glass. This is a method whereby the frit is mixed with a binder such as a fluxing medium (wallpaper paste), a colouring agent (kugler colours) or a metallic oxide. Once mixed, it is layered finely inside a mould. This is repeated until the desired thickness is achieved. The mould is then fired until all the pieces fuse together, leaving a solid form. *Pâte-de-verre* is an ancient method which was revived in France in the later part of the 19th century. The Daum Brothers were by far the most successful European Art Nouveau glass artists. The Daum Company was set up in 1870 and the first Daum *Pâte-de-verre* sculptures date from 1906 when Almeric Walter joined the firm after studying at l'Ecole de Sevres. Daum produced *Pâte-de-verre* pieces continuously since 1906, adopting their designs according to the changing

fashions. Daum evolved the technique and influenced many 20th century contemporary makers, not least Diana Hobson (FIG.2). There is an argument in the contemporary glass movement as to what constitutes *Pâte-de-verre*. In Britain and Ireland it is associated with sugar like crystals where as in the Daum Factory the effect is quite different. The reason for this is because of the different grades of frit used and the different temperatures the pieces are fired to. The higher the temperature, the more fused the piece will be e.g. in 'Dish with lizard posed ready to spring' (FIG.1.) executed by Almeric Walker in 1912 for the Daum Factory. It is clear to see that this piece has lost the fragility associated with contemporary English *Pâte-de-verre* such as in Diana Hobson's 'New Textured Series no.5'. Fusing rods or threads of glass is a technique which is called *Filet-de-verre*. Coloured rods or canes can simply be made by joining two gobs of glass until they fuse, then stretching the glass until a rod forms between the two irons. Many contemporary artists such as Klaus Moje (FIG.3.) work in this medium. Moje cuts up

coloured canes and fuses them together in a mould, which is, in fact, an alteration of an ancient Roman technique of mosaic glass “ He has taken an ancient Alexandrian or Roman luxury glass concept and updated it both in form and technique. Moje cuts his coloured rods into ribbons or strips with a diamond saw, arranges their design as a flat sheet and fuses them together in a kiln at a precisely controlled temperature”. (Paul Hollister, ‘Klaus Moje’, American Craft, Dec/Jan 1985)

Once fused, a *Filet-de-verre* panel can be laid out flat over a different mould. This sheet can be bent or formed in a subsequent firing to produce a three dimensional form. Blowing was first developed somewhere in the Syro-Palestinian region in the later part of the 1st century BC. A blowpipe is a hollow tube about 5ft long and $\frac{3}{4}$ inches in diameter, with a mouthpiece at one end. Air is blown through the mouthpiece to inflate the molten gather at the opposite end. Blowing is simply a technique of shaping a gob of glass either freehand or by using a mould. Once shaped, colour can be added and further gathers can alter the size or shape (FIG.4).

The remains of small blown bottles (40BC) have been discovered in the Jewish Quarter of the old city of Jerusalem. These bottles were not made using a metal blowpipe, but a hollow tube of glass. Obviously the invention of the blowpipe was close at hand. Various techniques can be employed to decorated the surface of blown vessels. Enameling is a decorative technique where powdered glass is mixed with an oily medium and layered or painted onto the surface of another glass piece. Once decoration is completed, this is then reheated in a furnace or kiln to fuse the pattern to the blown object. Sandcasting is a method by which a sand mould is constructed and left to set. Colour and texture are added to the mould to give the desired effect. Molten glass is then ladled into the sand and left to cool. Once created the glass is removed from the sand and placed in the annealer to cool gradually and to avoid cracks. The 1960s brought about quite a bit of experimentation with the above techniques.

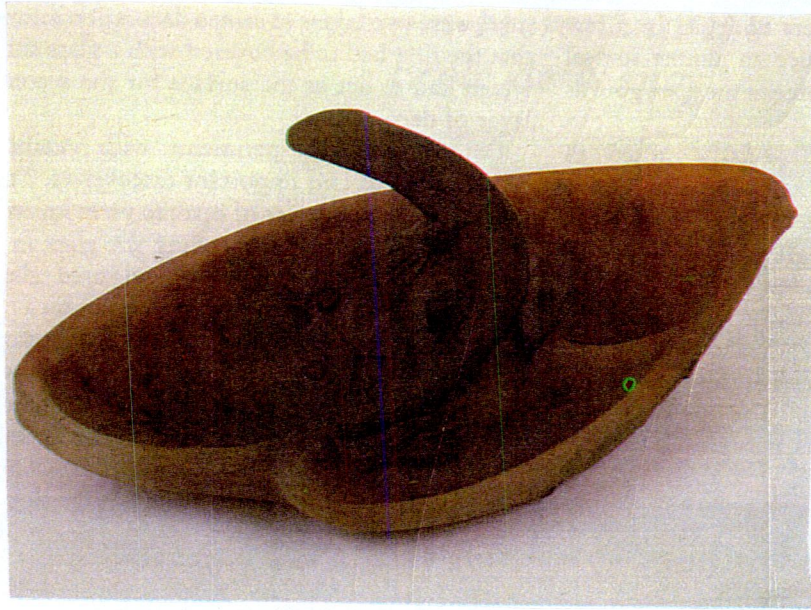


Fig. 1 'Dish with lizard posed ready to spring' (25cm D.) 1912. Pâte-de-verre. The Daum Factory

Fig. 1. Dash with liquid posed ready to spring (25mm G) 1912. Pale-de-ventre. The
Kaim Factory



Fig. 2 : 'New Texture Series No. 5' (20cm H). 1988. Pâte-de-verre and pebbles. Diana Hobson



Fig. 2. New Textile Series No. 2 (20cm H). 1988. Pâte de verre and pebbles. Diana Hobson



Fig.3 Untitled piece'(45 x45cm). 1987. Filet-de-verre. Klaus Moje.



Fig. 4 : Mould blown cup (3in H) 25AD. Rome.

Fig. 4. Mould-blown cup (3in H) 25AD Rome

CHAPTER 2.

The Rise of the studio Movement and Pilchuck

In 1962 at two workshops in Toledo, Ohio, Harvey K. Littleton an associate professor of ceramics at the University of Wisconsin, and Demark Albino, an inventor and glass chemist, designed and built a small furnace that would allow artists to blow glass in their studios. One of Littleton's first students in studio glass was Dale Chihuly, a native of Tacoma, Washington State. Chihuly was working as a glass tutor at the Rhode Island School of Design. R.I.S.D. was seen as a dynamic art school despite the fact that the school's glass department was still in its infancy. Chihuly was beginning to envision the perfect art school for glass. Incorporating the best attributes of R.I.S.D. and Haystack Glass School, Maine, three years later, he founded Pilchuck in Seattle in 1971, with a two thousand-dollar grant(FIG.5.). Pilchuck became a reality when Chihuly and a

crew of friends and students set up the school on a tree farm in north Seattle.

“Dale absolutely cannot be given enough credit for what he did on this-not just Pilchuck, but his momentum and drive have quite literally built the glass movement. He in fact, more than anyone has created the market for selling glass. He, more than anyone else, has validated crossing the boundaries between art and craft and he, of course, must be given more credit for seeing this potential and almost being a one man magnet-orchestrator of all these events”.

(James Carpenter, ‘Clearly Art’, Whatcom Museum of History and Art, Seattle 1992, page 41).

Chihuly and the influence of Pilchuck has brought the medium of glass to a growing new audience. He has brought glass out of the crafts department and into the realm of sculpture. Chihuly’s work can be appreciated as a sculpture made from glass (FIG.6).

There are a number of glass artists who make use of the textures and non-reflective characteristics of glass. I will discuss how they overcame the stereotypical outlook on glass and proved that transparency and utility in glass are not necessary for it to be considered beautiful. Like Chihuly, Toots Zynsky, Mieke Groot, Daniel Clayman, Hank

Murta Adams and Howard Ben Tre have all worked in this way. They do not associate their medium with function or the reflective qualities of glass. These glassmakers began to see new possibilities. The surprise element in their work has had a lot to do with the success of these chosen artists. I see this as the 'awe' factor. Their choices of materials, processes and representations reinforce their concepts and personal philosophies. This illustrates what appeals to me about the textured elements and intrigue of non-reflective glass. This tightly-knit world of glass artists is often regarded as the Studio glass movement. Not quite three decades in progress, this experimental movement seems set to continue and experience substantial changes. A popular view of 20th century glass may suggest bowls, tumblers, paperweights and chandeliers. This narrow range of opinion still exists today but slowly but surely the stigmas of many centuries of functional, cultural and traditional preconceptions are crumbling. For a long time, it was thought that glass did not possess the necessary qualities to

become a medium for sculpture, but over the last thirty years glass has been adopted by numerous artists as a medium for artistic expression in which function is not a primary consideration.



Fig 5.: Michael Norot. Sewing the roof of the first hot glass shop at Pilchuck. 1971.



Fig. 2: Michael Noto. Sewing the roof of the first hot glass shop at Pittsburgh, 1971.



Fig. 6 'Macchia' (10 x 10 x 10 in) 1982. Blown glass. Dale Chihuly.

