

# GLASS FACTOR

Luminaries in the Canadian Art Glass Scene

CANADIAN CLAY & GLASS GALLERY



**GLASS FACTOR** *Luminaries in the Canadian Art Glass Scene*

|                   |                     |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| Brad Copping      | Francis Muscat      |
| Laura Donihier    | Susan Rankin        |
| Susan Edgerley    | Donald Robertson    |
| Alfred Engeler    | John Paul Roberson  |
| Irene Frolic      | Tyler Rock          |
| Catherine Hibbits | Karl Schartz        |
| David James       | Oriel Talaryn       |
| Michele Lapointe  | Irene Thorkelson    |
| Lisa Lynn         | Koen Vandersluisken |

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Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation.

Installation View: Francis Muscat, Catherine Hibbits, and Irene Frolic. Keith and Winifred Shantz Gallery.

# GLASS FACTOR

## Luminaries in the Canadian Art Glass Scene

Curated by Christian Bernard Singer

Glass Factor: Luminaries in the Canadian Art Glass Scene

Catalogue of an exhibition held at the Canadian Clay & Glass Gallery, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada from September 24, 2010 to January 2, 2011.

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Christian Bernard Singer 1962-

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Installation View: Karl Schantz, Susan Edgerley, John Paul Robinson, and Alfred Engerer. Keith and Winifred Shantz Gallery

# GLASS FACTOR



Installation View: Koen Vanderstukken, Susan Rankin, Karl Schantz, Alfred Engerer, Catherine Hibbits, Susan Edgerley, John Paul Robinson, and Michèle Lapointe. Keith and Winifred Shantz Gallery.

## Exhibition Foreword

## FOREWORD

What an exhibition! What a cast of characters! What an ever-evolving history of Canadian art! What an opportunity!

None of this would have happened had a series of bizarre and synchronistic events not come together 'in a hurry.' Originally, another exhibition had been planned but sometime in late spring, the guest curator pulled out and we were left without a show. Although honouring the curatorial commitments of my predecessor and friend, Virginia Eichhorn, remained of great importance to me, I was presented with an early opportunity to allow my own curatorial voice emerge. I had already felt that my exhibitions with artists Joni Moriyama and Cristian Raduta seemed to really resonate with viewers, but when I started planning an exhibition with Alfred Engerer (a show that was a real hit with viewers), it seems that a large part of my own history of 'flirting' with the glass world came to the fore. I decided to do an exhibition that would bring some of the biggest pioneers in the Canadian art glass scene together. In addition to Alfred, I had formed relationships with only a handful of prominent glass artists whom I wanted to include. Pulling together the rest was a delightful venture, like putting on a party and just hoping your guests would show up. Some only knew me as an artist, others knew of my gallery in Toronto, still others, I suspect, signed on because I name-dropped Alfred Engerer and the growing roster of artists. Eventually, I ran out of both space and artist fees and had to cap participation to 18 artists. But what artists – and because of them, what a show!

I want to thank Alfred Engerer, whose guidance, humour, and connections made this show possible. Thank you also to Brad Copping, President of the Glass Art Association of Canada who invited me to attend the glass conference where I was able to make connections and was introduced to a large and highly energetic group of glass artists. I also wish to thank Sandra Ainsley, Diane Charbonneau, Virginia Eichhorn, and Elena Lee for their advice and support. Mounting this exhibition would not have been possible without preparators, Marc Lafreniere, Gareth Lichty, and Marc Prier, Gallery staff, and volunteers. I especially wish to thank my wonderful curatorial assistant, Vanja Stojanovic, who was a dream to work with and always anticipated my next move. Thank you also to Nancy Schnarr who researched and wrote the accompanying essay *Glass Education in Canada: A Fluid History*.

We are extremely grateful to our funders, the Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council, and the City of Waterloo. We are equally grateful to the Musagetes Fund at the Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation who sponsored this exhibition and to Geisterblitz Art Glass Works who sponsored this catalogue.

