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RAM Collects: Contemporary Perfume Bottles

March 12, 2025 – February 21, 2026

Perfume bottles may not be the first thing people think about relative to how glass is used, but they have a history of production and refinement that spans centuries and continents. More than just functional items, these bottles reflect layered choices relating to design, history, luxury, class, and skill. In modern societies, they are also pivotal in product brand development and advertisement.

Some contemporary glass artists have utilized perfume bottles as spaces for experimentation and exploration—not necessarily function. This desire to challenge functionality has run parallel with the desire to produce usable and practical objects. Whether creating bottles as the focus of their practice or as a limited area of production, artists combine their individualized styles and techniques with a long line of historical precedents.

RAM's permanent collection—the largest collection of contemporary craft in North America—features over 20 glass perfume bottles from the last quarter of the twentieth century. Most of the artists represented also created other kinds of work in glass. For example, Audrey Handler is well known for still lifes combining glass fruit and miniature figures, and Jon Kuhn created the beloved *Pendulum Cluster* that hangs overhead at RAM's front entrance.

Tessa Clegg

"I'm firmly rooted in the applied arts tradition. I make domestic objects, not sculpture."

British glass artist Tessa Clegg (1946–) utilizes techniques such as paté de verre and lost wax casting to produce her work. In both manners of working, Clegg uses molds to shape what the final work will look like, enabling her to create the textured fluted surfaces that are visible in many of her pieces.

In the 1980s, Clegg worked with fellow glass artist Liz Crowley to complete a series of collaborative pieces revolving around the human figure and storytelling. Clegg and Crowley met while they were both students at the Stourbridge College of Art, England. In 1998, she was awarded the Jerwood Prize for Applied Arts for her work in glass by the Crafts Council, London. Clegg's work is included in the collections of museums around the globe including the Corning Museum of Glass, New York; Musée des Arts Decoratifs, Paris, France; and the Victoria & Albert Museum,

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London, England. She is represented in RAM's collection by five vessels and is currently on display in two exhibitions—*RAM Collects: Contemporary Perfume Bottles* through February 21, 2026, and *On Fire Part II: Surveying Women in Glass in the Late-Twentieth Century* through January 24, 2026.

Read:



[independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/the-independent-collector-john-windsor-s-guide-to-collecting-contemporary-art-tessa-clegg-1187004.html](https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/the-independent-collector-john-windsor-s-guide-to-collecting-contemporary-art-tessa-clegg-1187004.html)

Audrey Handler

One of Harvey Littleton's first female glass students at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, Audrey Handler (1934–) is a pioneer of the Studio Glass Movement. Currently living and working in Wisconsin, her home studio, located in a nineteenth-century-cheese factory, is one of the oldest continually operating glass blowing facilities in the United States. Using glassblowing as her technique of choice, Handler creates multicolored fruits and vegetables which range from life-size to large-scale. Additionally, she creates sculptural domestic environments out of glass, sometimes working collaboratively with her husband who fabricates the woodworked elements. On occasion, Handler combines these two subjects to create still lifes with glass fruit and miniature figures.

Handler has received much recognition for her work in glass and is active in glass-related organizations. In 1971, she helped form the Glass Art Society and served as a board member. Currently, she is on the Glass Advisory Board of the Bergstrom Mahler Museum of Glass, Neenah, Wisconsin. In 2014, Handler was awarded the Wisconsin Visual Arts Lifetime Achievement Award. She is represented in RAM's collection by five works and is currently on display in two exhibitions—*RAM Collects: Contemporary Perfume Bottles* through February 21, 2026, and *On Fire Part II: Surveying Women in Glass in the Late-Twentieth Century* through January 24, 2026.

Explore:



audreyhandlerglass.com

Watch:



[youtube.com/watch?v=181tZCII2_s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=181tZCII2_s)

Listen:



talkingoutyourglass.com/audrey-handler/

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James Minson

Third generation glassworker James Minson (1962–), followed in the path of his grandparents who were scientific glassblowers in London, England, and later established the Minson Scientific Company in Sydney, Australia. Minson studied jewelry making, glass, and silversmithing at Sydney College of the Arts, earning a BA there. He continued his education at Antioch University, Seattle, Washington, where he earned an MA in Psychology and Art Therapy. Today, Minson’s work is represented in the collections of the Corning Museum of Glass, Corning, New York; Krannert Art Museum at the University of Illinois at Urbana, Champaign, Illinois; and the Perlen Museum, Berlin, Germany. Combining his knowledge with a desire to use art to help people, Minson established a glass studio in 2002 at the Misioneros del Camino, a Guatemalan orphanage. While pursuing his masters degree in Psychology, Minson created a study that evaluated the beneficial effects that creating glass art had in other aspects of the Guatemalan children’s lives. Minson is represented in RAM’s collection by six works including one set of five perfume bottles.