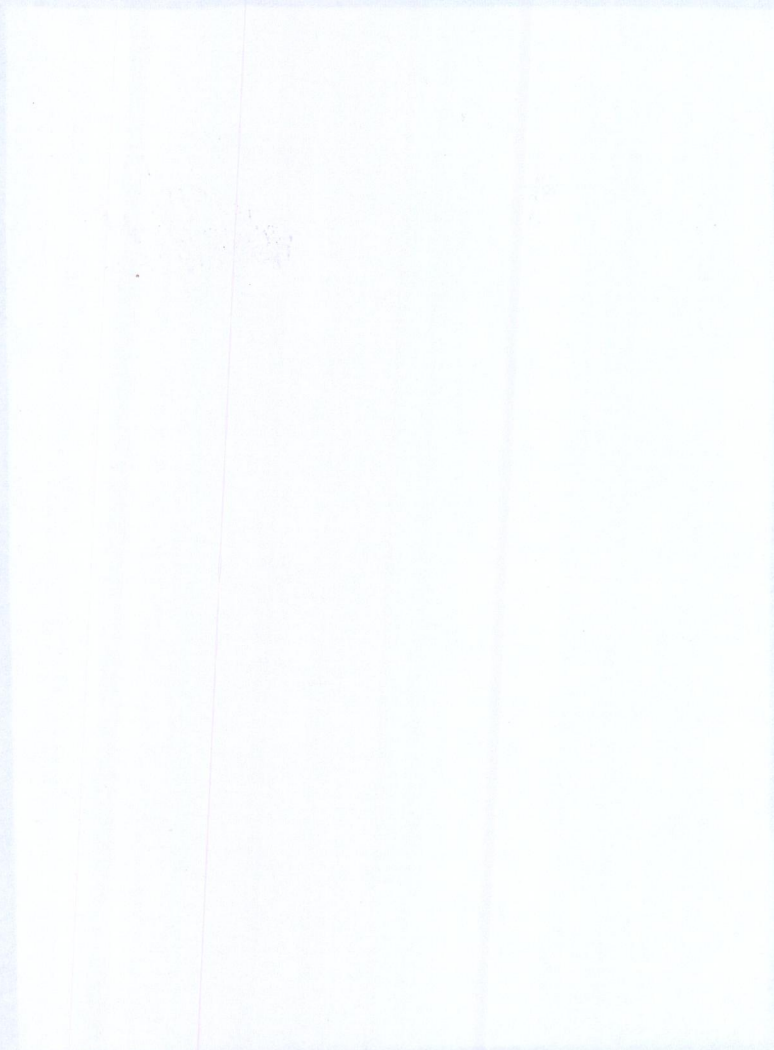


Fig. 6. Mascopha (10 x 10 cm) 1982. Blown glass. Date (initials).

CHAPTER 3.
FORMS WITH A TACTILE TWIST.

No one is creating glass sculpture quite like Toots Zynsky.

Mary Ann Toots Zynsky's creations are not made for usage but as an experience. Born on March 25 1951 in Boston, Massachusetts, she has been called Toots since birth.

Education: 1970-Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, Maine.

1971- Pilchuck Glass Centre, Washington.

1973- BFA, Rhode Island School of Design.

1973- Pilchuck Glass Center, Washington.

1979- Rhode Island School of Design, special
student in advanced glass programme.

Zynsky's involvement in the early years of Pilchuck made her part of a counter-culture experiment gone right. Extensive travel is the basis for the inspiration behind her work. Exposure to different countries and cultures have been translated into her

work and in turn have enlivened her palette. In 1983 she traveled to Italy and was mesmerized by its cultural roots and its general conception of art and craft. During 1984/85 she lived in Vienna. This encounter awoke a brighter, more concentrated palette within her, while six months spent in Ghana gave her the idea of creating glass threads which may have been inspired by the colours of the tribal costumes worn there. It was her encounter with Mathijs Teunissen Van Manen, a Dutch designer, that changed her methods of glass fabrication. He formulated two devices for her, a bell furnace that can be erected or dismantled in only two hours, and a long, flat apparatus based loosely on the procedure of fibre optics for constructing glass threads, which beforehand she used to stretch primitively herself from 10-14mm thick Murano glass rods. This method successfully yet unintentionally blurs the boundaries between painting, sculpture and traditional glass making. Her love for painting is clearly evident in her work except, instead of using paint, she picks and chooses from the

piles of coloured threads she fashions and combines with the richness of her experiences. With alternatively feint and audacious bands and swatches of threads which are textured and coloured, she creates work that although complicated, looks as if the colours have been applied with the stroke of a paintbrush, a technique that permits her to layer opaque and transparent colours in a manner that allows one colour to reveal itself through another on the three dimensional canvasses she makes. Zynsky has matured into one of the most eloquent abstract artists working in glass today. If these creations were paintings, they probably would already have gained ubiquitous acclaim for there outstanding innovation and colour. The organic forms can be perceived as pure colour and texture in a seemingly enduring motion, each glass thread showing her as an impertinent colourist . Her forms which may loosely be described as bowls, have varied in size, ranging from palm size to pieces which, before firing and manipulation when laid out flat before

fabrication, measure up to three feet in diameter. She has said about the move to the larger scale from the smaller:

"It's like a painter going from a tiny canvas to a large one, the possibilities are so much greater. In the past I did not have the room to do more, some of the most recent work has patches of clear glass enlivening the surface, adding a textural glaze to the piece". (Toots Zynsky, Internet art resources, July 1997.)

With endless patience she allocates the threads on either plaster, ceramic fibre, or metal double moulds and, mixing the coloured threads with experimentation, she fires them up to 650 degrees in the kiln. She then places her piece into another smaller or bigger sized mould and manipulates the outer rims of the bowl with pizza spatulas. The result is about one quarter of an inch thick, with both the rough edge and the textured surface suggesting the original threads. Although Zynsky's pieces are quite spontaneous when fused, there is absolutely nothing haphazard about her vigorous compositions. They are meticulously created, clam or shell shaped vessels. Her challenge is to make the coloured threads expressive of her experiences, to push the pieces away from their highly designed

appearance and veer towards the organic, the textured, and the enigmatic. Extremely elegant pieces and yet direct, they show her ability to reaffirm conventional configurations. Originally she started out as a glassblower because that was what she was offered, but quickly she became frustrated with just working pieces on the blowpipe. She then moved to doing large plate glass sculpture but because the plate glass was quite expensive and few people were working with that kind of glass at the time, she couldn't afford many mistakes. Then in February of 1979 she returned to blow pieces. This was a series of colourless hot pieces with glass spun around the exterior and although they looked extremely fragile, they actually had a solid interior. This series of work was entitled the "Multiple-Fraction Series".

Many *Filet-de-verre* combined with blown glass bowls followed, such as 'Untitled 1982' and 'Bowl 1987'. This *filet- de-verre* technique evolved from her years of experience with blowing, slumping, fusing and casting. 'Untitled 1982' (FIG 7) is a nest-like piece. Thousands of *filet- de- verre* rods are fused

to form an intricate weave similar to the surface of a fibreglass sheet. This crazing concave appears to nurse or protect the inside section, which section consists of a free-blown sand blasted bowl, which in relation to the outside section is quite small. It draws allusions to an egg in a bird's nest except the blown bowl seems to have *filet-de-verre* sprouting out of the left side of the bowl, thus the bowl looks more illuminated on the other side. The *filet-de-verre* is a metallic silver colour adding to the precious yet strong appearance of this section. The edge is uneven, broken and unfinished, quite similar to a bird's nest. The contrast between the perfect circular rim of the bowl and the jagged edge of the outside section adds fragility and a delicacy to the free-blown bowl. 'Bowl'(1987) (FIG.8.) is a similar piece to 'Untitled'. Again this is a free-blown bowl, translucent but smooth. The *filet-de-verre* hangs over the edge of the piece and forms a blanket on the interior of the bowl. The *filet-de-verre* has numerous voids throughout and when

lit from above these voids become illuminated. The shadow cast below the bowl is a mass of white dots. This bowl actually reminds me of a huge bowl filled with spaghetti, the spaghetti drooping over the edge hiding the bowl below. Delicacy has always played a major part in her work. In 1979, in a series appealingly entitled 'Dust Collectors', the pieces appear to have a surface which was untouchable, which infact was quite deceiving. The name for this series was apt because these pieces were extremely difficult to clean. When asked what the reason for the title of these pieces was, she simply told the onlooker that they were for collecting dust. They are no more fragile than any other glass pieces, but subjecting the pieces to rapid temperature changes would cause the glass to crack. Zynsky's technique is unique and, ironically she is not at all interested in colour or the exploitation of glass's ability to allure the onlooker with its smootness and shininess. " I never liked the shininess of it" she has said('The Seattle Times'16/11/95,pg.

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H26) but what fascinates her about glass is its limitless possibilities.

"You can pour it and cast it like metal, you can stretch it, carve it, saw it, you can stick it together. It's the only material you can melt and blow. It's such a strange and plastic thing. I think that's what keeps drawing me back to it" .(Breaking point-free form adventures in glass, 'International Herald Tribune' Dec 1994)

She is also fascinated by the sound of glass, the ping, the sleek cracking sound and the crescendo of glass as it explodes into a million pieces. She longs to know why sometimes glass breaks and why sometimes it doesn't. Because of this fascination, she once attached contact microphones to glass and learned that it could break without the onlooker even noticing a crack. With the microphones she could just hear the crack. It is a well-known fact that Zynsky's love of sound and music combines with the interplay of shining colour and light to intrigue her. After a period during which she preferred using simple yet strong colour contrasts, she has tended to adopt a more mannerist style. She uses delicate and subtly different tones to

give this effect. This adds an unexplainable depth to the surfaces of her pieces. Zynsky may choose to lay bright, contrasting even violent colours side by side to define their vividness or she may prefer to use various colours from the vast palette she has developed to shape her decoration, similarly to the way a tapestry weaver would. The method by which she lays these colours portrays an amazingly tactile, interactive, wave-like motion which results in a highly sophisticated type of tapestry. Many elements of Zynsky's work lead the viewer to sense this: firstly, she uses threads of an infinite palette of colours; she manipulates these threads until she is happy with their juxtaposition and finally the interior of the piece consists of a stratum of plain glass, which plays a role similar to that of linen or canvas. Although her pieces look quite precious and fragile they are most tactile and very 'like yet unlike'. 'Like' because they have a shiny element like that of most glass, 'Unlike' because on first glance the "Recent Chaos series"(1995) could appear confusing to the onlooker. Could the

pieces be made of glazed thrown ceramics? or is she using actual tactile glass? The colours she uses seem to be fighting for prominence, hence the title 'Chaos'. The non- glassy element of Zynsky's work is something that appeals greatly to me. The tactility, the organic shape and the deception of fragility all play an immense part in my love for her work. Their power of seduction is infinite.

