
Glass: Interpretations on A Vision - Amy M. Schaefer and Merrily Orsini

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When first discovered

in the Middle Ages, glass was considered such a mystery that its creators were often called magicians. Today, contemporary glass artists continue this magical tradition with bold and beautiful works of art. The ways to manipulate glass are limitless, and a closer examination of the methods that some glass artists use is a fascinating and interpretive journey.

Jon Kuhn

A sculpture by Jon Kuhn begins with some of the purest glass fabricated anywhere on the planet. Kuhn attaches plates of this clear, optical lead-fluoride glass to thin pieces of Bullseye colored glass. The two glass elements are carefully glued together, then machine-ground to a thin plane. This glass plate is cut into thin strips and shuffled into new layers, repeating the process, until the result is a grouping of brilliant colors. Once satisfied with the groupings, colors and clarity, Kuhn embeds these tiny glass plates into layers of optical lead-fluoride glass. Often having 5,000 to 6,000 components, the end result is a flawlessly designed sculpture that gracefully holds the core materials.

Although Kuhn's work may seem rooted in mathematics, geometric shapes and careful planning, it is the end result that captures the eye of the observer. The inspiration behind his pieces often reflects upon the human search for meaning. Perhaps Kuhn himself expresses it best, "My work is not about physical beauty in and of itself, but the manifestation of the inner spirit."

Rick Beck

Known for his large-scale glass sculptures depicting industrial, everyday objects such as screws and bolts, Beck's pieces begin their evolution with sketches and take shape in the form of a clay positive (model). A mold of the form is taken and placed into a kiln where it is filled with molten glass, fired and annealed. The rough form is then carved and fabricated with other castings to achieve the finished piece. Using a fragile material like glass to depict indestructible objects, allows Beck to create an interesting juxtaposition in his work.

"My work in glass is a synthesis of human and mechanical form, with an emphasis on formal aspects. I am interested in playing the volumes of mass against the rhythm of the lines described by the threads of the screws and the flutes of the bits. I enjoy the interplay of the visual (visceral) versus the verbal (descriptive/technical)."
- Rick Beck

Milissa Montini

Milissa Montini has long been exploring light, form and color in glass, resulting in pieces reflecting nature's patterns. In recent years, her works have expanded to include abstract designs ranging from the movement of currents of the sea to multifaceted fields of vegetation. Montini's artistic eye has allowed her to find success with flameworked murrini. Cut to fit together and kiln fused, the resulting plate is ground thin to reveal the intricate patterns and slumped into shape.

"I find the designs I choose timeless, reminiscent of an ancient lure. Specific subject matter is selected from personal encounters that have shaped my work and my life."
- Milissa Montini

Richard Ritter

Drawn to the spontaneous qualities of hot glass and the "dance" of creating glass sculptures, Richard Ritter explores the translucent nature of glass by utilizing multiple layers of murrini, latticino and crystal to create visual expressions of nature. Ritter starts from raw glass, mixing and melting it to make crystal and opal colors, creating images such as flowers and leaves. These elements are combined within a glass matrix or on the surface of the glass, resulting in gossamer lace blankets of opal glass floating beneath petals and other pearls of nature.

"The elements of crystal and opal glasses, the murrini imagery, the latticino and cane combine as a kind of vocabulary in my work. I hope that when people look at my pieces, they may scan the surface and what lies beneath. The meaning comes about from the eye and mind of the viewer." — Richard Ritter

Paul Stankard

Looking at a Stankard paperweight you may be fooled into believing that he has preserved a living flower in glass, when in fact he has created one entirely from spun filaments. Highly sophisticated and an elegant tribute to nature's beauty, Stankard's art encapsulates mosaic cane words or murini. These arrangements of flowers and insects are flameworked using a gas oxygen torch, and then enclosed in two separate pieces of colored crystal glass, allowing for great detail and delicacy.

"I am interested in integrating mysticism, informed by botany, into my work, giving the glass an organic credibility. Through the work, I explore the cycles of nature with wildflowers as a personal metaphor." — Paul Stankard

Different Interpretations, Unparalleled Beauty

Although the methods used in glass work are vast and diverse, each artisan's unique approach allows for the beauty of the end result. The magic in light's refraction through glass creates a magnificent display of color as a spectacular feast for the eyes. Selected works of Jon Kuhn, Rick Beck and Paul Stankard will be on display with various galleries at SOFA NEW YORK 2003, May 28 - June 1, 2003.