



Layering Creative Virtues onto an Object, Part 2: Survey

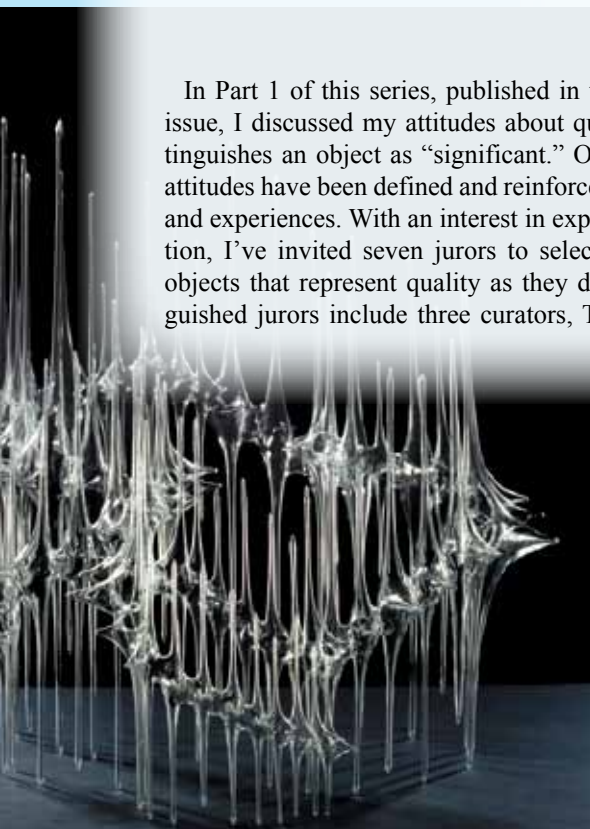
By Paul Stankard

Introduction

In Part 1 of this series, published in the February/March issue, I discussed my attitudes about quality and what distinguishes an object as “significant.” Over the years, these attitudes have been defined and reinforced by my challenges and experiences. With an interest in expanding this exploration, I’ve invited seven jurors to select five flameworked objects that represent quality as they define it. Our distinguished jurors include three curators, Tina Oldknow, Jutta

Page, Gwynne Rukenbrod, and four artists, Shane Fero, Christina Logan, Gateson Recko, and Yoko Yagi.

It’s rewarding for me to experience these 35 objects, selected for their merit, knowing that, when I began my creative journey, the idea of viewing glass objects outside their function was unusual. This survey represents not only flameworking’s movement into the fine art world, but also the technical and esthetic advancements made in the past few decades. Based on this accelerated activity flameworking is experiencing, it’s easy to predict higher visibility for the material and this process on the international art scene.





Gwynne Rukenbrod is curator of Fine Craft at the Houston Center for Contemporary Craft (Houston, TX; www.crafthouston.org). She has served as executive director or curator for numerous organizations, including the International Society of Glass Beadmakers and Ohio Center for History, Art, and Technology. In addition to her curatorial work, Rukenbrod is a studio artist with an exhibition entitled "Restful Places—Cremation Urns and Objects" coming up at the AAW Gallery in St. Paul, Minn.

I chose these five lampworked pieces based not only on amazing craftsmanship in the medium, but also for each artist's ability to think "outside the box" of traditionally lampworked vessels and beads. Matt Eskuche's piece "Ha Cha!" brings to mind mass consumerism and our igno-

rance of the pollution it causes. The common Styrofoam cup we all use for coffee and tea is blown up to a large-sized painting, forcing the viewer to question whether we would want that type of decoration on our walls and to question our everyday disposal of such items. Ginny Ruffner's "Brain Brakes" illustrates Ruffner's need to be creative yet keep control of her creativity. "The fruit represents fruitfulness, which is the key to my heart, and those keys are in my hands. My hands support my heart, which has grown wings and is about to fly away again. Fortunately, my brain, which is driving the cart, throws back a restraining chain and screeches on the brakes," states Ruffner. Combining oil paints with her glass work, she has paved the way for women in a male-dominated medium. Milissa Montini and Jenine Bressner, I feel Jenine is doing a wonderful job with transcending the material of glass and approaching the art community

differently from an indie artist perspective and Montini for her complicated murrine hollow beads. Both are breaking ground and helping to elevate the art of glass beadmaking. Brent Kee Young's chair represents architectural feats in lampworked glass. His true-to-scale pieces are large, yet have a wonderfully delicate look thanks to his intricately constructed pieces. He is not only trying an unusual technique with glass, but has made the crossover from furnace-blown glass to lampworked glass. Each of these five artists is using the torch to create their work and creating an excitement in the art world that will continue to elevate this art form for years to come.