"Her forms set colours in motion, creating an almost kinetic field. The folds and the curved surfaces provide a sense of Kaleidoscopic movement making the colours rock and roll within their forms. One feels movement where there is none, hears music where there is silence". (Toots Zynsky, 'Wakefield Daily Paper', Boston 1993)

This is true and evident of her 'Italian Chaos' 1994 piece (FIG.9.) in her exhibition at the Elliott Brown Gallery, Seattle, Washington, held in July 1994. Zynsky has clearly worked from the palette she based on the experiences she had while living in Italy. The piece is 7x13.5x8.25 inches and is a mass of colours: black, red, yellow, green, blue and orange, all awesome and reminiscent of an exciting adventure around an Italian city

on a summer's night. This bowl is gently undulating with an narrow base. The waves of the sea. It is organic in shape and by its shape could in fact be a vegetable or flower growing upwards towards the sun. This three-dimensional painting has an excitement about it which is mysteriously cogent yet utterly self-evident. The strokes of colour call to mind, hustle and bustle, jazz music on street corners and an inter-racial frenzy of artistic freedom. The base colour for this piece is the green interior, which draws the viewer's eye and attention to the greens on the exterior. The texture, as always, plays a major role in this piece. The unevenness, the undulating walls create a longing, to touch the piece, to feel the glass threads, each thread a different experience, a different person, a different night. The thousands of threads con the onlooker into a state of disbelief: "How could this possibly be glass"?. Texture, density of colour, and tactility are all elements of many disciplines of the arts, but successfully the main attraction of Zynsky's work. 'Italian Chaos' started when she moved to Paris. She spent a lot of time

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Chaos, started when she moved to Paris. She spent a lot of time

watching planes of light on buildings in the city- " Its really a city piece. There's not much tranquillity about it" she once said about the piece.(Painting with glass 'The Seattle Times', Nov 16th,1995).

As a founding member of the Pilchuck Glass School, Zynsky had the great honor of exhibiting in Seattle to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Pilchuck. Here she introduced her 'Recent Chaos' series on a new major scale. In December 1995 - art critics, collectors and artists alike were astounded by the varied scales of her pieces. Amongst the coloured works, 'Glorious Chaos' (1995) 8.5 x 14.25 x 8in was a huge success. Great attention was given to the interior monotone so that, when light shines through the walls, the colours of the exterior became manipulated in relation to the interior. This exciting piece has a narrow base and the lip of the bowl looks to droop inwards towards the center of the piece. The inside layers of threads run in the opposite direction to that of the exterior. The manner in which the rim droops makes one believe that maybe there is something hidden inside. As the piece is organic in shape, the

bulges appear to be caused by the build up of raindrops inside the petals of a rose. In the case of the exterior colours, there are allusions to warm colour field paintings in the warm browns, reds, blazing yellows and golds she uses. Standing on its narrow base, they grow, swirl and flourish. The outward spread of the piece shows how the glass seems to bend at will, undergoing a completely organic metamorphosis in the process. Glorious sunny days and happy times spring to mind. This piece urges the viewer to inspect the interior of the bowl. This stimulating, textile- like piece is an energetic suite of warm summer evening colours. Subtle shadows echo those seen in abstract expressionist paintings. This bowl, in my opinion, doesn't contain the glossy elements expected to be present in glass generally. It resembles an upright, textured shell; an open-mouthed plant, a painting moulded into an organic summer blossom. In July 1997, 'Elaborating Chaos' opened to the public at the Elliot Brown Gallery, Seattle . A widened palette enriched her overall achievement. 'Hidden Chaos' has a vaguer

spectrum of colours, ranging from subdued shades of black to warm faded oranges. Measuring 11x17x12 inches, this piece has few dark or vivid colours. Its colours are similar to coral or the watery appearance of a jellyfish. There appears to be a lot of movement in it as the rim is cut deeply. It looks to be swimming downwards as the colours in the narrow base blur. The folds in the rim are subtle, floaty and appear to be swaying. This rim opens outwards all the way around. The outside layer of the exterior of this piece seems to be composed of clear threads, leaving a scratched or faded surface. The muted watery colours of both the interior and exterior seem to be hiding under an outside layer of clear glass. She draws colour and shape from her moods and feelings, her experiences and thoughts. I feel that the colour and scratchy texture of this bowl may symbolize hidden emotions, her fears and even memories affected by the ravages of time. Perhaps she is trying to preserve these fading memories by incorporating them into the glass. The layering of threads calls to mind the deterioration water would make on a

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piece of glass washed up on a shore. Despite the superficial similarity between the pieces I have discussed, the colour, size, texture, and configuration of each rim is quite different. Maybe her next direction could lie in an even more outrageously dented realm or maybe in a moodier, more textured field. The theatrical element displayed by this glass is due to Zynsky's ability to make glass appear organic, sculptural and non-reflective. It is ironic that Zynsky, like the other artists discussed have encountered doubts and resistance simply because they use a traditional craft medium in a non-functional, non-traditional manner. The diversity seen in the selection of artists I have chosen shows the amazing range of abilities in the studio glass world. I find Zynsky's work visually compelling and each piece draws the viewer deeper and deeper inside the pieces. This to me is what real art is all about.

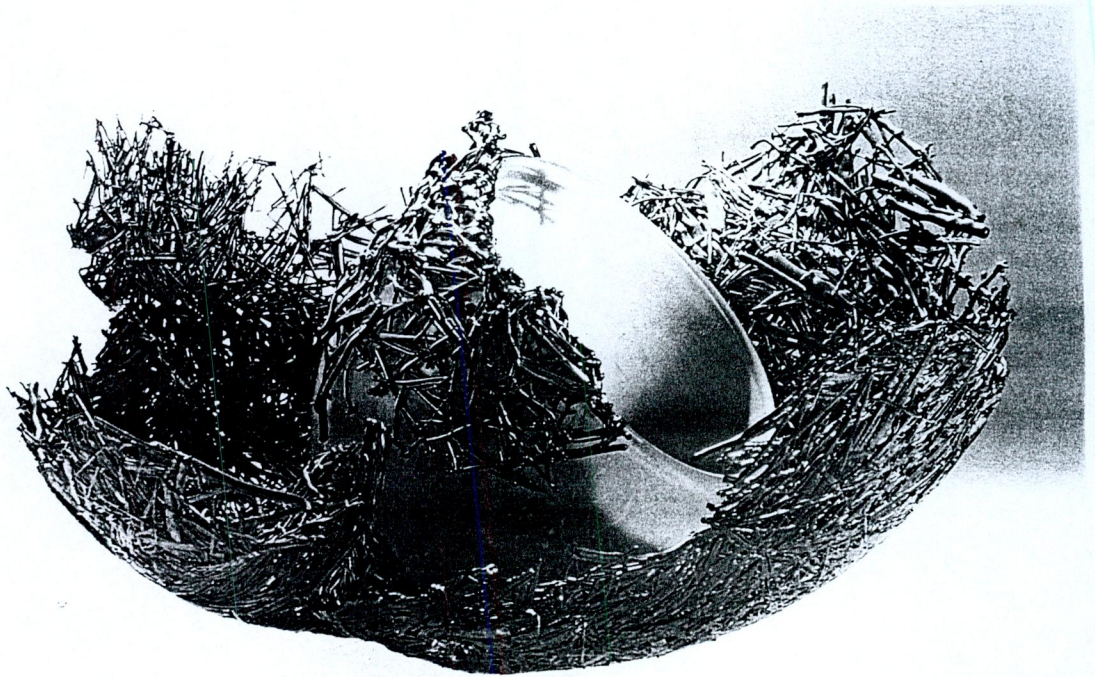


Fig 7 : 'Untitled' (5.5 x 10.5 x 10.5 inches) 1982. Glass Threads

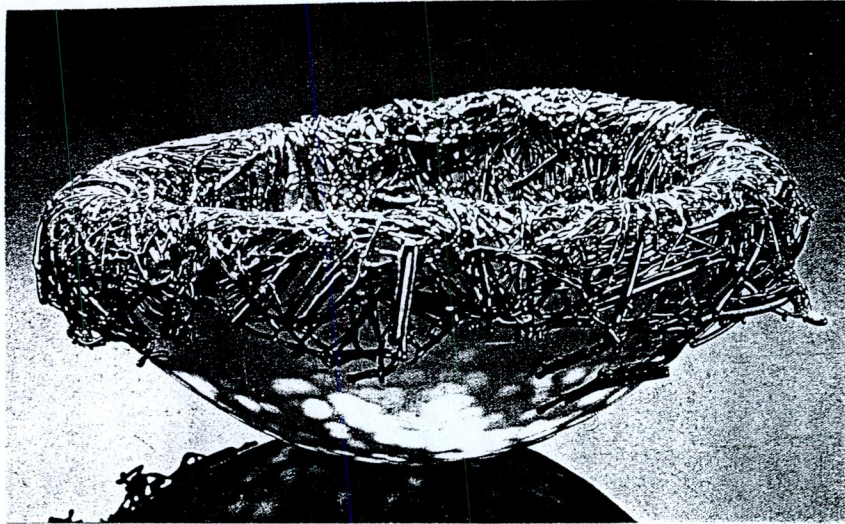


Fig 8 : 'Bowl'(4.75in D.) 1987. Glass Threads



Fig 9 : 'Italian Chaos'(8.25 x 14.5 x 8in) 1995. Glass Threads



Fig 10 : 'Glorious Chaos'(8.5 x 14.25 x 8in). 1995. Glass Threads



Fig 11 : 'Hidden Chaos'(11 x 17 x 12in) 1997. Glass Threads.

Mieke Groot's work displays similar properties to the work of Toots Zynsky. Born in the Netherlands in 1949, she is currently the coordinator of the glass department in the Gerrit Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam. Groot was educated in this Academy between 1969-1974 and originally qualified from the jewellery department. From 1974-1976 she studied glass here and has exhibited worldwide since then. In 1989 she did a one woman exhibition in the Braggiotti Gallery in Amsterdam, *fig. 12b*. In which she used simple rounded blown shapes to make various sized, big-bellied pots. This series attracted attention because of the division of colour fields seen on the surfaces and the combination of smooth interiors with the rough tactile layers. This series of large pumpkin and sphere shaped pieces is similar to Zynsky's work in that both have smooth interiors of one colour, and textured exteriors which are multi-coloured. Both artists vary the sizes of their sculptures and neither is of the opinion that the transparency or smoothness associated with

glass is a priority. Groot takes great pleasure in ridiculing plastics and other such materials by using glitteringly rich colours. The reason I find her Work fascinating is the fact that her translucent surfaces give impact visually when combined with the tactile qualities she achieves. She deliberately enlivens her pieces by contrasting pure transparency with *tromp-l'oeil*, which is a method where by enamels are layered over and over until she creates a skin, which is formed in a number of irregular layers. In her piece entitled 'Vaso' 1989 these same elements apply. This round free-blown pot has many similarities to Zynsky's 'Hidden Chaos' bowl (FIG.11) Groot's 'Vaso' (FIG.12A) is 19x24 inches and consists of many colours such as oranges, reds, greens, yellows and blacks all of which are used in 'Hidden Chaos'. The only difference between the colours of both pieces is that the colours are much more vibrant in 'Vaso'. The interior of this piece is ebony black and shiny which draws the eyes of the viewer to the inside. This piece looks as if it is a crazed mosaic. The greens oranges and blacks

