



Y O U N G
G L A S S

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2017



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TENSION, TECHNOLOGY, TRADITION, TRANSCENDENCE: PERSPECTIVES ON *YOUNG GLASS*

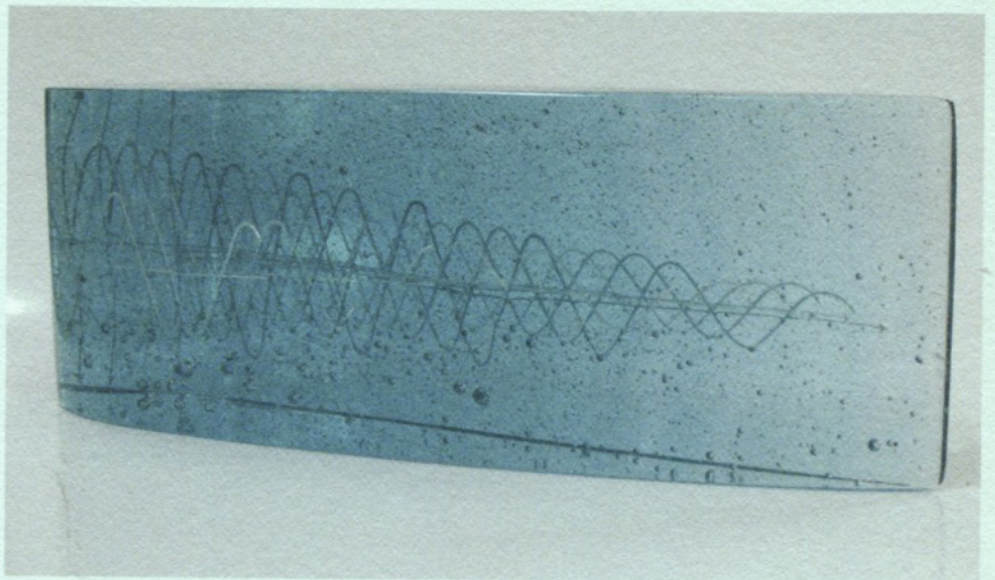
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This essay begins with a couple of confessions from the author. First, I entered this competition a decade ago and was rejected. Therefore it is a curious privilege to sit on the jury of *Young Glass*. I'm able to share my elation with artists representing new talent in glass from around the world, many of whom I've worked with as teacher, mentor, critic, fabricator or even collaborator. There is indeed hope for those who did not get in, including some truly great emerging artists. I proved this to some disappointed students by sharing with them, and now you, my own failed entry of 2007, a poorly photographed and photoshopped brick of glass with an embedded print.

I include this failure as it represents my maturation into what one might call middle-aged glass, happy to leave behind some mistakes on the way to a brighter future. Equally left behind, I have observed in this iteration of *Young Glass*, is the prevalence of the autonomous aesthetic object in glass. Through my selections, I must also confess to helping to promote the end of an older paradigm, perhaps to my own peril. What the artworks in this exhibition demonstrate are reflections on the state of our society, an awareness of broader dialogues in creative practice, a reverence for (and questioning of) craft traditions, and an on-going search for the perfect moment through art making.

MILLENNIAL TENSION

This exhibition will ultimately be set in the context of an era of change. Sunderland, home of National Glass Centre in the UK, was a city that voted strongly in favour of secession from the European Union, where various nationalist movements are also gaining a voice. The USA, my home country and that of the largest representation in this exhibition, has just embarked on a rocky start to the Donald Trump presidency. The feeling of instability permeates this exhibition. The artworks and their underlying concepts do not sit kindly for the viewer, if they are actually objects at all. Vignettes do not remain static, such as Zuzana Kubelkova's



Jeffrey Sarmiento
Transmission (Decay)
Cast and enamelled glass
Rejected from Young Glass 2007