Christian Bernard Singer  
Curator, Canadian Clay & Glass Galley





Installation View: Susan Edgerley, John Paul Robinson, Lou Lynn, Tim Whiten, Brad Copping, Donald Robinson, Orest Tataryn, and Peter Powning, Douglas Wright Education Gallery.

# Glass Factor: Luminaries in the Canadian Art Glass Scene

Curated by Christian Bernard Singer

## Glass Factor: Luminaries in the Canadian Art Glass Scene



Fire and flame – heat, combustion, and sweat. Like one possessed, the artist's muse, fury, and obsession merge to commune with the scowling rays of intense heat - not a place for the timid. Into the belly of the tank - a cradle of the beginning and end of time - the artist dips the blowpipe to gather the honey-like substance with its colour of white gold. Shaping the translucent liquid into an egg, a human breath awakens life in the form of a

bubble. Whether the glass blower works alone or enlists the help of others in a choreographed ballet of master, aides, and apprentices, the creative possibilities are just beginning. Either way, the making is an act of exploration, curiosity, courage, love, and a testament to the artist's responsive oneness with the material.

Most glass artists first experience the medium by learning how to centre the glass on a blowpipe and blowing that first bubble. It is akin to learning how to centre a ball of clay on the wheel and pulling that first successful vessel. Not only do both require a mastering of skills that date back thousands of years but they must eventually find ways to make the medium their own.

The creation and manufacture of glass objects throughout history has required invention, discovery, and development of numerous techniques and processes dictated by desire, intent, or necessity. These include blowing, casting, slumping, cutting, grinding, polishing, and engraving. There are many more we know about and yet many more we have yet to discover. However, it is important to note that the material itself comes out of the technological appropriation from the worlds of ceramics and metals – unabashed pilfering in fact – it is like ceramics without the clay where the glaze is its own supporting body.

This exhibition shares in a part of this continuous creative journey by some of Canada's best and most interesting pioneering glass artists working today. The

works in this exhibition represent a stunning array of technical and aesthetic approaches to working with glass from such hot processes as blowing, hot-forming, slumping, and various casting methods to cold-working processes such as cutting, grinding, tumbling, etching, and assemblage. Many of the works also incorporate other materials and practices such as metals, bronze and aluminium casting, stone, multimedia, digital media, and installation.

The physical essence of glass being composed of quartz silica sand, the medium has a built-in connection to geological time and to the natural world. Therefore, many of the artists in this exhibition instinctively and consciously reference time, place, science, and nature. Although an enduring material, glass is also fragile, precious, and luminous, leading others to explore notions psychological and emotional factors related to the human experience.

*GLASS FACTOR: Luminaries in the Canadian Art Glass Scene* presents works by Brad Copping, Laura Donefer, Susan Edgerley, Alfred Engerer, Irene Frolic, Catherine Hibbits, David James, Michèle Lapointe, Lou Lynn, Francis Muscat, Susan Rankin, Donald Robertson, John Paul Robinson, Tyler Rock, Karl Schantz, Orest Tataryn, Lone Thorkelsson, and Koen Vanderstukken. Additional works by Daniel Crichton, Lisette Lemieux, Kevin Lockau, Peter Powning, Tim Whiten, and others are also presented thanks to the Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery's growing Permanent Collection.

While glass art encompasses a wide variety of styles and techniques, probably most familiar to viewers will be the way some glass artists manifest the natural world in the form of organic vessels. Therefore, we begin our tour of the exhibition with Susan Rankin, an avid gardener who celebrates the beauty of gardens in her functional blown glass vases draped with leaves, vines, and flowers. Like a living organism at the end of a blowpipe, it is as if she empowers and tends to a sort of organic growth while hot-working. Often incorporating coiled rims and feet that frame and ground the action throughout the body of the vase, the finished work is so luscious and jewel-like that its purpose as a functional object can seem redundant as living flowers are not required to complete it. Rankin also cautions about the garden's propensity for overabundance, which can overpower the senses and dull our ability to mine the details. In fact, sometimes a garden or even wild nature requires an element to ground the eye so that human perception can rise to increased awareness. Her outdoor solid-worked glass and pipe *Garden Columns* resemble totems that take on different characteristics as they harness the varying qualities of natural seasonal light. As land art sculptures that react to the wind by swaying gently like a small grove of bamboo trees, they also act like markers and provide human scale to a site in a way that quietly grants an entry point for deeper cognizance.