are juxtapositioned in a similar manner to that of Hidden Chaos. The interior looks as if it is a separate section, i.e. the black transparent blownform looks as if it could be lifted out from the inside of the crazed outside, leaving it to sit as a piece in itself. This sturdy piece appears huge when compared to Zynsky's piece. The exterior appears much older than the interior simply because of the contrast in the techniques. Irregular shapes on the exterior make 'Vaso' seem alive. Groot's work, like Zynsky's, tends to follow a basic design, a shiny base colour on the interior and varied textured colours on the exterior. In *fig.13* 'Blown Form Series', (1994) the exteriors of the pieces have again surfaces which are rough, scratchy, cracked and matted. The colours, which she used, are vivid and vibrant as before, such as flaming reds, oranges and yellows. This series seems less fussy in comparison to the previous one, as the exteriors are just one colour. This looks to be more harmonious, more mature. I don't see these pieces to be utilitarian but simple as sculptures. " This reveals the artists concentration and deep

concerns towards glass, and through the change she achieves the broadening of sensitivity in herself" (World Glass Now, Mieke Groot, pg.56) A notable comparison to Toots Zynsky's bowls is that of Dale Chihuly's 'Seaforms' ie. 'Macchia' (10x10x10") 1982, (Fig.6). In that they are similar in colour, size and both artists have manipulated the rims of their vessels. 'Macchia' interior has a variety of shades of green while the exterior has a multitude of exciting colours, such as blues, pinks, reds and whites. This piece like Zynsky's 'Italian Chaos' (Fig.9) has a sturdy narrow base and grows upwards and outwards organically. Toots Zynsky may have drawn inspiration from Dale Chihuly's earlier work, having previously worked with Chihuly at Pilchuck.

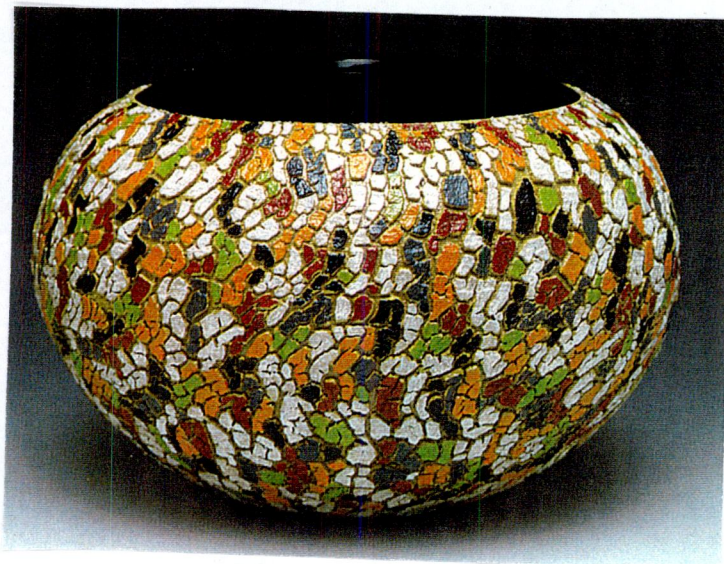


Fig 12A : 'Vaso' (9 x 24 cm) 1989. Blown Glass with Enamels.



Fig. 12A. Vase (9 x 24 cm) 1989. Blown Glass with Enamels.

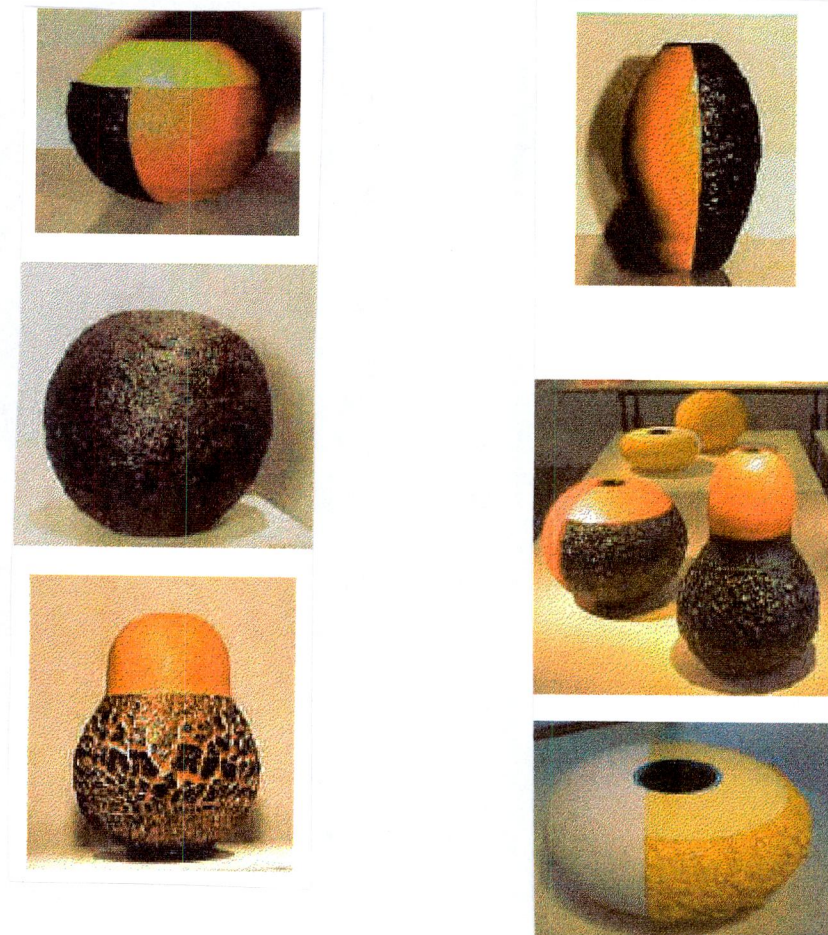


Fig 12B : Exhibition at the Bragiotti Gallery, Rotterdam. 1989



Fig. 12B. Exhibition in the Bragdon Gallery, Rotterdam, 1989.



Fig 13 : 'Blown Form Series.' 1994

Fig. 13. Blow-form Series 1904

CHAPTER 4.

Abstracting the Mundane.

Daniel Clayman was in Lynn, Massachusetts in 1957.

Education:

1986 B.F.A. Rhode Island School Of Design.

University of Massachusetts, Amherst and Connecticut College.

Clayman works with cast glass and bronze to amazing result. To those who have been brought up to think that glass art is shiny, clear and smooth, Clayman's glass is different. He casts colourless *pâte- de- verre* shells that have been inspired by nature; they take on the qualities of marble made translucent, a simple milky opalescence. His shells are similar to nuts or seedpods, organically rooted in the natural world. Clayman has always been interested in mimicking the mundane objects found in everyday life and preserving them as non - functional glass sculptures, experimenting with ideas of what function should or should not be. Since the early 1990s Clayman's work

has come on in leaps and bounds. Although his earlier works, such as his 'Household Object' (1990) were fine and did earn him a place in the hierarchy of contemporary glass, his more recent exquisite forms such as 'Quiver' (1998) are more mature and abstract. The clocks, irons and handbags he made in the past were a different body of work, their textures highlighted by extreme attention to detail and inspired by his childhood. The copper elements added to a feeling of immense weight, the *pâte-de-verre* catching the light, giving the impression that all his works are illuminated from within. Both 'Household Object' of 1990 (9x10.5x2.5)(FIG.14.) and 'Untitled' 1990 (1.45x21x3)(FIG.15.) are prime examples of this earlier work. 'Household Object' bears a close resemblance to an old fashioned iron or maybe an old kettle. The inspiration for this piece was obviously drawn from his childhood, his memories of growing up with such household objects. This piece consists of brown and orange *pâte-de-verre* and has intense attention to detail. The stepped vertical base combined with copper adds a

weighty presence. I feel that another source for this piece must be a deep love of architecture and a sense of proportion. The handle of this piece has allusions to string wrapped around the handle. There is a huge hole at the center of the piece. At the top of the piece there is a section that would make one wonder could liquid actually be poured into the piece. Small bubbles linger throughout the piece suggesting melting ice. The profile of this piece is slender and parallel lines circle the base. Objects such as the one that inspired this piece probably stick out in his mind, because these are the things that he would have associated with his mother. "In the titles Clayman sets up other metaphors to amuse and tantalize". (Betty Friedenheim, Daniel Clayman, 'Glass Magazine', no. 43, Spring 1991) 'Untitled' is another textured piece and is very similar to 'Household Object'. The massive, rounded handle seems to be the main feature of this grey and black piece. Highly textured and quite unlike traditional glass, this piece works alone or in a group. There is superb attention to detail, as if Clayman is seeing the

past through rose tinted spectacles. This piece also has a slender profile and commands a weighty neo-classical presence. The *pate-de-verre* looks to have hundreds of circular indents on the surface. The handle of this piece is similar to the hose of a Hoover. It looks folded and flexible. These circular dents are counter-balanced by linear and curving elements. This piece draws allusions to a grey leather handbag. The bag, although heavy, takes advantage of the light available so it seems charming, filled with a secret past that only Clayman remembers. Since making this series, Clayman seems to have perfected his casting skills, and also his skill of combining glass with bronze. 'Hull' (5.25x 16x 9.5 in) 1997 (FIG.16.) has a serene, sensuous feel, where the contrast between the bronze and the glass is extremely concentrated. Although the colours used make this a cold piece, the coherence between the glass and the bronze works well. The slit in the piece calls to mind the moment when the butterfly leaves the

old caterpillar husk, it's Chrysalis (The pupa of an insect before emerging in it's final state) in a transformation from something old into something new. This piece was constructed additively. Clayman first made a styrofoam model and then a plaster one to which the texture was added to enhance the outcome of the final casting. Although based on nature, 'Hull' is not printed from nature but makes me think that it was invented from the memory of touch. The bronze in this piece could be seen as protecting the glass, like a mother protecting her child. The similarities between Clayman's work and that of Howard Ben Tre (who will be discussed later) are willingly acknowledged by Clayman. Ben Tre sees cracks and clouding in his pieces as a mark of the process, an added bonus, as Clayman does.