Pavel Skrott
Glass...#1
YouTube video

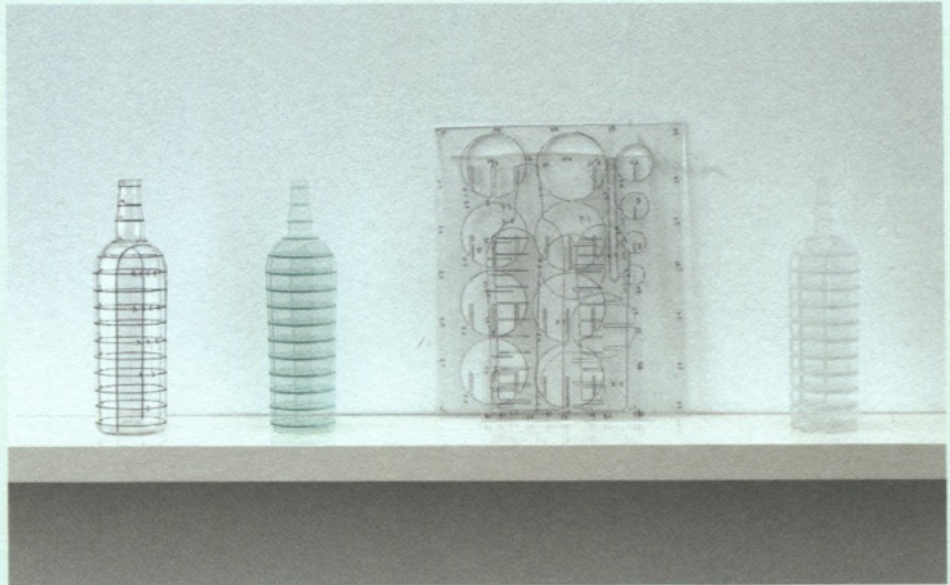
My Chemical Romance, which uses glass as the medium through which to view a slow crystallisation. Eve Cromwell uses the simple optical quality of water-filled drinking glasses to decode backwards-masked handwriting, a distorted recollection of intimate encounters in her *Cubicle Stories*. There seems to be a resistance, or even a rejection, of easily consumed glass artworks, replaced by performances. Whether one is licking glass with Judith Roux in public or risking life and limb with the a skate-die-destroy mentality with Kārlis Bogustovs, these are a fitting use of glass, although process seems to dominate these demonstrations.

Market forces, or lack thereof, push the glass artist away from the comfortable territory toward experimentation with video and film. In *Narcisse*, Gabriel Ferraci's muscular actor struggles with an invisible object, which bends the image in the video with each repetition, until the image, which one realises is being viewed from a stressed-out mirror, shatters. The logical conclusion to this line of thinking is of course an artwork that explores materiality with no original or physical content. One needs not even attend the exhibition or read this essay to consume the work. With *Glass...#1*, Pavel Skrott offers the viewer a ubiquitous YouTube video, mining Hollywood's depictions of violence, punctuated by shattering glass. This is of course a riff on Christian Marclay's 20 year-old remixed filmic compositions, exposing these video works as evidence of a knowledge of new media art, with a long path yet to be engaged to be regarded within a broader spectrum of contemporary art practice. Riikka Haapasaari's endeavour to combine filmmaking principles with her work in glass takes the biggest strides in this direction.

