PRESS KIT
Lausanne, March 2015

LIVING GLASS II
RECENT ACQUISITIONS BY THE GLASS ART COLLECTION  2012-2014
18 March – 1 Novembre 2015

OPENING TUESDAY 18 MARCH 2015 FROM 18.00

MEDIA CONTACT
Danaé Panchaud, public relations
+41 21 315 25 27, danae.panchaud@lausanne.ch

CONTENT
Press release p. 3
Contemporary glass p. 4
History of the mudac glass collection p. 5
Selected pieces from the collection p. 7-11
Practical information p. 12

Nendo, Innerblow Table 02, 2012 (detail)
© Atelier de numérisation de la Ville de Lausanne
Living Glass II is the second installment of the mudac’s latest contemporary glass art exhibition and presents a broad selection of works and installations by today’s glass creators of many nationalities—Swiss, European, American and Asian. Bearing witness to the very idea of glass art, pieces ranging from sculpture to edition design all translate the museum conservation team’s open and ongoing approach, as assisted and supported by the Collection’s patron.

The ensuing major canvassing program has brought to light the incredible diversity and dynamism of the contemporary scene with respect to such a singular and demanding material. This new set of works represents a very far-spreading, overall view of contemporary glass art production in Switzerland and around the world. Today, joining those regions and countries that first launched the major groundbreaking trends reinstating glass internationally, there are countless initiatives by artists and designers who have forgone any formal education in the mastery of this material. Designers and artists are linking up with master glass artists to work together. As a result, on the one hand, today’s glass art features spectacularly intricate and beautifully mastered pieces with an undeniably aesthetic impact and, most importantly, encompassing the tradition and know-how of the famous major centers of the second half of the 20th century. These now exist side-by-side with more experimental pieces that can even be highly conceptual, and are often very singular in shape or statement.

In their fascination with the very particular world of glass art production, the latest generation of artists and designers now test, experiment and question the practices such production entails, but always—and necessarily—in tandem with today’s master glass artists. The many pathways being travelled by creators stemming from at times very distant horizons attest to the liveliness of the contemporary glass art scene. Mudac is happy to put its acquisitions policy at the service of that scene’s plurality and dynamism.


Sam Baron, Fil, du projet Drawing Glass, FABRICA, 2013
© Marco Zanin / FABRICA
Architecture began resorting to glass already in the late 19th century and even more so during the 20th. Moreover, since 1950, this material itself has evolved in unique fashion, as documented by the Mudac collection over the last forty years. Be it for monumental sculpture, art works or design pieces, glass has in fact become a choice material that is truly contemporary.

The properties of glass are as singular as they are fascinating—ever intimating the paradoxical and challenging our perception of mass, volume and space. Like no other medium, glass brings into play metaphor, and even the temporal dimension. Moreover, not only does it easily imitate other materials, but it also can be turned into whimsy, be transformed into kitsch, or else serve to inspire contemplation. Essentially a plain material, in its crystalline form glass becomes precious. Certainly it comes as no surprise that a material that is so proteiform, so highly expressive, is held in great esteem by such a diversity of creators.

Today’s artists, designers and the public at large are showing renewed interest in glass, reflecting their curiosity about the creative process, a certain form of tradition and the handcrafting of a material. The mudac conservation department has done its canvassing in different realms of creativity, discovering sculpture pieces directly tied to the studio glass movement (generally entailing impressively large one-off works), contemporary art works that often avail themselves of this medium to metaphorical ends and, finally, the design field’s explorations devoted to lighting fixtures, mirrors and vases. By definition, glass sits at the intersection of art, design and handicrafts. Therefore it is all the more suited to such transdisciplinary realms of creative endeavor as “design d’auteur” or art design.

The exhibition Living Glass II invites viewers to discover glass’s wealth of expressivity for themselves, and to take stock of the technical qualities and variety of approaches belonging to the creators who have joined the Mudac collection over these last seven years.

---

Hassan Khan, *The Knot*, 2012 (detail)
© Atelier de numérisation de la Ville de Lausanne
HISTORY OF THE MUDAC GLASS COLLECTION

It was in 1970 that the patrons Traudl and Peter Engelhorn, friends of René Berger (former director of the Fine Arts Museum of Lausanne) and Rosmarie Lippuner (director at the time of Lausanne's Decorative Arts Museum) launched the mudac collection. The Engelhorns, who were of German and Austrian origin but had settled on the Riviera Vaudoise a few years before then, wished to set up a collection of one sort or another. Perhaps Impressionist paintings? Or antique bronze pieces? All that had already been done however, whereas they were looking for something unprecedented, something linking up with the artistic and technical developments of the day...

It was at this point that the Engelhorns were introduced to Peggy Guggenheim, who was living in the Venier dei Leoni Palace of Venice at the time. It so happens that, in the late 1950s, the master glass blower Egidio Costantini had submitted an ambitious project of his to Peggy Guggenheim, known as a great lover and active supporter of modern art.