"Clayman is linking up with a long line of artists, including the indigenous artisans, who have transformed nature's forms, but he is taking things in his own direction, moulding the personal into the uncommon. These are objects of the uncertain evolution; parts of undeniable wholes. They are female and

male, sexual and asexual. They hallow the container. Enough is left unsaid".(Marsha Miro, 'Glass', Spring 1997, pg.53) 'Quiver' (1998)(FIG.17.), another piece by Clayman, is 9 x 21 x 9.5inches in height and is part of his 'Gradations series'. The glass appears to have a warm pinkish tinge, in sharp contrast to matte bronze, which is dulled by white areas. This structure seems to be rooted in the world of nature. The bronze is sliced open in a similar manner to a botanical drawing, a close –up section of a bud, the bronze protecting the delicate interior. I feel that this piece invites me to power my life, my existence, the natural world and all in its domain, as life is too short to tremble or for us to be afraid to enjoy it. The bronze shell comes to a sharp point, symbolizing how rapidly everything can change, the large opening symbolizing the many opportunities and paths one may choose. The smoothness and the muted colours in this piece, when combined with the gradations, to me symbolize the constant climb one has before reaching contentment. It makes a powerful metaphor, which the onlooker both unconsciously and

knowingly fathoms. The piece seems to quiver literally and symbolically. Clayman has succeeded in transforming nature's forms into part nature, part human sculpture. This piece emits an inner glow that is obscured by the destiny of its containment-like an idea in the mind or a feeling in the soul. In my opinion the pieces described are catalysts for ideas, feelings and memories.

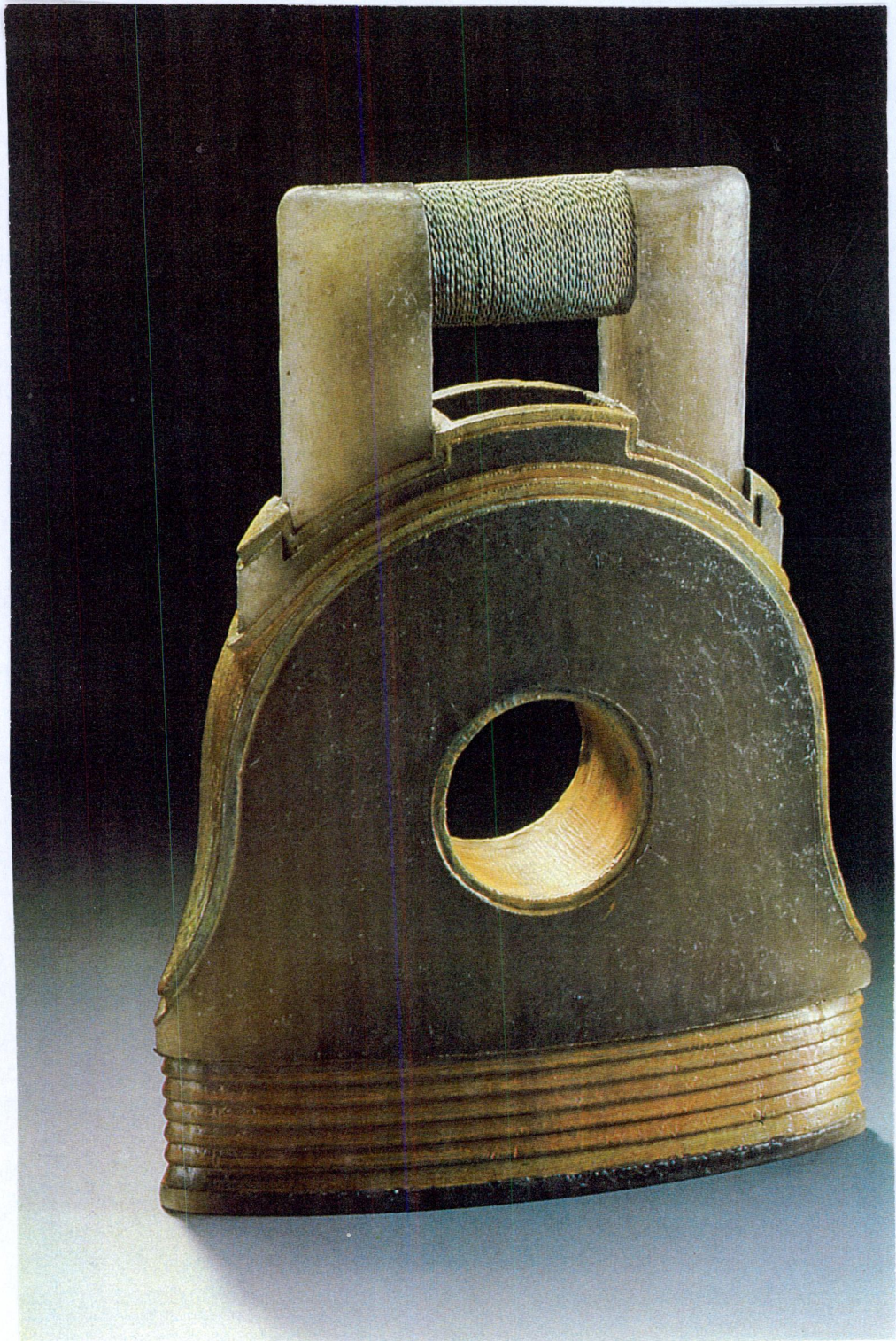


Fig 14 : 'Household Object' (9 x 10.5 x 2.5in) 1990. Cast. Pate de verre

Handwritten text: Household Spect.