TECHNOLOGY ENGAGING TRADITION

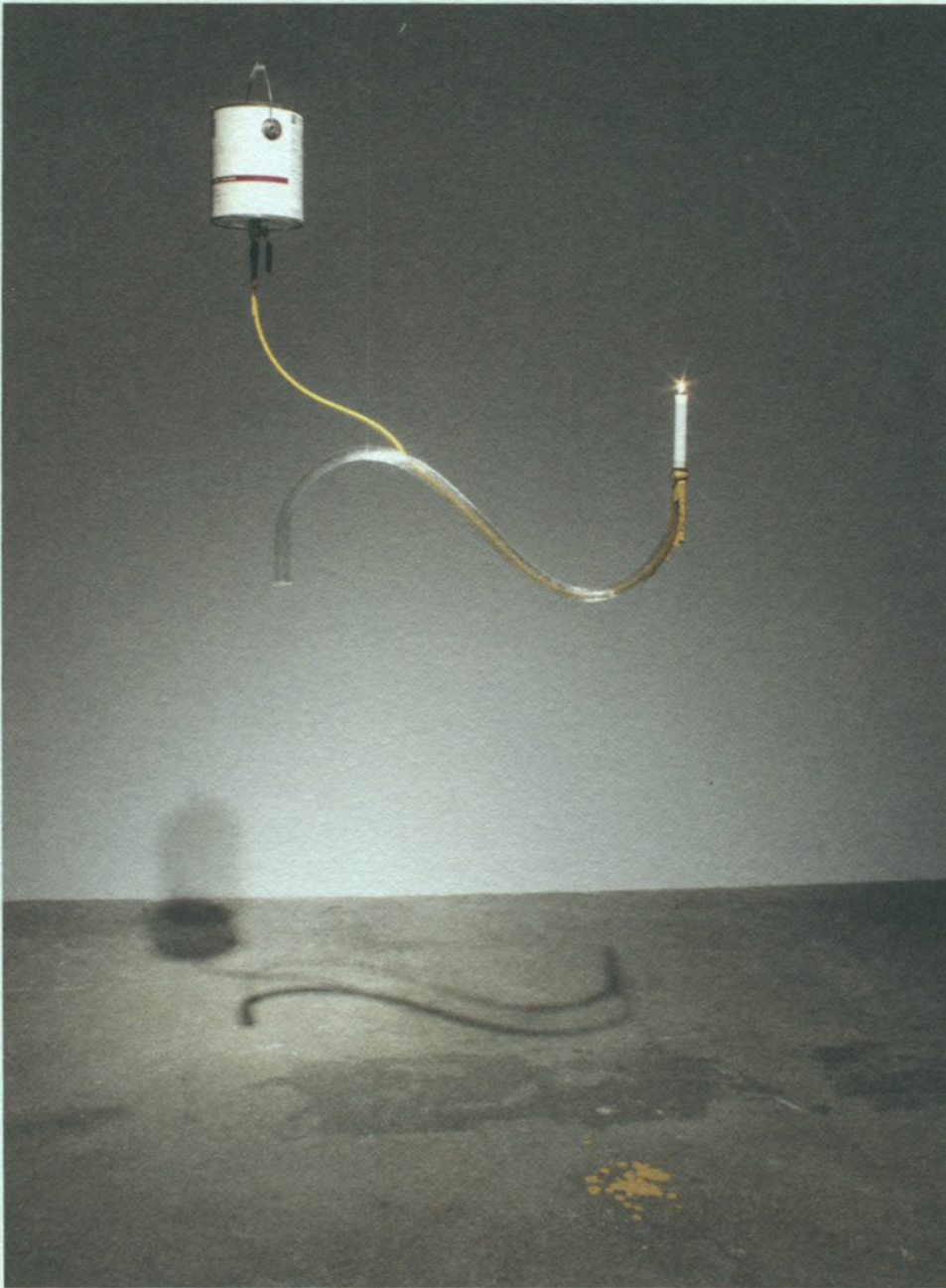
Young Glass continues to depart from the norms of the previous decade, even as its artists pursue the central tenets of Studio Glass: artistic expression combined with refinement in the making of objects in glass. Some of the most engaging

David King
Anatomy of a Waffle Bottle, 2015
Waterjet cut and blown glass



works in this exhibition connect references to historical contexts and processes even as they push toward 21st century approaches to making. Some of this can be attributed to the growth of academic, art practice-based research in which the University of Sunderland has been a pioneer. It is now more commonplace, at least in Europe, the UK, Australia, and notably the GLASSARTENGINE cross-disciplinary model being developed by Alfred University in the USA. Research methodologies have been behind the increased prevalence of new technologies being made more accessible and adapted for glassmakers. It is obvious to see how parametric forms and pixilation from the digital/virtual world creep their way into the aesthetics of new glass art, but I suspect this will only serve to date the works more quickly than is desired. *Young Glass* participants are not limited by the confines of their discipline, and digital technologies are subordinated to concepts. The fascination of 3D printing and waterjet cutting for the sake of it seems to have worn off, and I am hopeful the word digital will no longer be necessary in describing methods of manufacture. Instead the focus should always be expanding on the capacity of forms to render meaning.

