

***On Fire Part II: Surveying Women in Glass in the Late-Twentieth Century***

February 19, 2025 – January 24, 2026

Exhibition Glossary of Glass Terminology  
Compiled from various sources

**Acid Etching**—the process of decorating glass, developed in the nineteenth century, in which the surface is etched with hydrofluoric acid. The glass is coated with an acid-resistant substance such as wax through which the design is scratched. Then, the acid is applied to etch the exposed areas of glass.

See: **Ann Wolff's** *Untitled* and *Facing Insides*

**Acid Polishing**—the process of making a glossy, polished surface by dipping the object into a mixture of hydrofluoric and sulfuric acids.

**Annealing**—the process of slowly cooling a completed glass object in an auxiliary part of the glass furnace, or in a separate furnace. This is an integral part of glassmaking because if a hot glass object is allowed to cool too quickly, it will be highly strained by the time it reaches room temperature; indeed, it may break as it cools. Highly strained glass breaks easily if subjected to mechanical or thermal shock.

**Batch**—a mixture of raw materials used to make glass.

**Blowing**—the technique of forming an object by inflating a gob of molten glass gathered on the end of a blowpipe and shaping it with tools or in a mold.

See: **Sonja Blomdahl's** *Red/Yellow/Green Vessel* and  
*Red and Celadon Vessel (R11398)*

See: **Sharon Fujimoto's** *Untitled (Vessel)*

See: **Audrey Handler's** *Apple* and *Going Home*

See: **Flo Perkins'** *September Cactus*

**Blowpipe**—an iron or steel tube, usually about five feet long, for blowing glass. Blowpipes have a mouthpiece at one end and are usually fitted at the other end with a metal ring that helps to retain a gather.

**Borosilicate glass**—a type of glass with the main glass-forming constituents silica and boron oxide. Borosilicate glasses are known for having very low coefficients of thermal expansion. Such glass is less subject to thermal stress and is commonly used for the construction of reagent bottles. Borosilicate glass is sold under such trade names as Simax, Pyrex, Schott, or Refmex.

# R | A | M

**Cane**—a solid glass rod.

**Carving**—the removal of glass from the surface of an object by means of hand-held tools.

See: **Molly Stone's** *Untitled Vessel #0314*

**Casing**—the application of a layer of glass over a layer of contrasting color.

**Casting**—the generic name for a variety of techniques used to form glass in a mold.

See: **Margie Jervis and Susie Krasnican's** *Shadow Vessel*

See: **Jaroslava Brychtová and Stanislav Libenský's** *Red Head #37*

See: **John C. Littleton and Kate E. Vogel's** *The Wave*

See: **Molly Stone's** *Untitled Vessel #0314*

**Crackled**—a surface decoration produced by chilling the glass in water and reheating it to partially smooth the cracks and relieve the strains.

**Crystal**—a term for highly refractive, colorless lead glass.

**Cutting**—the process of making facets, grooves and depressions by using rotation discs of various materials, sizes, and shapes, and a stream of water with an abrasive.

See: **Jane Bruce's** *Black/Red Object*

See: **Philip Baldwin and Monica Guggisberg's** *Chartreuse Sentinel*

See: **Linda MacNeil's** *Hand Mirror*

**Enameling**—a decorative technique wherein colored powdered glass is mixed with oil, then painted onto the surface and reheated to fuse the design.

See: **Deb Cocks' Platter**

See: **Carol Cohen's** *Blue Jug, White and Gold Flowers, Green Shard Shoes with Apple, and Fish in Seedy Glass*

See: **Margie Jervis and Susie Krasnican's** *Dark Shift* from the *Polychromed Series* and *Shadow Vessel*

See: **Concetta Mason's** *Instant Recall*

See: **Ginny Ruffner's** *Tempest in a Spoon* from the *Structuring Beauty Series*

**Engraving**—the process of decorating glass by cutting the design into the surface of the glass with a diamond, a metal needle, or a rotating wheel.

See: **Ann Wolff's** *Untitled*

See: **Lisabeth Sterling's** *The Drama Continues*

# R | A | M

**Etching**—a process that can be done in several forms, but mainly it involves hydrofluoric acid action under controlled conditions on certain unprotected areas of the glass. Pattern stencils are used, and acid resist paint is applied to the areas that are not to be etched.

**Favrile**—a type of glass developed in the early 1890s by Louis Comfort Tiffany with an iridescent surface that simulates excavated ancient glass.

**Filet de verre**—a technique coined by Toots Zynsky in which threads of glass are fused together in a kiln to achieve unique manipulations of color.

See: **Toots Zynsky's** *Aqua Bowl #2* and *Untitled #9*

**Flameworking**—the process of manipulating glass that has been slowly heated over a torch or flame until soft; also called lampworking.

See: **Emily Brock's** *Collector's Room* and *Bakery-Coffee Shop*

See: **Ginny Ruffner's** *Language of Beauty*, *Tower of Fruit and Flowers*, and *Envisioning the Weather* from the *Envisioning Series*

See: **Kari Russell-Pool's** *Sunflower Wish Bowl*

**Fuming**—the coating of the surface of glass with a thin spray of metallic chloride, creating a wrinkled and iridescent surface.

**Furnace**—the source of heat for fusing the raw ingredients of glass, maintaining objects in a molten state, and reheating partly formed objects. See also **glory hole**.

**Fusing**—1. the process of melting the batch.

2. heating pieces of glass in a furnace until they bond.

3. heating enameled glasses until the enamel bonds with the surface of the object.