Milissa Montini, "Gratitude," handmade murrine, hollow lampworked glass bead. Photo by Kevin R. Cooke, Graule Studios.



Brent Kee Young, "Matrix Series: Respite," lampworked glass. 39" x 37" x 38". Photo by Lumina Studios, courtesy of Robert M Minkoff Foundation.



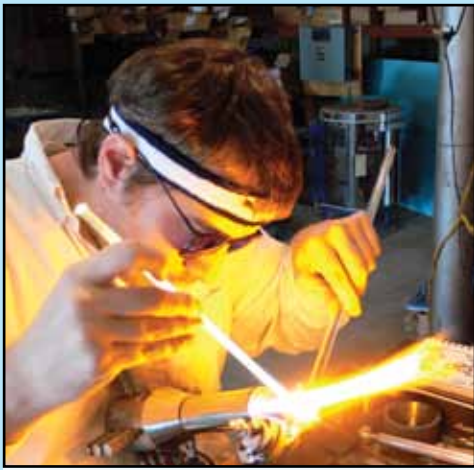
Ginny Ruffner, "Brain Brakes," lampworked glass and acrylic paints. Photo by Matt Smith.



Jenine Bressner, "Neck Party," lampworked glass beads. Photo by Nadav Benjamin.



Matt Eskuche, "Ha-Cha! (The jazz hands of a Diet Coke)," lampworked glass, paint, IKEA shelf, and canvas. Photo by Matt Smith.



Gateson Recko is most known for exploring the glass sphere, particularly the marble, in his award-winning *Universe Marble* collection. His background includes a BA in Architecture from Columbia University and cofounding and serving as Artistic Director for *Hot Soup*, Philadelphia's first public glassblowing facility. Gateson's work has been shown at SOFA New York and Chicago as well as Palm Beach 3 and belongs to the permanent collections of the Wheaton Museum of American Glass, The Corning Museum of Glass and the Kobe Flameworking museum in Kobe, Japan. Most recently, Gateson was the featured artist for the Borosilicate Art Expo in Yokohama, Japan and as the featured artist for Wheaton Art Center's Marble Weekend.



Zach Puchowitz, "EZMONEY," 2008—borosilicate glass complemented by metal, rubber, paint, glue, U.S. currency, and found objects; 16x17x11.

The challenge of selecting just five artists or the objects they create may be equaled to the difficulty of creating a work of art that "celebrates excellence." I have been fortunate to be part of an artistic explosion that I would loosely define as the second studio glass movement, generated by the mass accessibility of glass through the use of a torch. Brought on by a handful of talented flameworkers generously passing down information, coupled with the boom of the Internet, a generation of new artists has emerged with unlimited knowledge and a fearless ambition to make skillful and thought-provoking work. Although my choices come from diverse backgrounds, they all make work that is unique, original and informed.

Chris Juedemann's "Granite Godfather" combines the weight of a solid granite sphere with a murrine of an American icon, Marlon Brando as the Godfather, creating a premeditated marriage of material and imagery that defines "heavy." Zach Puchowitz's "EZMONEY" captures the rise in popularity of inner-city America's



Chris Juedemann, "Granite Godfather," 2008—granite and glass; 2-inch diameter.



Scott Deppe, "Celtic Buckle," 2008—borosilicate glass; 3x3.

thug lifestyle, coupled with a hot rod rockabilly style reminiscent of Peter Saul or R. Crumb. Christopher McElroy expresses a balance between man and nature in his subtle masterpiece, "Mobile Root." Very few American artists seem to have wabi sabi, but Christopher definitely has it. Jillian Molettiere explores the human psyche in her 3D graphic expressionist work, "Mental Block: Blue One." Through the use of cast resin and modern materials, she has created a synthetic world of human emotions and curiosities. Scott Deppe has amazed many with his intricately detailed disc-flip patterns, as evidenced in "Celtic Buckle." Accompany that with an exploration into color that would make Itten proud, and you end up with one of flameworking's biggest trendsetters.