The waterjet cutter at National Glass Centre in Sunderland was used for two works in this exhibition and they each engage craft process in an interesting way. In Dr Erin Dickson's *Window series* she endeavours to record the view from bedroom windows of places she has lived. These works invoke the colour volume principles employed by Libenský/Brychtova and more recently researched by Dr Heike Brachlow, in which the thickness of the glass creates contrasts of light and dark. The result of Dickson's modified milling process is a true-to-scale image of the view, captured permanently in the medium through which it was originally seen, and one of the few works in this exhibition that reference the heritage of stained glass in Britain. David King's pursuit of perfection as a glassblower is but one of many processes in which he meddles. His devotion to a particular



Zac Weinberg
Concept for Modified Chandelier
Blown, cold-worked glass, latex
paint can, vinyl tubing, ball valve,
dripless candle, monofilament.

whisky bottle form is evident in multiples and iterations. In *Anatomy of a Waffle Bottle*, he deconstructs the form in two ways. First, using a 3D model based on the bottle contours, he produced an easily repeatable interlocking form from float glass. He goes further to complicate this deconstruction through the making of his own window glass, this time through the historical process of slumping blown glass muffs, or open cylinders. David's meticulous measurement system was then used to adjust the waterjet cutting file to account for the uneven thickness of his

window glass. So what appears on surface to be a simple approximation of form becomes an intense, and laboured questioning of the definition of a bottle, one that might appeal to fans of the conceptual artist Joseph Kosuth.

TRANSCENDENCE

Now that the 21st century has come to the Studio Glass movement, is there still a place for refined narrative object making? Clearly this remains a core practice, and some of the best new examples of this kind of work have been included in the exhibition. One can point to the trope of blown glass objects shown in sets, indicating these are the best of the glass artist's efforts. However, even works that appear to be traditional plinth based objects expose process, with the use of glass as a bubbling, gurgling, dripping and even brittle material all brought out. The artists do seem to be aware that capturing the action of making embodies their ethos and fascination with the dynamic material. Mobility and transnational connections seem to be a big part of the development of global glass. One trend I would like to pick up is the inclusion of Xueyu He, a Chinese artist whose *Curve or Straightness?* consists of three wave forms in cast glass, connected by the flow created in a kiln, fitting in with the other process-led cast glass works. In the past decade the number of universities teaching glass in China has grown from 3 to 30, and I will not be surprised to see rapid development in the quantity of work emerging, or that in the next decade a unique Chinese take on glass art will be visible.

An investigation into materiality, handcrafted objects and their meanings remains paramount in the outcomes of the young artists in this exhibition. In this regard the interpretations of lighting in this exhibition successfully marry concept and craft. Alex Rosenberg has applied his own *Epitaph* to a sheet of glass, exposed rather fleetingly through a candle-lit glass lantern. Taking the lighting into the realm of product design, Kirsten Vikingstad Storesund's *Milovat Lamps* are outstandingly designed and crafted objects clearly emerging from the Scandinavian tradition. Finally, I believe a moment of lightness has been achieved in two interpretations of the chandelier, albeit in a dysfunctional way typical of the current spirit of this exhibition. Whereas Rui Sasaki has created a phosphorescent chandelier that can only be seen in darkened space, Zac Weinberg's *Concept for Modified Chandelier* is an irreverent approximation of a lighting object, featuring a paint can plumbed to overfill a vinyl tube, which somehow holds up an s-curved glass arm topped with a dripless candle. It provides light whilst teetering on disaster as the paint appears to have gushed onto the gallery floor. Exciting, well-crafted, and sometimes precarious, *Young Glass* is fulfilling the vision of early studio glass, liberating the material for the making of art.

Dr Jeffrey Sarmiento's involvement with Glasmuseet Ebeltoft dates to 2002, and he has also been a Fulbright Scholar to Denmark and studio assistant to museum founder Finn Lynggaard. He is also currently Artistic Director at North Lands Creative Glass in Scotland.