Explore:



[ramart.org/exhibit/
precedents-glass-clay](https://ramart.org/exhibit/precedents-glass-clay)

John Nygren

Working primarily in glassblowing and flameworking, John Nygren (1940–) creates blown vessels which he “draws” on using molten rods of glass. A consistent theme throughout his work is nature. He often incorporates animals—usually amphibians—trees, and plants into his pieces. In addition to being a basis of his subject matter, Nygren also utilizes environmentally friendly practices in his studio, melting down recycled bottles to create new elements for his work.

In 1965, Nygren earned his BFA from the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, and in 1967, received his MFA from Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. Glass had interested Nygren during his undergraduate years, but due to the lack of equipment available to him, he was unable to create glasswork which survived. Instead, Nygren invested most of his studio practice into ceramics. After graduating with his MFA, Nygren moved to North Carolina to accept a teaching position in ceramics at Wilmington College. Around the same time, he attended a three week glassblowing seminar at Penland School of Crafts, North Carolina, where he learned much about the technique and, equipped with the right supplies, created several

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works that were widely exhibited. He was awarded the Sawtooth Center for Visual Art's Winston-Salem Artist of the Year award in 2000.

Important to the artist is his methodical system of record keeping which involves stamping each piece with an identification number and holding a registry that describes every work he has ever created, complete with a written description and drawing. His work is included in several museum collections including the Corning Museum of Glass, New York; The Mint Museum, Charlotte, North Carolina; and The Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC. Nygren is represented in RAM's collection by seven vessels.

Explore:



johnnyngren.com

Brent Kee Young

"My work speaks of many things... of a respect for things natural; ambiguity in space, form, volume, time, and images that are not there. It speaks of... man's marks, nature's marks, and their relation [to one another]."

Brent Kee Young's (1946–) career has been filled with experimentation and innovation fueled by a "fascination with the process of handling hot glass." Young, the son of noted Chinese American actor Victor Sen Yung, began studying engineering, switched to ceramics, then was ultimately accepted into a master's program at San Jose State University based on his work in glass. His career has been marked by technical achievements and his desire to use various techniques.

Young's work is included in the permanent collections of several museums, including the Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois; the Corning Museum of Glass, New York; the Niijima Contemporary Glass Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan; and the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC.

RAM currently has five works by Young in the collection, including pieces from his *Fossil Series*. With this series, he explored the notion of ambiguity—tapping into the idea that fossils are not the things that existed but impressions of things that existed. He incorporated mold-making techniques—developing a clay model of his desired piece and then using it as a mold—as well as flameworking. For his current work—

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in which he builds networks of clear glass into various shapes—Young drew upon the frameworking processes that he employed with the early *Fossil Series*.

Explore:



[brentkeeyoung.com/
home.html](http://brentkeeyoung.com/home.html)

Watch:



[youtube.com/
watch?v=qsCdTR1I_VY](https://youtube.com/watch?v=qsCdTR1I_VY)

Artists of Color at RAM

RAM is committed to supporting diverse voices—whether that diversity reflects race, gender, sexuality, age, ability, social standing, or world perspective. In this moment in time, it is critical that spotlights are placed on voices that have been historically underrepresented, and at RAM that begins with women and artists of color. Artists of color are identified in this context as non-white and non-European in heritage. This simplification—which is arguably a flawed starting point—does not account for the nuances and variations of society. It is a beginning—a way to direct those who want to educate themselves about what is possible when new perspectives are discovered. Modifications to this approach are expected as RAM learns and grows. Further, as an educational institution rooted in the humanities and using art as a catalyst, RAM wants to encourage inquiry and exploration about the world in which we live. RAM hopes spotlighting artists of color spurs further engagement with these artists and their ideas. The following is a list of artists of color whose works are included in this exhibition. This effort is not meant to single out artists to stigmatize them but to magnify and cast a spotlight on their significance. It reflects intention, goodwill, and an attempt to reckon with years of historical underrepresentation. RAM hopes this provides opportunities for audiences to learn more about these artists and their ideas. Visitors are encouraged to take note and research these artists via the internet to find out more about their biographies and larger bodies of work.

Brent Kee Young



Women Artists at RAM

RAM acknowledges the efforts of self-identifying women in the art world consistently and sincerely at all times. The museum highlights how women are inextricably woven—and often the foundation—of creative endeavors and discourse. By current count, 41% of the artists in RAM's collection are women. This percentage—which is consistently increasing—is already substantially greater than the ratios calculated at other organizations with permanent collections and active exhibition programs. At RAM, work made by different genders is considered for inclusion in the museum's holdings on equal terms. And notably, because RAM relies on gifts of artwork to build the collection, this policy has been reinforced by open-minded donors who have collected, and then donated, quality work regardless of the gender of the artist. The following is a list of women whose works are included in this exhibition. This effort—similar to efforts to highlight artists of color at RAM—is not meant to single out artists to stigmatize them but to magnify and cast a spotlight on their significance. It reflects intention, goodwill, and an attempt to reckon with years of historical underrepresentation. RAM hopes this provides opportunities for audiences to learn more about these artists and their ideas. Visitors are encouraged to take note and research these artists via the internet to find out more about their biographies and larger bodies of work.

Tessa Clegg, Audrey Handler, Janet Kelman, and Yaffa Sikorsky-Todd