Constantini was convinced that glass was a vital 20th-century material that could lend itself perfectly to usages other than the utilitarian and decorative purposes it had served until then. He believed that glass possessed technical and expressive features suited to artistic creation, and sought to prove his point by inviting recognized artists to work—with his help—towards developing this potential. He wanted them to send him their sketches so that he and his assistants could lend shape to their ideas, producing unique objects more in the vein of small sculptures than vases or trinkets. Peggy Guggenheim not only accepted to see the glassmaker, but also agreed to propose his project to the artists she knew: these included Pablo Picasso, Jean Cocteau, Jean Arp, Marc Chagall and Max Ernst.

In the period from 1959 to the mid-1960s, based on the sketches submitted by a number of artists, and thanks to the skills of Egidio Costantini and his workshop in Murano, a group of 36 pieces came into being. Named La Fucina degli angeli (Furnace of the Angels) by Jean Cocteau, who actively participated in the project, this group of works is considered to have given rise to a whole new discipline—namely, glass art.

These pieces, heralding the advent of glass art as an unprecedented artistic discipline on the borderline of the decorative arts, fascinated Peter and Traudl Engelhorn to the point of their acquiring the entire group.

Their enthusiasm led the couple to research the subject, whereupon they came to realize that this was no unique idea. Since the early 1960s, in both Europe and the United States, several initiatives had been coming into being in the glass art field, including a movement labeled studio glass.

The studio glass movement introduced a new approach to glass and to the usual ways of fashioning it; release was sought from the constraints of productivity and the industrial context to which glassmaking belonged at the time. All this required an individual workshop and the creation of a kiln on a small scale, allowing glass to be fired to its fusion point (between 600 and 1400 degrees Celsius), to be shaped and to be re-fired. In other words, for it to be cooled off in stages until attaining room temperature. In 1962, Dominick Labino achieved just such a kiln.

Meanwhile, in their continued enthusiasm, the Engelhorns alighted on these ideas for their collecting purposes. They were impressed by the dynamism of the creators involved in all these recent developments with respect to a new art seeking to make the most of such a paradoxical and fascinating material’s potential. All that remained to be found was a venue, which would have to be public, since they wished to share their new-found passion with others; it would also have to be suited to displaying the works and to promoting them on behalf of all the interested parties.

In his customary open-minded manner, René Berger lost no time in introducing the Engelhorns to Rosmarie Lippuner who, upon the death of its preceding director, had just taken over the direction of the Decorative Arts Museum. And this was the starting point of a marvelous collection whose 36 original objects have, over a 43-year period, grown into some 540 pieces.
SELECTED PIECES FROM THE COLLECTION

Ann Wolff was born in 1937. An artist of Swedish origin, living in Germany, she has won a number of awards, including two in 2011 alone: the Lifetime Achievement Award of the GAS Glass Art Society in the USA and the European Culture Prize, PRO EUROPA, Strasbourg. She has always been fascinated by the expressive power of the human face and body and their interaction with the environment. Her solid and powerful style counterbalances the light passing through the glass. Her work expresses strength and effort and has a sculptural, even monumental dimension. There is nothing insipid about her approach: she chooses existential themes and translates them with unshakeable conviction.

Hassan Khan, a Cairo-based artist, musician and writer born in 1975, interweaves references to minimalism and the energetic popular movement New Wave Shaabi into his musical performances. His sculpture *The Knot*, which was exhibited at the Kassel documenta in 2012, represents a Gordian knot, a metaphor for an insoluble problem that can only be resolved by bold action, hence the expression ‘cutting the Gordian knot’. Many of this multifaceted artist’s works have a self-referential theme. The work was created around the time of the Tahrir Square protests during the Arab Spring. It is possible to see it as a reflection on his working methods. As Hassan Khan says himself: “It’s not possible to fully understand how an artist works. I don’t know exactly what I’m doing. But I find out as I go along. As I work, I understand a little more…” In the act of creation, old codes are deciphered and new ones are created in an ongoing oscillation between individual and social references.
Drawing Glass

This series of 14 objects accompanied by freehand sketches is the result of a workshop organised by Sam Baron, director of the design department of Fabrica in Treviso. Simone Farresin and Andrea Trimarchi of Studio Formafantasma were invited to lead an experiment with the seven fabricanti (students in residence) who graduated in 2013, and guided the students in their exploration of the creative process and the relationship between drawing and 3D execution. Glass was the obvious material to choose as, in its clear and transparent form, its materiality disappears to the extent that it resembles a line drawn in space. The sketches were given to glassmaker Massimo Lunardon, who interpreted the designs and executed them, underlining the traditional collaboration between designers and master craftsmen.

Dean Brown, Perspective, from the Drawing Glass, FABRICA, 2013
© Marco Zanin / FABRICA

Studio Formafantasma, Mar Gh’era, from the projet Drawing Glass, FABRICA, 2013
© Marco Zanin / FABRICA
This British artist, born in 1949 and based in London, executes her own designs. This work was one of the submissions for the 2014 Coburg Glass Prize (Germany), a prestigious European event that showcases the wide range of artistic expression possible through glass. It awards a number of prizes and is a reference in the discipline. Katharine Coleman exploits the optical properties of clear lead crystal overlaid with a layer of coloured blown glass. Broken China Bowls was created by first carving and polishing the crystal to reveal its interior. Then the design was engraved, reflecting and refracting through the internal surface, creating the illusion of one bowl floating inside another.