Each artist has a unique vision for his or her work, but they all bring an attitude of making the finest quality work with integrity, attention to detail, and—above all—originality.



Jillian Molettiere, "Mental Block: Blue One," 2008—glass, solid surface material, resin; 4x4x4.



Christopher McElroy, "Mobile Root," 2008—borosilicate glass, tree root, silver; 18x6x6.



Jutta-Annette Page is the curator of Glass and acting curator of Decorative Art at the Toledo Museum of Art. She was educated in Germany and moved to the United States to continue her studies. She received an M.A.E. in Jewelry and Metalsmithing at the Rhode Island School of Design, and earned her M.A. and Ph.D. in the History of Art and Architecture from Brown University, followed by a Harvard University Research Fellowship. Her highly acclaimed book, Beyond Venice: Glass in Venetian Style 1500-1750, was published in 2004 and followed by The Art of Glass: The Toledo Museum of Art, in conjunction with the opening of the museum's new Glass Pavilion.

Page chairs the International Council of Museums' Glass Committee, is a visiting professor at the Bard Graduate School for Studies in the Decorative Arts, and serves on the executive board of the Glass Art Society and the board of the Creative Glass Center of America at Wheaton.

Literature, music, the visual arts, and science have served as inspiration to lampworkers at least since the late Renaissance. The diorama, portraying the myth of Diana and Actaeon, a subject derived from the Metamorphoses by the ancient author Ovid, is a case in point: The delicate composition with its figural glass elements is suggestive of a three-dimensional bookplate.

Music inspired Czech artist Vera Liskova to push the sculptural boundaries of flame-worked borosilicate glass in her work "Anthem of Joy in Glass."

American artist Ginny Ruffner's theatrical interpretation of "Beauty as Drama" is a wry comment on the fragility of female beauty, as well as on its representation in the history of art.

The elongated, rather rigid shapes of flame-worked glass drops and their resemblance to tears inspired British jeweler Wendy Ramshaw to create her interpretation of Picasso's Cubist portrait of his crying lover and companion.

British artist Annie Cattrell explores subjects related to neuroscience, anatomy, and meteorology in flame-worked glass. Her work "Capacity" uses the technique to illustrate the fragile expanse of a human lung seemingly frozen in taking in a breath, in a work that fuses science and art. For centuries, scientific apparatus has been a financial backbone for flame-work-ers. Artists who traditionally do not work in glass (at least, not exclusively) have been drawn in recent years to this aspect of the technique.



"Diorama of Diana and Actaeon, glass, wood, metal, glue, velvet; 21.9 cm H; 19.5 cm L; probably made in Venice, Italy; possibly Innsbruck, Austria, 1690-1720.



"Anthem of Joy in Glass," colorless glass; flame-worked borosilicate, 99.5 cm H, 95.1 cm W, 101.6 cm D; Vera Liskova, Prague, Czechoslovakia, 1977.



"Chain of Tears for Weeping Woman," flame-worked glass, blackened steel, 41 x 9 x .6 cm; 16 1/8 x 3 1/2 x 1/4"; Wendy Ramshaw, British, 1998.



"Beauty as Drama, # 141-52", flame-worked glass, Prismacolor pencils, oil paint, Krylon fixative, H. 33 cm (13 inches); from the Beauty Series; Ginny Ruffner, United States, 1990.



Tina Oldknow is Curator of Modern Glass at The Corning Museum of Glass. She has served on the staffs and as a consultant for several museums, including the J. Paul Getty Museum, and is the author of numerous books on glass including, *Richard Marquis Objects* (1997), *Dante Marioni: Blown Glass* (2000) and most recently, *Contemporary Glass Sculptures and Panels: Selections from The Corning Museum of Glass* (2008). Oldknow holds a B.A. in art history from the University of California, Los Angeles and an M.A. in art history from the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. Her next major exhibition is "Voices of Contemporary Glass: The Heineman Collection" which will appear at The Corning Museum in summer, 2009.