Fig. 14: Household Object (9 x 10.5 x 2.5 cm) 1990. Cast. Fair de Vence

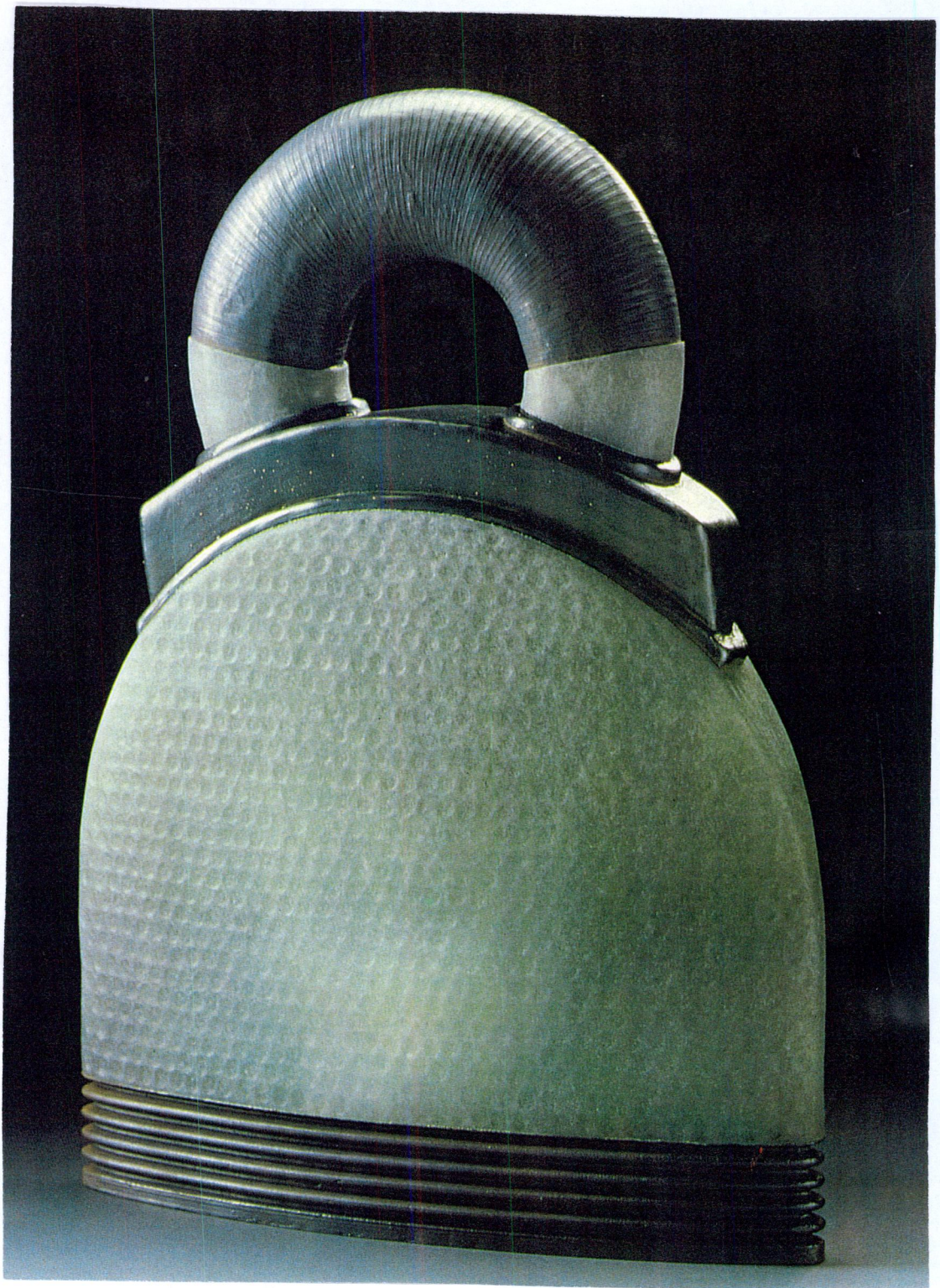


Fig 15 : 'Untitled' (14 x 21 x 3in) 1990. Cast. Pate de verre

Fig. 13: United (14 x 21 x 3in) 1990 Cast. Page de verso

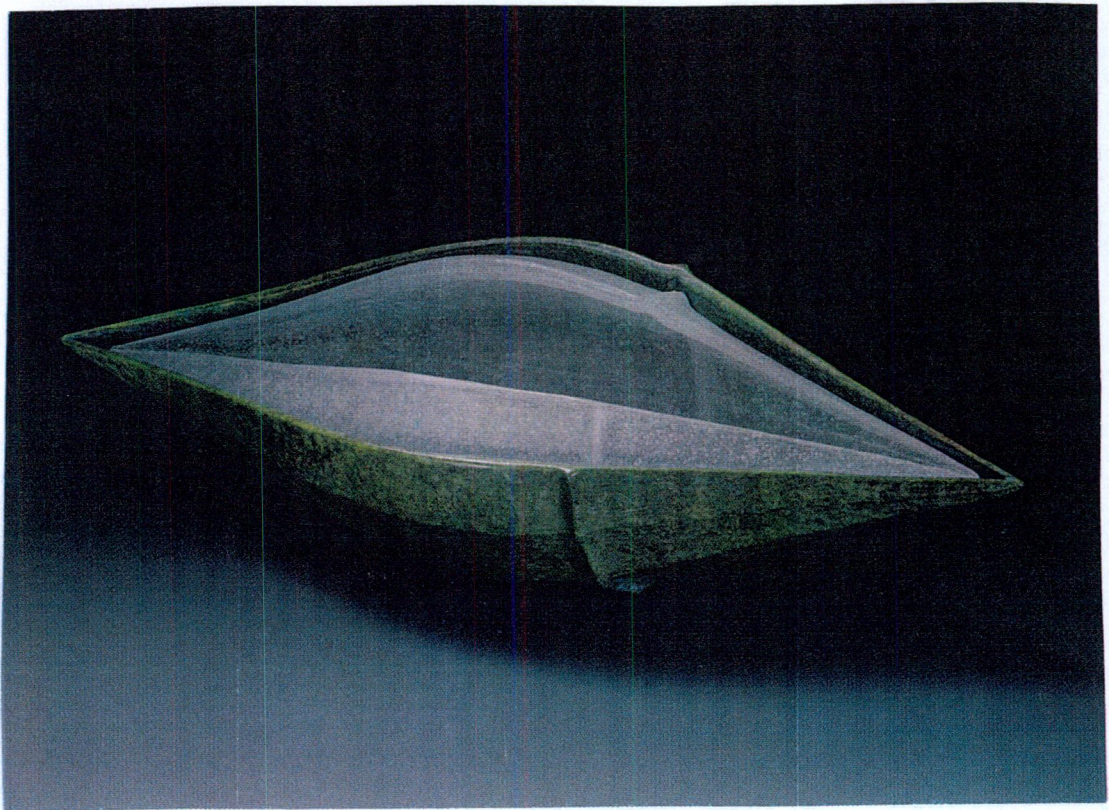


Fig 16 : 'Hull' (5.25 x 16 x 9.5in) 1997. Cast. Pate de verre. Bronze

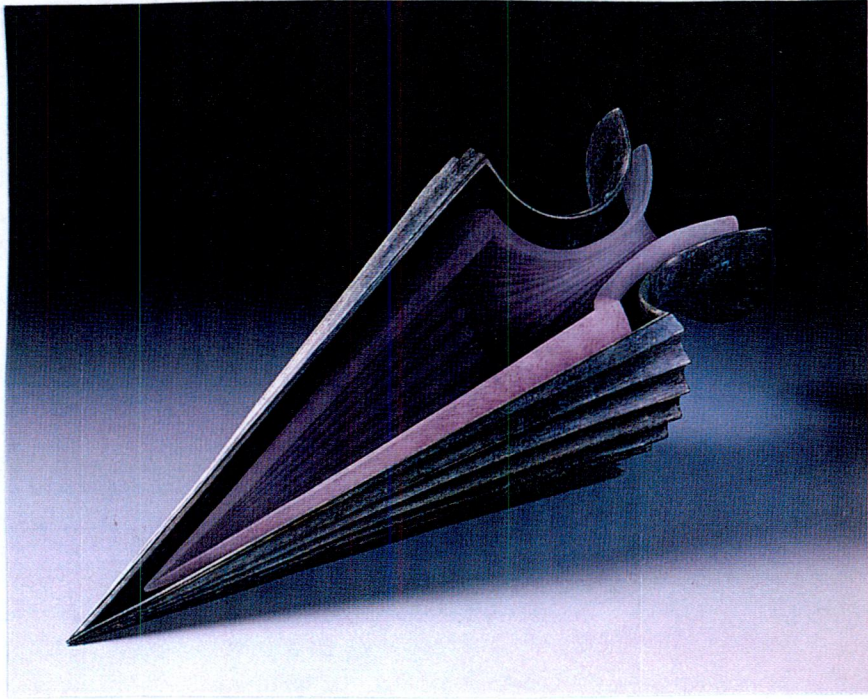


Fig 17 : 'Quiver' (9 x 21 x 9.5in) 1998. Cast. Pate de verre. Bronze

CHAPTER 5. "Beautiful or Grotesque"

In sharp contrast to many other cast glass artists Hank Murtha Adams believes transparency of glass is a myth. Adams was born in 1956 in Philadelphia, and for those who may still believe that glass is mainly transparent, smooth and fragile, Adams' work is an eye-opening experience. Some of his castings weigh up to 12 stone, are about life size and extremely heavy. Much of his work has the density of concrete or marble yet it possesses an unusual classical spirit.

Education:

- 1981-84 Tennessee Technological University, Cookeville, TN.
- 1981 Pilchuck School, Stanwood, WA.
- 1980 Penland School, Spruce Pine, NC.
- 1978 Rhode Island School Of Design, Providence (B.F.A.)

In the beginning he cast most of his own pieces by pouring ladles of molten coloured soda lime glass into large moulds. Using copper wire and tubing additions, his figures, torsos,

busts and heads are his signature pieces. The figures lack most of the refractive optical effects associated with glass. They are dulled by sand blasting and appear crystalline and brittle. His beat up, cracked, cast, disfigured and pierced casts contain only a minute element of translucency. This is all that Adams needs to help make it spring to life. Few survive the casting process without defects. During casting, he becomes a gambler, at the last minute deciding on the colour that he wishes to cast in the mould. Sometimes he never even opens the mould to see the solidified outcome. Adam's works are neither beautiful nor grotesque, good nor bad but entirely shocking. His dense castings with their melodramatic endings all symbolize the perils and successes of going against the grain of the stereotypically unadventurous glass market worldwide. His pieces "reveal an attitude of calculated defiance (so you thought glass was pretty)".

(Cheryl White, 'American Craft Magazine', Oct/Nov 1989, pg.81).

Many of Adams' heads tend to have a stunned expression on their faces due to their rapid casting. It's as if things were moving too quickly for them to digest. They are left with static expressions and almost rudimentary features. 'Crowned Head' (27x33x77), 1991, (FIG.18.) is another quite grotesque piece. Colour is the dominant feature here. The vibrant blue when contrasted with the dull grey heightens the brilliance and intensity of this bust. Adams' has worked with the surface of the glass and painted the metal inclusions and wire spiralling out of the piece. The wire is painted a vivid blue while the metal, which is exploding out of the top of the crown is dabbed blue. This large and solid piece to me is symbolic of a king or a dictator whose command is unalterable. This head is sad looking as the blue eyes stare startled into space. The tight-lipped mouth appears solemn. "The slight translucency of the glass gives the piece a spirit, makes them alive, moody". (William Warmus, Hank Murta Adams, 'Glass' Spring 97). This head looks to be carrying the weight of the world as well as a heavy crown. The

crown has an almost banana- shaped points bending outwards, yet they still hold the metal sculpted piece in the center. The base of this piece looks unfinished. The platform on which it stands is in-fact an overspill of glass. The piece could have been cut and finished where the colour ends on the neck. I think the blue wires jutting from the scalp and neck areas are veins symbolizing stress and worry. The crown and the pressures of being in charge have forced this head to rely on a support, a neck support. This blue and matt translucent glass handle shaped connection seems to be the last hope for this head, the last support. Health is an important issue in this piece. This piece may be telling us that materialistic things are less important than the simple things; after all if you have your health you have happiness. The implied anguish and loneliness in this piece make it distinctive and symbolic. Adams' was the recipient of the Shimononseki City Art Museum prize for "Lasa" in 1991(FIG.19.). Its surface is ruggedly scarred as if with a knife, similar to a Rodin sculpture. "Lasa" (33x4x121/2) 1991

is a purple cast. This Torso seems to be that of a fair maiden.

'Lasa', maybe meaning lass, is a young, elegant lady with her hair piled to the top of her head, similar to that worn by ladies in the early 1800's, yet 'Lasa' shows how Adams repeatedly kills our desire to see these works as classic busts. This slender blue eyed cast looks content as she does not bristle with receptors, metal or wire. Adams has used his glass to convey human vulnerability to love contentment in this figure. She looks innocently happy, unaware of what may come to future generations. 'Lasa' appears frozen in time, oblivious to death, immune to old age and sickness. Adams regards HIV as a slap in the face of technology: "HIV binds death immediately to love, in fierce opposition of the stated goal of medical technology" (William Warmus, Hank Murta Adams, 'Glass' Spring 1997).

Before the HIV virus we thought we were unbeatable, we thought we were simply enjoying ourselves, expressing our individuality. We were invincible, innocent. 'Lasa' appears content in knowing her time has passed. She appears grateful. "The fact that these sculptures can stimulate self-reflective

analysis suggests that the artist has been weighing such issues as well. Adams demonstrates a restless experimentation and a willingness to take serious risks that could foster such a leap of the imagination”(Dorothy Weiss Gallery, ‘American Craft Magazine’ V.49, Oct/Nov 1989 pg.81). Adams’ 1995 cast entitled ‘Assessor’ (35.5 x 21 x 14in) straddles a fine line between the grotesque and the humorous. He uses copper wire for the hair and eyes in many of his works, and this is also true for ‘Assessor’. The standing torso is made from glass of a pink and orange colour, which he combines with metal, which is blue . Using the "theatrics of posed or imagined characters", as Adams has described them (Hank Murta Adams, ‘Elliott Brown Gallery’, Hank Murta Adams Exhibition, July 1996) he explores the emotions, senses and intellect of his “Characterizations” to question commonly held discernments of individual identity and our place in the world. Adams uses the colours of his glass and metals to show the state of the world and its problems. The names that Adams chooses for his sculptures are "characterizations" of what he believes the spirit of the piece should be- “Assessor” has a smug look on her face, her thin elegant lips smiling smugly at passers by. Her chest is decorated with a field of little handmade copper constructions similar to Christmas lights, which is actually

wiring from radar detectors. The idea of Adams taking a hammer and chisel to this piece to chip off unwanted bumps and lumps and to add texture is not hard to imagine. This blighted bust could be seen as an animated sickly character or as a caricature because of the horrific tumors or growths exploding out of the top of its head. These growths could also represent hair piled on top of the head.

"Keep it direct, simplify things so that they are digestible'" (William Warmus, Hank Murta Adams, 'Glass', Spring 1997).

These tumors are symbols of upheavals emerging from deep inside the body as if she's about to pass judgment or just realized that she knows something the onlooker doesn't.