Alessandro Diaz de Santillana also created a project specifically for the mudac collection. This glass artist likes to take over space with mural reliefs that are often of monumental size and is very comfortable with the illusionist games associated with this material, especially mirrors. Untitled mudac is composed of sparkling glass elements that are tilted at various angles, partially reflecting and distorting the surroundings. The result is an activation of space and a relationship of astonished curiosity between the spectators – whose reflections are manipulated – and the work.
This Japanese artist has for many years divided his time between Murano and his country of origin. Yoichi Ohira was born in 1946 and has just retired from producing art after an illustrious career. Unlike his opaque pieces made up of canes of coloured glass, *Cristallo Sommerso Nº60 – Scolpito* is part of a collection he began in 2006 with the assistance of maestro Giacomo Barbini of the Anfora glassworks, reflecting his interest in clear glass. This series is characterised by compact and coherent shapes, focusing the attention on volume rather than colour, resulting in a stunning sculptural presence despite the small size of the pieces.

Born in Lausanne in 1976 and awarded the cantonal plastic arts grant for 2014, Sandrine Pelletier lives and works in the Lausanne/Geneva region. *Marina* is the result of one of her first encounters with glass, a material she continued to explore during her *Forest Winds* residency in the Nantes area in 2014. Her creative processes draw inspiration from the popular arts and various forms of craftsmanship to create a corpus of works that bears witness to a strong desire for experimentation, playing with the limits of the chosen materials and techniques, even subverting them. Trompe-l’œil and illusion, ideally expressed in glass, are never far away, as in the case of this work acquired by the mudac.
Born in Iceland in 1943, Hreinn Fridfinnsson is one of the standard-bearers of conceptual art in Iceland. His work uses common materials such as glass and cardboard to address themes that are both simple and profound, in a lyrical and poetic way. Cast is a cast of the artist’s hands. The work is placed upside-down on a plinth, and is reflected in the mirror placed underneath. It is not by looking at the object itself, but through the reflection, that the eye is able to apprehend the piece’s true nature; does this mean that the reflection is more ‘real’ than the physical object?

Simon Klenell of Sweden, who exhibited at European Glass Context 2012, amuses himself in Frigger Tactics with subverting a classic of glass production: cut-glass drinkware. He takes the key elements of this formal language, such as the iconic cabochon and whisky glass, deconstructs them and reassembles them to create a fantastic table setting that is both grotesque and charming. All these pieces are new creations, nothing is recycled. None of these objects has any practical function, although all of them make playful reference to their traditional and decorative role.
In *The Seed of Narcissus*, Tomáš Libertiny associates two unexpected materials: massive silvered crystal glass and bee’s wax. This spectacular work seeks to unite the organic and artificial worlds, nature and culture. Accompanied by a video that shows bees busily “colonizing”, this work is impressive first by its size and then by the scent that greets spectators, drawing them into a closer communication with the work. The cocoon shape resembles a natural swarm of bees and stresses the weight of the arrangement. The wax evokes fragility through its softness. At a time when we are becoming aware of the mass destruction of bee populations, this work owes as much to the bee as it does to the human hand and highlights its crucial role by means of art.

GZ was born in 1952 in the Czech Republic, then part of Czechoslovakia. A graduate of the Czech glass sculpture school, which generally focuses on non-figurative expression, she excels in bringing out the plastic and light-enhancing properties of her chosen material, using moulds and carving to create often monumental works that draw attention to the concepts of volume and space. *Exponat* is a challenging piece: its massive upper part rests on five delicate feet that barely seem strong enough to support it. The milky colour of the glass further reinforces the paradoxical impression of lightness that the work projects.
PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Opening
Tuesday 17 March 2015 from 18.00

Dates
18 March – 1 November 2015

Events
Sunday 19 April 2015 at 15.00 with Anne-Claire Schumacher, curator of the Musée Ariana
Thursday 28 May 2015 at 12.15 with Sandrine Pelletier, artist
Thursday 15 October 2015 at 18.00 with Daniela Schönbächler, artist
Reservation essential: 021 315 25 30 or info@mudac.ch.

Guided tours
Saturday 21 March 2015 at 15.00
Saturday 11 April 2015 at 15.00
Saturday 2 May 2015 at 15.00
Saturday 12 September 2015 at 15.00
Saturday 10 October 2015 at 15.00

Hours
September-October : Tu-Su 11.00-18.00
July-August : Mo-Su: 11.00-18.00
Open on every bank holiday, Mondays included

Contact
Place de la Cathédrale 6
CH-1005 Lausanne
t +41 315 25 30
f +41 315 25 39
info@mudac.ch
www.mudac.ch

Media contact
Danaé Panchaud, public relations
t +41 21 315 25 27
danae.panchaud@lausanne.ch

Visuals