

Contemporary Glass at Racine Art Museum



R|A|M

Contemporary Glass at RAM



The landscape of contemporary art is diverse—whether describing types of work, subjects explored, or materials used. Perhaps arguably, it can be said that it is getting more and more difficult to describe an artist or a kind of work by media as there is often a blending of materials and a hesitancy to emphasize one aspect of a work over another.

Having said that, there is still a lot to be learned by looking at a material—and artistic uses of it—in depth. With an ever expanding catalog, Racine Art Museum's collection of works made of glass offers this opportunity with hundreds of examples created by some of the best known names in the field as well as emerging talents. Believing that the last few decades have been

a historically significant time for artistic advancement, RAM has concentrated on the achievements of glass in the US and abroad to capture a clear picture of the movement's growth. As is true with all facets of RAM's collections policy, multiple examples by a single artist are acquired to demonstrate his or her process of development over a period of time. Not only are there sculptures, reliefs, and vessels, there is also adornment.

RAM regularly exhibits works made primarily of glass in both collection and loan exhibitions—investigating the media in concentrated ways such as **Handle With Care** in 2012, which featured new acquisitions to the collection, and in the same year,





(opposite)
Paul Marioni
Jester, 1987
 Glass
 10 3/16 x 6 inches diameter
 Racine Art Museum,
 Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser

(opposite below)
Kéké Cribbs
Grainne Uaile, 1991
 Glass, wood, and paint
 22 1/4 x 41 3/8 x 3 3/4 inches
 Racine Art Museum,
 Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser

(left)
Michael Glancy
Frozen Flux, 1997
 Glass and copper
 vessel: 6 1/4 x 3 1/8 inches diameter
 base: 1/2 12 1/6 x 12 inches
 Racine Art Museum,
 Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser
 Photo: Gene Dwiggin

(below)
Silvia Levenson
Panchina Di Vetro, 2002
 Glass, metal, and AstroTurf
 20 x 47 3/16 x 10 1/8 inches
 Racine Art Museum,
 Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser

the ground-breaking survey of artists who use glass to make adornment, **Cutting Edge: RAM Explores Contemporary Glass Jewelry**. Those represented in RAM's collection use a variety of techniques and processes and the group survey exhibitions tend to reflect the myriad possibilities that the material offers.

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.

Rationale for choosing glass includes the following ideas:

- Glass transmits color and light in a way no other material does.
- It is versatile and can be manipulated with a variety of methods—including blown or cast, flameworked or carved.
- Its surface can be etched, sandblasted, or painted.
- It is appealing because of its metaphorical associations and historical significance in both art and non-art arenas.



In addition, there are those contemporary makers who are trained to work with glass but who incorporate it—or the idea of it—into a much larger practice that could include video and performance. Because of the natural tendencies of the material, glassworks have often been prized for their beauty, with an emphasis on light, color, form, and pattern. More critical investigations—a desire to expand upon and sometimes undermine this “weight” of formal associations—has led to work that is self-consciously content driven.

The use of glass as an unabashed medium for self-consciously made art—as sculpture and not only vessel, window, or ornament—was given a push forward in the 1960s as new explorations regarding the medium began to develop. The beginning of the American studio glass movement is most often traced back to 1962 when Harvey K. Littleton established two glass workshops at the Toledo Museum of Art that brought artists, scientists, and experienced professional glassblowers together. These early proponents envisioned independent studios for glassblowing, a scenario that was not possible up to that point with the established technology. Such workshops provided forums for information sharing across disciplines and launched glass programs at universities while simultaneously sparking an interest by artists to experiment with the material. 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.

Today, artists use glass to examine aesthetic concerns, process, and social and cultural issues. Armed with the knowledge of the history of glass and its artistic and practical uses, they make work that reflects their own interests and talent.

Quotes from select artists in RAM’s collection highlight a diversity of approaches and interests:

Dale Chihuly

One can only wonder what kind of genius thought of blowing human breath down a metal tube, forming a bubble inside a molten blob of glass. And to think that this molten blob of glass is made only of silica or sand, the most common material in the world, that can be transformed from a solid to a liquid to a solid just from fire. For me it’s the most mysterious and magical of all the inventions or materials that mankind has invented or discovered. Since I was a little boy I always loved glass.



(above)
Dan Dailey
A Chaos of Birds,
 from the *Birds Series*, 1982
 Glass
 10 1/4 x 8 3/8 x 6 1/4 inches
 Racine Art Museum,
 Gift of Daniel Greenberg
 and Susan Steinhauser

(left)
David Reekie
Cross Talk, 1991
 Glass, wood, and paint
 17 7/8 x 27 3/4 x 6 3/4 inches
 Racine Art Museum,
 Gift of Daniel Greenberg
 and Susan Steinhauser



Kéké Cribbs

I am a painter, a sculptor, a story teller, and most importantly, an "Experimenter" [sic] who does not believe rules or fashion trends should dictate what an artist makes. I work intuitively and from the heart. Making things with my hands is in an effort to communicate with others and is the reason I make art.

Dan Dailey

I try to convey a feeling with some of my vases, specifically the vases with drawings. Humor is my favorite. When somebody laughs out loud at one of my pieces, I get a kick from that moment which dispels any doubts that may have crept [sic] into my head regarding the necessary seriousness of art.

Michael Glancy

I look to everything in life as a derivative of the square or circle, every form comes from that including the really organic ones, so I'm constantly looking at nature and I always see squares, rectangles, triangles,

circles, curved lines...I certainly have favourite colours [sic]...they're locked into the romance of the materials I think... I am trying to glorify not me and my own efforts, more the diversity and the brilliance of nature.