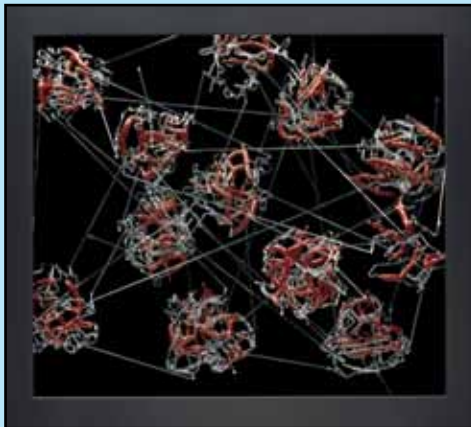
"Horse Skeleton," Dafna Kaffeman (Israeli, b. 1972), Israel, Jerusalem, 2003. Flameworked glass, H: 24 cm, W: 21 cm, D: 6 cm. The Corning Museum of Glass (2005.3.22, gift of Dale and Doug Anderson).

Dafna Kaffeman is a young Israeli artist who works in a variety of materials.



Marie Antoinette Sacrifices the Heart of the Nobility on the Altar of the French Republic, Pierre Haly (French, active late 18th century), France, Nevers, about 1790. Flameworked glass, H: 22.5, W: 28.2, D: 21.2 cm. The Corning Museum of Glass (2003.3.35)

In this allegorical scene, the French queen Marie Antoinette walks among classical ruins that represent the aristocratic regime toppled by the French Revolution. She is about to place a winged heart, symbolizing the nobility, on an altar, next to two flaming hearts that represent the clergy and the common people. The white glass imitates porcelain, which was fashionable at this time.



"FAMILY MATTER," Jill Reynolds (American, b. 1956), United States, Brooklyn, New York, 2002. Flameworked glass; glycerin, pigment, cork and wax, H: 132.1 cm, W: 144.8 cm, D: 68.6 cm. The Corning Museum of Glass (2002.4.64, the 17th Rakow Commission).

FAMILY MATTER is a portrait of the artist and her 11 siblings as interconnected molecules. Each glass molecule is made up of 12 complete sets of letters spelling out a name. The letters are made of small glass rods and larger blown glass tubes that are filled with a bloodlike red liquid. Here, the metaphors of molecules and letters are extended to human relationships.

Scientific studies, ancient burials, and memento mori are some of the ideas that this small but simple horse evokes. To effectively communicate an idea, technique does not have to be flashy or complicated.



Woven Heaven, Tangled Earth, Susan Plum (American, b. 1944), United States, Brooklyn, New York, 1999. Flameworked glass, Diam. 91.4 cm. The Corning Museum of Glass (2001.4.70)

Woven Heaven, Tangled Earth was inspired by Susan Plum's research into ancient Mesoamerican cosmological systems. She writes: "Mayan and other Mesoamerican traditions use the weaver's loom as a metaphor for the universe. The loom of the universe is believed to be constructed of filaments of light from which the Heavens and Earth are woven. These woven strands of light can become entangled around the Earth, and it is the job of Mayan shamans to untangle this 'discord.'"

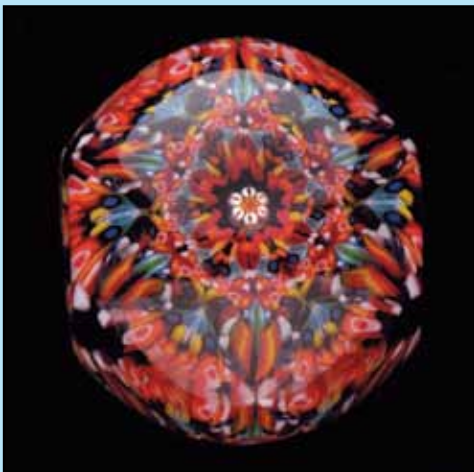


"Shirts, Cherries, and Snowflakes, Of Course," Ginny Ruffner (American, b. 1952), United States, Seattle, Washington, 1993. Flameworked glass; oil pigments, colored pencils, H: 50.4 cm, W: 37.7 cm, D: 35 cm. The Corning Museum of Glass (93.4.89).

Ginny Ruffner, who was trained as a painter, is an artist and teacher internationally recognized for her sculptures in glass. While small-scale flameworking was traditionally executed with soft soda-lime glasses, Ruffner adapted her knowledge of harder borosilicate glasses, used in scientific glassmaking, to the making of art. Her upbeat sculptures, which refer to personal experiences, memories, and ideas, are sandblasted and covered with designs in paint and colored pencil.