Portraiture was the subject of the notorious novel by Oscar

Wilde in "A portrait of Dorian Gray" (James Sullivan publishers,

Philadelphia, 1890) in which a painting recorded precisely the evil

deeds done by its decadent subject. Wilde observed: " Every

portrait that is painted is a portrait of the artist, not of the sitter".

The sitter is merely the occasion: "It is not he who is revealed by the painter, it is rather the painter, on his coloured canvas, who reveals himself" (Oscar Wilde, 'A portrait of Dorian Gray', James Sullivan, Philadelphia, 1890).

In ancient Greece, the idealized faces of youths and maidens, the perfection of the human spirit, were important, where imperial Roman portraits documented bloodlines, wealth and status, but Adams' portraits are not likenesses of individuals but his observations, a means of communication with the sitter, the viewer and society at large.

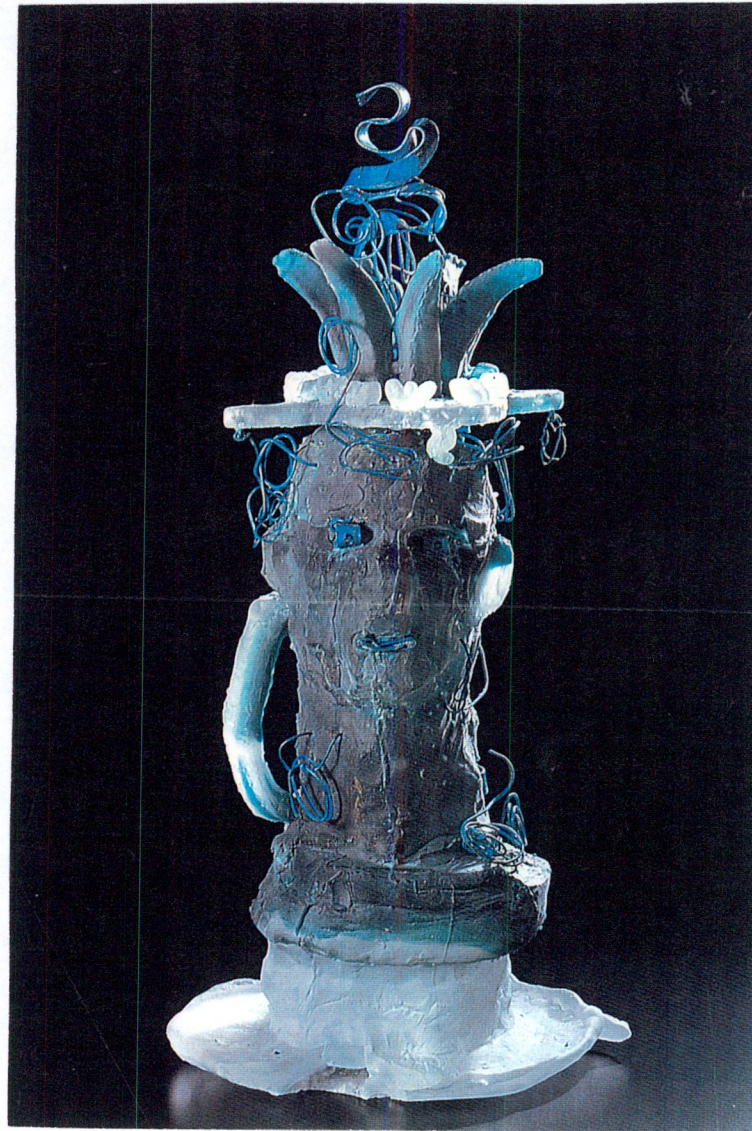


Fig 18 : 'Crowned Head' (27 x 33 x 77in) 1991. Sandcast Glass.



Fig 18 : Crowned Head (27 x 33 x 75mm) 1991 Sandcast Glass.



Fig 19 : 'Lasa' (33 x 14 x 12.5in) 1991. Sandcast Glass



Fig. 19. Lamin (33 x 14 x 12.5m) 1991 Seaboard Glass



Fig 20 : 'Assessor' (35.5 x 21 x 14in) 1995. Sandcast Glass.

CHAPTER 6. Casting Archetypes

Born 1949 in Brooklyn, New York, Howard Ben Tre has emerged as the predominant studio glass sculptor in America. As an artist his distinguished and intellectual energy binds the onlooker to the pieces in a phenomenal manner. He is especially noted for his non-functional, architectonic sculptures. One is struck by the sheer scale of his pieces, which have gone from table size to monumental masterpieces. They are sandcasted in a factory in Brooklyn and transported to his Rhode Island studio where they are finished with textures evocative of buried treasure or excavated ruins salvaged from the past. Normally he works with a wooden model that has been constructed after the initial designs have been completed. Sand is packed tightly around the model that is then chemically treated. The model is then removed, leaving the concrete- hard sand ready for casting. Ben Tre's use of translucent glass bears resemblance to articles

from the past, such as old flints from the Stone Age. His semi-metal and textured surfaces prevent the onlooker from looking through his work. Copper foil inlays, metal powders and pigmented waxes are later patented. He introduces soft colour in a less decorative way than many others who use sandcasting technique do, scouring the exterior glass with metal and metal oxides. These penetrate into the pores of the glass. His pieces are archetypes, using symbols and icons, borrowed from other cultural experiences, all of which have something in common and suggest mystery, the type of mystery found in standing stones, pyramids or tombs. Ben Tre is of the opinion that if a piece cracks or breaks it doesn't mean it is broken, the accidents that happen in glass are part of the process; they add character to the glass. He works with these accidents. Shininess, smoothness and transparency are not the important elements in his work. If the piece cracks, he will simply stick it back together again. He never sees breakage as a failure, finding the accidents quite beautiful, something that traditionally would

have been unacceptable in glass. Ben Tre feels that artificial light such as a spotlight has no "velocity" (Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain, 'Sculptures de verre,' Nice, 1994). He prefers natural lighting for his pieces as this modifies and allows the piece a life of its own. When the light changes we start to understand the density of the pieces which are creatively designed to look artless and tactile, to make the onlooker see feelingly. Making full use of the icy translucence of glass, Ben Tre eliminates fragility and his works instead take on the appearance of solid, rock or concrete, elements quite unlike glass. Ben Tre's sandcasting techniques turn time-tired aesthetics into magical contemporary forms, texture adding tactility and volume to his pieces. Ben Tre says "I'm learning how to put myself in my work, I learn about myself, which is what interested me in art in the first place" (Diana Johnson, 'Howard Ben Tre', 'Sculptures de verre,' New York, 1993). Sandcasting has been a voyage of self-discovery for Ben Tre. 1986 saw Ben Tre's free standing columns. Monoliths fabricated from transparent glass with copper additions. 'In First

Figure' which is 70 inches tall (1986) the thickness of the untinted glass caused the glass to be a greenish colour, thus allowing the light to penetrate deeply into the glass and as the copper had oxidized, turning it a greenish colour similar to that of the glass. The rough exterior surface of this solid glass piece is quite unlike the surface of how glass is usually portrayed. Although 'First Figure' (FIG.21.) is textured, it is quite inorganic. Rich with visual imagery it has a sense of form, a skin that allows the spectator to enter and exit the piece. Its sand- blasted texture is similar to that of frosted glass or ice. The many bumps and chips deepen the experience and artfully rescue it from the glassy element. The form is simple yet strong and has a certain relationship to materials such as earth and iron. The minimal appearance of this piece allows it to have a timeless strength, combined with a raw elemental presence. The patented copper suggests an ephemeral quality and the textured glass adds to the opacity of this piece. It evokes the agonizing sense of time passing, as the copper appears rusted and ravaged by time. The

height of this piece adds to its sheer power. There is coherence not resemblance between the glass and the copper. In 'Dedicant 7' (49x18.25x7) 1987 (FIG.22.), scale is of utmost importance.

This cast glass is combined with lead, gold leaf, structured brass and patina. The sharp edges of the piece have been manipulated to rounded contours as if eroded. This hammer- shaped piece is set on a marble rectangular base. A copper cube has been set into the flat surface of the crown of the piece. The hammer shape consists of a long rectangular column with a semi-circle top. Allusions to an ancient Roman pillar or an archaeological find give this piece a sense of romance and strength. Ben Tre has a born naturalist's relationship with glass and metals. The light seems to penetrate this piece and becomes dispersed as a soft glow.

“ We feel a sense of an unknown past in contemporary sculptures, the type of mystery found in old monuments, and it is this incomplete understanding that we call mystery”.

(Diana Johnson, 'Howard Ben Tre', 'Sculptures de verre', New York 1993,).

In Ben Tres piece entitled 'Dedicant 11' (48x15x10.5), 1998 (FIG.23.) the central glass cast looks to be suspended between the two glass pillars. These rectangular glass pillars have been coloured by the copper and gold leaf as well as the patina to give them a wooden or concrete feel. Both pillars look eroded yet dedicated to their purpose, which is to suspend the center section. The central cast is both flat at the bottom and top. This whole piece is textured to the touch. The browns and blacks when combined unify and produce a harmony. This piece reminds me of when the tide goes out on the beach and the pillars supporting the pier appear in the distance. These pillars stand like guardian figures that embody strength and controlled energy. But Ben Tre's monoliths are more in harmony with industrial wastelands of a city than with the cleanliness of an exhibition space. Ben Tre certainly has erased the fragility in glass with these chosen pieces. Unquestionably these monoliths show that beauty is inherent in non-traditional, non-reflective sculpture.