See: **Emily Brock's** *Collector's Room* and *Bakery-Coffee Shop*

See: **Ruth A. Brockman's** *Tiger*

See: **Judith Candy's** *Spring*

**Gaffer**—the master glassblower and head of a team of artisans.

**Gather**—1. to get glass from the furnace onto the pipe or punty.

2. the molten glass on the pipe or punty before it is blown.

**Gilding**—the process of decorating glass by the use of gold leaf, gold paint, or gold dust. The gilding may be applied with size, or amalgamated with mercury. It is then usually fixed to the glass by heat. Gold leaf may be picked up on a gather of hot glass.

See: **Judy Jensen's** *Valley of the Kings* and *When the Earth Touches the Sky*

# R | A | M

**Glass**—an artificial substance made by fusing some form of silica (sand), an alkali (potash or soda), and sometimes another base (lime or lead oxide). It is plastic when molten and rigid when cold. Used for functional, decorative, mechanical, and commercial purposes, glass is an ancient material that holds great appeal for many contemporary artists. Whether the primary, singular material of an artwork, or one of multiple media utilized, glass has aesthetic properties and technical capabilities that encourage exploration and manipulation. The reasons artists choose glass as a vehicle for artistic exploration are as varied as the artists themselves.

**Glory Hole**—a reheating oven within the furnace.

**Kiln**—an oven used to process a substance by burning, drying, or heating. In contemporary glass working, kilns are used to fuse enamel and for kiln forming processes, such as slumping.

**Kiln Forming**—the process of fusing or shaping glass (usually in or over a mold) by heating it in a kiln. See **slumping**.

See: **Jane Bruce's** *Black/Red Object*

See: **Ann Wolff's** *Huvud #68* from the *Head Series (Head #68)*  
and *Boll-Hus (Ball-House)*

**Lead Glass**—a variety of glass in which lead replaces the calcium content of a typical potash glass. Lead glass contains typically 18–40% lead oxide (PbO), while modern lead crystal, historically known as flint glass due to the original silica source, contains a minimum of 24% PbO.

**Marver**—a slab of marble or steel used for rolling and chilling hot glass.

**Melt**—the fluid glass produced by melting a batch of raw materials.

**Mold or Mould**—the form, normally made of wood, metal, graphite or plaster, used for shaping and/or decorating molten glass.

# R | A | M

**Murrine** (common pluralization *murrini*)—an Italian term for colored patterns or images made in a glass cane (long rods of glass) that are revealed when cut in cross-sections. Murrine can be made in infinite designs—some styles are more familiar, such as millefiore. Artists working in glass design murrine in a variety of ways from simple circular or square patterns to complex detailed designs to even portraits of people. Murrine are designed by layering different colors of molten glass around a core, then heating and stretching it into a rod. When cool, the rod is sliced into cross-sections of desired thickness with each slice possessing the same pattern in cross-section. The murrine process first appeared in the Mideast more than 4,000 years ago and was revived by Venetian glassmakers on Murano in the early sixteenth century.

**Pâte de Verre**—a French term meaning glass paste. Powdered colored glass is mixed with a binder and a fluxing medium, then molded and fired. The process was known in ancient Egypt and revived in France in the nineteenth century.

See: **Tessa Clegg's** *Bowl and Closed Bowl*

See: **Robin Grebe's** *Misgiving*

See: **Kimiake Higuchi's** *Cyclamen*

See: **Etsuko Nishi's** *Lace Cage Bowl and Lace Cage Bowl #168-14*

See: **Karla Trinkley's** *KT3*

**Polishing**—smoothing the surface of an object when it is cold by holding it against a rotating wheel fed with a fine abrasive. Glass can also be polished with hand-held tools.

See: **Molly Stone's** *Untitled Vessel #0314*

**Punty (Pontil)**—a solid steel rod used for gathering glass and for attachment to the bottom of a blown piece so that the blowpipe may be struck off and the opening of the piece reheated and finished.

**Sandblasting**—the process of removing glass or imparting a matte finish by directing a pressurized stream of sand at the surface.

See: **Margie Jervis and Susie Krasnican's** *Dark Shift*

from the *Polychromed Series*

See: **Concetta Mason's** *Instant Recall*

See: **Susan Shapiro's** *Winoker's Wonder* from *The Night Traveler Series*

See: **Acquaetta Williams' Cut Vessel**

See: **Ann Wolff's** *Facing Insides*

# R | A | M

**Slumping**—the process of creating a sagging form by using the force of gravity on heat-softened glass.

See: **Margie Jervis and Susie Krasnican's** *Shadow Vessel*

See: **Toots Zynsky's** *Aqua Bowl #2*

**Stained Glass**—the generic name for decorative windows or panels made of pieces of colored or painted glass held together with lead strips. Strictly speaking, the term is inaccurate because, in addition to glass colored by staining, glaziers used, and continue to use, glass colored by metallic oxide, glass colored by flashing, and glass decorated with enamel.

See: **Ann Wolff's** *Untitled*

**The Studio Glass Movement in the United States in the 1960s**—

the development of a small furnace by Harvey Littleton, and easy-to-melt glass by Dominick Labino, allowed artists to produce one-of-a-kind objects in their studios. Littleton went on to establish a glass program at the University of Wisconsin–Madison while others worked to do the same at institutions across the country. These efforts encouraged experimentation and secured a place in contemporary craft for this compelling and dynamic medium.

**Wheel Engraving**—the process of decorating the surface of glass by the grinding action of a wheel, using disks of various sizes and materials (usually copper, but sometimes stone). An abrasive in a grease or slurry is applied to a wheel, as the engraver holds the object against the underside of the rotating wheel.