Yoko Yagi is a widely respected glass artist who has been on a journey to research and pioneer art-making techniques combining fusing, kiln-forming, and flameworking. Yagi earned a B.A. in Aesthetics from the University of the Sacred Heart, Tokyo, with additional studies in and travel to Europe and the United States. Yagi's process integrates flameworking with murrines fused onto layers of sheet glass that celebrate what critics internationally have referred to as "quiet beauty." Her art is represented in the United States by Bullseye Gallery in Portland, Ore., and Snyderman-Works Gallery in Philadelphia. In October 2009, Yoko Yagi will be featured in a solo exhibit at the Gallery Art Box in Osaka, Japan.



Daisuke Takeuchi, "Kaleidoscope," "Tombodama" bead, Satake. 20x20 mm. Photo by Takayuki Matsuzawa

The detailed workmanship of this piece mesmerizes us. The "Kaleidoscope" draws our eyes to an intimate gaze. His intuitive and calculated excellent skills make these tiny mosaics into a dazzling magical world. Takeuchi recently opened his own studio in Nara, Japan.



Hideko Takamizawa, untitled, Borosilicate glass object, Size: 17 H x 19 D x 20 W cm. Photo by Taku Saiki.

Takamizawa's series of imaginary flowers is notably outstanding among other borosilicate artworks in Japan. Her strong but elegant work declares her freedom in using borosilicate glass to convey her interpretation. Her work is in the collections of the Crafts Gallery of the National Museum of Modern Art.



Yoshiko Minagawa, "A Fruit and a Beetle," Beetle: Korurimusui, 1.8x7.1x3.2 cm; flower: flameworked glass (Satake); fruit: blown glass, 8.4x11x7.5cm.

Minagawa's zeal for flamework made her reach to create her series of insects. This is an incredibly challenging effort and requires special skills to create such a detailed specimen as this insect. It is also clear that her aim is not just making a glass specimen of an insect, but to give viewers to an imaginary scene. She combines her glassblowing skill in this work, making a large fruit that is actually a bottle and using a flower as its stopper. Her innovation not only shows the possibility of expanding the field, and is proof of her multiple capabilities.



Toshiki Uchida, "Fern," "Tombodama" bead, Satake glass. 28x28 mm.

There is an ineffable allure in gazing into the depth of this ethereal opaline glass. Uchida shows another world in only a 28-millimeter diameter sphere. Uchida has been known as one of the masters of Tombodama in Japan. He said that continuing to see his work evolve is the joy for him as an artist.



Taeko Yamada, "Flame-drawn blue flower—En-byo Seika," Borosilicate glass container. 73 mm x60 mm x60 mm.

Yamada's exquisite skills result in a soft and delicate piece of artwork using borosilicate glass. This is like a glass canvas with beautiful vignette on it. Yamada carefully paints another layer of colored glass all through onto a clear glass tube to make the body of a bottle with opaque color. Then she draws all the decorative flowers and leaves, which requires extremely careful attention, not only to the spot she is working on but to the whole body throughout the process.



Shane Fero, an American master, maintains a studio in Penland, N.C. He divides his time between his art-making and education. He has participated in international symposia, given workshops, and demonstrated at the major glass centers worldwide, and his art is represented in more than 30 major public collections and numerous private ones. He is president of the board of directors of the Glass Art Society and, in March 2009, he will receive the Distinguished Artist award from the International Flameworking Conference at Salem Community College, acknowledging his contribution in the glass art field.

As a refutation of Plato's concept of art as imitation of the forms, I can really appreciate references to nature but not approximating an actual form. Inspiration from nature becomes transcendent when an artist conceives and executes an allusion or morphing of a real form. Kathleen Elliot's botanical constructions are even more intriguing when they are not a representation of actual specimens, but spring from her imagination, even though they are informed by nature. Likewise, Richard Clement's "Golden Urchin" doesn't look like a real urchin, but is actually more beautiful in its form and continues the tradition of a Tiffany-like gold-fumed surface treatment. On a more removed and mysterious path, Jay Musler's "A Safe Place" resembles a gourd-like habi-

tat chained to a bird/turtle creature in a bucket and features his usual beautifully sandblasted and painted surface.