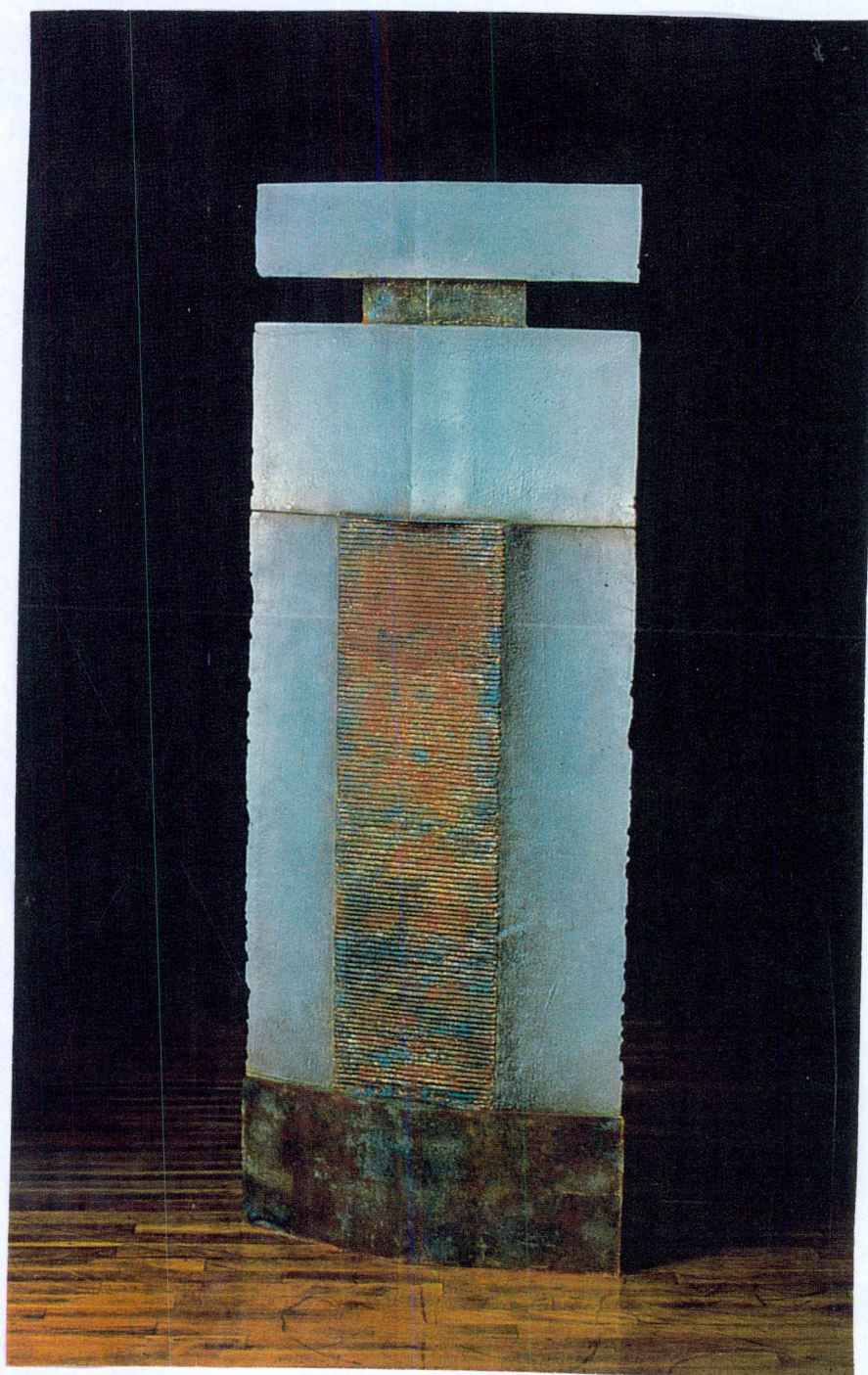


Fig 21 : 'First Figure' (70in H.) 1986. Cast Glass



Fig. 21. First Figure (70in H) 1936 Cast Glass

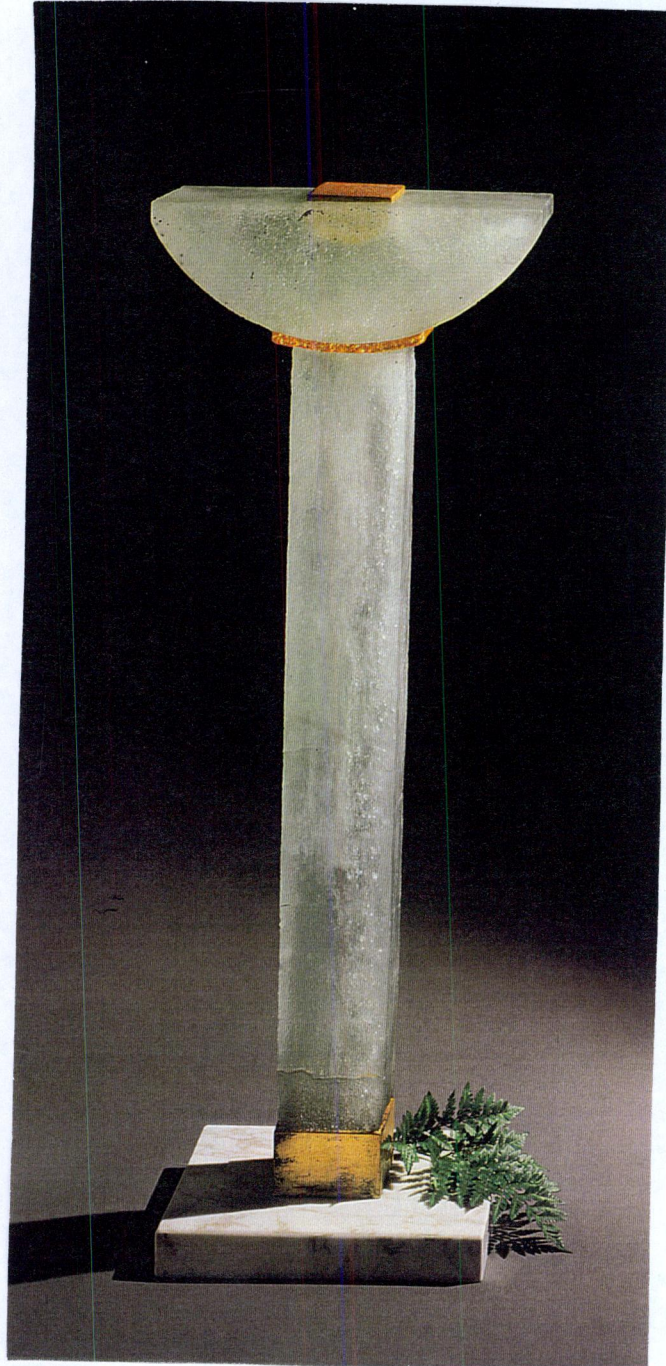


Fig 22 : 'Dedicant 7'(49 x 18.25 x 7in) 1987. Cast Glass

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Fig 22. Dedicant 7 (49 x 18.25 x 7in) 1987 Cast Glass

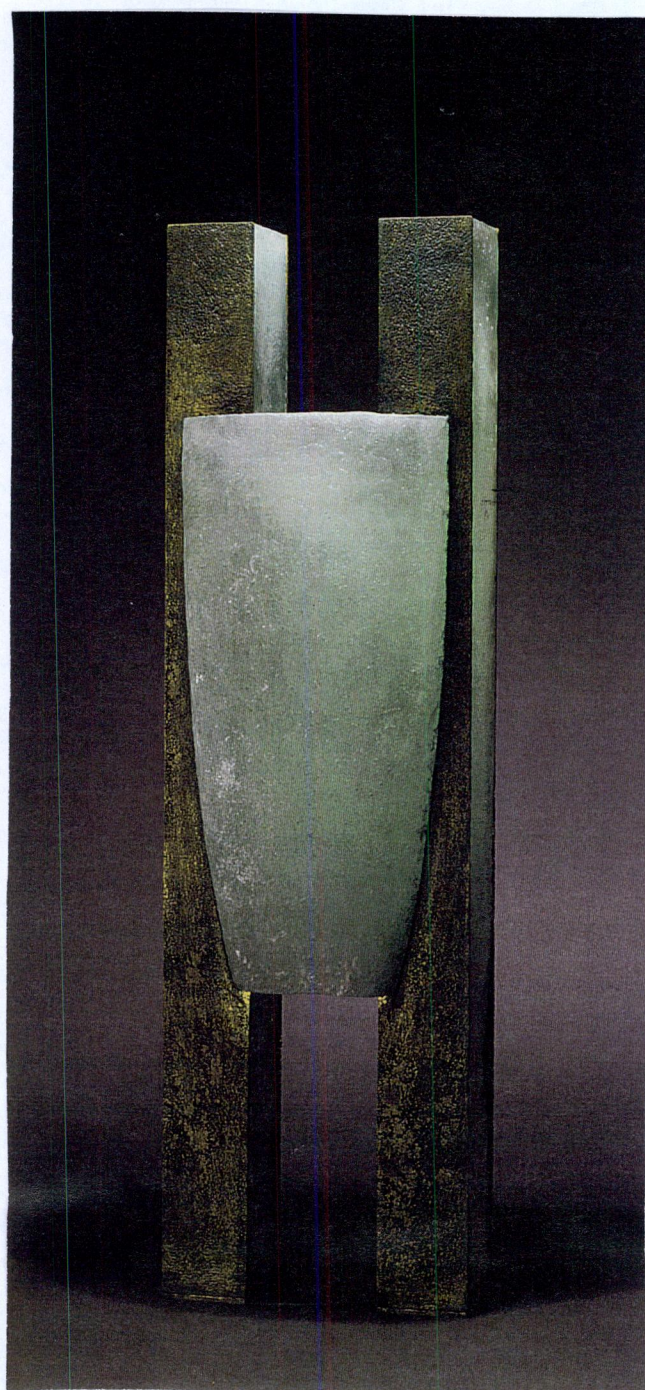


Fig 23 : 'Dedicant 11' (48 x 15 x 10.5in) 1988. Cast Glass



Fig. 2a: Dedham 11 (48 x 12 x 10.5in) 1988 Cast Glass

Conclusion.

It is impossible to survey briefly the works of these studio glass makers, all of whom share a common bond with Pilchuck Glass School. It is ambition, commitment and experimentation that has enabled these artists to move away from traditional functional glass into more experimental less utilitarian territories. If the truth be known, before these contemporary artists, Dale Chihuly and the Studio Glass Movement, glass would still be suspect as an art material. These contemporary glass artists have changed the expectations of the average person worldwide . These chosen few have given a new meaning to the words glass art . No longer shall the average person think of decanters, chandeliers, paperweights, or smoothness or transparency when they think of glass art. Now they may well think of tactility, texture and density also, the elements which are displayed in the work of Zynsky, Groot, Adams, Clayman and Ben Tre. Glass casting and sculpture

allow these artists greater flexibility which is not possible with any other art material. The onlooker is struck by the sheer adventurous skill of the above artists, their outstanding ability to show us visual imagery and commanding presence. I feel that these artists liberate glass from the limitations and expectations of past glass movements. Interestingly, although making full use of the icy translucence of glass, I feel these pieces clearly show how the element of fragility has lessened. Although the dense solid tactile aspect is now present, these artists still manage to keep the magical presence found in glass while combining it with the experimental tactile elements found in the Studio Glass Movement.

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