Joel Philip Meyers

Press the material to the utmost, and it will suggest ideas and creative avenues to the expressive artist...I permit the glass to sag, flop, stop, start, stretch; I control and yet am dictated by the glass.

As I paint and draw on the glass, the glass form reveals the drawing, adapts to its shape, distorts and expands as it clothes and envelops itself in my drawing.

David Reekie

My work is influenced by our reaction and adaptation to the society that surrounds us. We live in a world that grows more complex and difficult to comprehend. It has tensions and temptations that pull us in different directions. This creates characters and situations that provide a constant source of material from which I take my ideas.



(above)

Marvin Lipofsky

Appalachian Group 1984 #6, 1984

Glass

13 3/4 x 15 x 11 1/2 inches

Racine Art Museum,

Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser

(right)

Ann Wolff

Frau Holle Goddess of the Open Fields, 1986

Glass

5 5/8 x 13 5/8 inches diameter

Racine Art Museum,

Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser

Ann Wolff

The Studio Glass Movement from the United States burst in on my work—my isolation—in the mid-1960s. I was astonished and thrilled by the freedom with which glass was handled there. An immense curiosity about the unused potential and the broad possibilities of the new material for art: glass... The path I took shows that I intensely wanted to express my life in pictures, clarify things for myself... The notion of "Self," and hence identity, grips me, disturbs me, and motivates me. Everything comes from that.

On collecting:

Dale Chihuly

Why do people want to collect glass? Why do they love glass? For the same reason, I suppose, that many of us want to work with it. It is this magical material that's made with human breath, that light goes through, and that has incredible color. And I think the fact that it breaks is one of the reasons that people want to own it. Isn't it unbelievable that the most fragile material, glass, is also the most permanent material?

Encouragement for glass as a viable—and desirable—art material has also come in the form of direct and indirect support by collectors from across the country and around the world. Individuals dedicated to owning, preserving, and sharing glass artworks set a stage for supply and demand that invigorates the field. At RAM alone, multiple gifts of glass have come from the following over the years: Dale and Doug Anderson, Karen Johnson Boyd, Devra Breslow, Brillson Foundation in Memory of Michael Baer Brillson, Michael and Ann Brody, Stanton and Judith Brody, Charles Bronfman, Barry Friedman, Ltd., Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser, William and Fraeda Kopman, George and Dorothy Saxe, and Donald and Carol Wiiken.

In fact, several of these collectors have given multiple works or gifts over the years. In the 1990s, Dale and Doug Anderson gifted a painting on glass by **Judy Bally Jensen** and a colorful blown glass vessel by **Sonja Blomdahl**, to name two examples.



They have since offered over 150 other pieces by a wide variety of artists including **Hiroshi Yamano**, **Richard Marquis**, **Jay Musler**, **Flo Perkins**, and **Ginny Ruffner**. Also in the 1990s, Donald and Carol Wiiken donated works by several artists including **Jose Chardiet**, **Margie Jervis** and **Susie Krasnican**, **Jon Kuhn**, and **William Morris**. They have since offered nearly 100 pieces by artists such as **Erwin Eisch**, **Harvey K. Littleton**, and **Paul Stankard**. In 2013, Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser joined this group of valued supporters, presenting over 60 works that both introduce new





(opposite)
John Nygren
Early Sunrise Bottle (#3238), 1987
 Glass
 8 1/8 x 4 inches diameter
 Racine Art Museum,
 Gift of Daniel Greenberg
 and Susan Steinhauser

(opposite below)
Joel Philip Myers
 left:
 From the
Contiguous Fragment Series
 (CFBGB1), 1981
 Glass
 7 1/2 x 4 3/4 inches diameter
 right:
 From the
Contiguous Fragment Series
 (CFBGB4), 1981
 Glass
 7 1/2 x 4 3/4 inches diameter
 Racine Art Museum,
 Gifts of Daniel Greenberg
 and Susan Steinhauser

(left above)
Bertil Vallien
 left:
Bowl, 1983
 Glass
 5 1/8 x 6 1/2 x 5 3/4 inches
 right:
Bowl, ca. 1980
 Glass
 6 3/8 x 7 5/8 x 6 1/4 inches
 Racine Art Museum,
 Gifts of Daniel Greenberg
 and Susan Steinhauser



(left below)
Karen LaMonte
Mirror, 2003
 Glass
 11 7/16 x 5 3/8 x 5/8 inches
 Racine Art Museum,
 Gift of Daniel Greenberg
 and Susan Steinhauser

artists to RAM's holdings and expand upon significant makers already represented. Similar to the museum's philosophy of collecting the work of artists in-depth, Greenberg and Steinhauser would often amass five or more pieces by a single artist. Their gift includes an impressive grouping of international artists such as Zoltan Bohus, Dale Chihuly, Kéké Cribbs, Karen LaMonte, Sylvia Levenson, John Nygren, David Reekie, Colin Reid, and Bertil Vallien—with multiple examples by Dan Dailey, Michael Glancy, Joel Philip Myers, and Ann Wolff serving as archives of the artists' work from the 1980s and 1990s.

Lena Vigna
 Curator of Exhibitions

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(front cover image)

Joel Philip Myers

White Water I (CFOWHITELONGKSG 19923), 1991
Glass
8 1/2 x 29 1/2 x 3 1/4 inches
Racine Art Museum,
Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser

Racine Art Museum

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