In 1991, when I visited Robbin Mickelsen in Florida, I brought my new, surrealistic borosilicate figures to show him, and he asked me what they were. His "Rocker" embodies this weird spirit and is brilliantly executed; I particularly like the use of steel wool in the hair and tail. On the other hand, I am very fond of using flameworking with mixed-media to enlarge its content. Pat Owens's "Temptation of Anthony" combines a classical reference to ageless depiction of the story explored by Bosch, Grunewald, and Dali. Her expressive flameworked faces, combined with her talent in other media, show a masterly exploration of portraiture.

Consciously or unconsciously, these artists reflect creativity based on nature and culture, not the other way around.



Pat Owens, "Temptation of Anthony," flameworked, colored soda-lime glass figures, electroplated; patinated and painted bronze; painted wood frame; with welded steel wire structure. 35" h x 23" w x 4" d. 2007. Photo by Pat Owens.



Kathleen Elliot, "Pods From Elsewhere," flameworked (powders and frits, blown, sculpted, and cut) and sandblasted glass. 9.5" h x 14" w x 6" d. 2008. Photo by Keay Edwards.



Robert A. Mickelsen, "Rocker," flameworked (blown and sculpted) borosilicate and sandblasted glass, steel wool; assembled. 14" h x 16" w x 5" d. 2004. Photo by Don Abbott.



Richard Clements, "Golden Urchin," flameworked and borosilicate glass, sandblasted, fumed. 11.75" h x 3 15/16" w x 11.75" d. 2004. Photo by Richard Clements.



Jay Musler, "A Safe Place" flameworked glass, sandblasted & applied paint. 7" h x 9" w x 3" d. 2005. Photo by Jay Musler.



Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Musée-Atelier du Verre, Sars-Poteries, France; and Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C. She is currently filming a new master class video for the Studio of the Corning Museum of Glass.

Kristina Logan is internationally recognized for her glass beads. A committed educator, Logan has taught at major schools in both the U.S. and Europe, including the Studio at the Penland School of Crafts in North Carolina and Centro Studio Vetro and Abate Zanetti in Venice, Italy. Her work can be found in the collections of the Corning Museum of Glass;

Beads have been traded through the years from one hand to the other. Beads relate directly to the human figure. They have been guarded as precious items, traded as currency, worn around necks in glorious display, and stashed away in secret pockets. Beads have withstood the test of time, surviving for centuries.

The artists I have selected all show a dedication to the art of beadmaking. Their work is refined, well-thought-through, and well-executed. Each person shows innovation in beadmaking and a determination to perfect specific skills, which result in a clear sense of design in their work. When these skills are translated into the glass, they pack these tiny objects with energy.



Kristen Frantzen Orr, "Opalescent Coral Floral," 2005. Photo by David Orr.



James Jones, untitled, 2000. Photo by James Jones.



Kate Fowle Meleney, "Japanese Trapezoid," 2003. Photo by Jerry Anthony.



Terri Caspary Schmidt, "Moroccan," 2006. Photo by Margot Geist.



Daniel Adams, "Metamorphic," 2005. Photo by Roger Schreiber.



Conclusion

What I sense from the best of these objects is a commitment to making work personal by exploring the process. With the exception of the pieces we could categorize as sculptural, most of these works are small in scale. The combination of creative need and artistic drive makes this survey feel futuristic. These pieces derive their artistic integrity from the artists who are pushing the limits of the materials and inventing a new language for glass.

What is also impressive about this selection is its range. We see decorative art and fine art, conceptual sculpture, pop art, and traditional craft objects that move beyond convention all receiving equal attention. In other words, this survey celebrates the diver-

sity and potential of glass in ways that were unimaginable even a decade ago.

Finally, I want to thank the jurors. They took to my request with the utmost seriousness, and it shows in their selections. It's no light task to be responsible for representing excellence, and the time the jurors spent surveying the flameworked glass landscape and the seriousness with which they treated the art and process allows informed decisions to come naturally.

Publisher's note:

In addition to gaining an international reputation for his flameworked art, Paul Stankard teaches flameworking at Salem Community College. In his recently published book, *No Green Berries or Leaves* (www.mwpubco.com/titles/paulstankard.htm), Stankard writes about the challenges of pursuing a career in glass. He is featured writer for *Glass Line Magazine*.