Laura Donefer is fabulously wild – she is like a witch doctor who goes into the forest to sensually and lustfully commune with nature with her very core and emerges with potions

and talismans to encourage reconnections with our inner wildness. She says: “working with molten glass is like dancing the magma right out of the earth. It is hot and dangerous, and it feels like I am making love with the very essence of creation.”<sup>vi</sup> Donefer's early sculptural works should be read as a series of self-portraits that encompass surprising combinations of colour, form, and a wide array of materials. In her own oral representations of her works, the links between her life experience and the final sculptural works are unmistakable. The subsequent *Witch Pot* series continued her unique combination and are as self-revealing as one may have come to expect of the artist. For her colleagues, students, and friends, the works and the artist are virtually identical when considering Laura's sense of style and colour, boundless energy, and the countless connections and possibilities that she has created within, and for, her chosen community since the early 1980s.

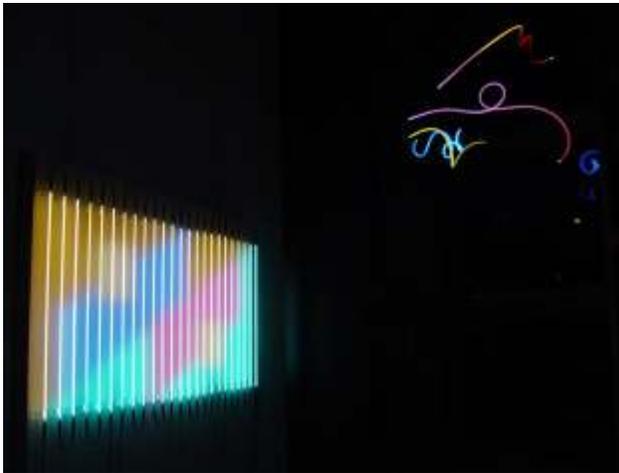
Meanwhile, the integration of nature takes a different course as John Paul Robinson creates his own mythologies to understand the world around him as well as his own place in that world. Looking for personal resonance by creating metaphorical symbols from scientific explanations of the natural world (such as waves, time, and flight), Robinson tries to make sense of explanations, which remain elusive in his own personal experience. For instance, in the time it has taken you to read this paragraph, the planet has sped unfathomable distances through space yet our gravitational pull to the planet makes this imperceptible. In other words, the

artist says: “While the idea that the earth is the still centre of our universe may no longer be believable to the mind, it still holds sway in the stomach.”<sup>vii</sup>



Brad Copping also looks for ways to “reaffirm his ties to the natural world”<sup>viii</sup> and his connection to, and place in, a world “where change is the only constant.”<sup>ix</sup> His blown glass and multi-media works are like meditative pathways toward the stilled alertness that is required in order to fully access the present. While spending time with and comparing various works within his larger oeuvre, one begins to notice that between the physical inception and the possible or intended final physical form of his works, he recognizes and isolates possible moments where expectation can be thwarted. This interplay of intent and accident recalls the quote made famous by John Lennon: “Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans” and Copping seems to consciously invite these 'happenings' during his creative process. His work is like an observation on ephemeral impermanence where everything is in constant state of

change and that these changes are natural and necessary. As in life, the work is about finding balance and acceptance, while flowing along and through change.



Alfred Engerer's idea of nature includes both natural and urban landscapes. He makes relationships between the body and the natural landscape as well as the body living in human constructed communities and cities. After being amazed at the sheer exquisiteness of nature, a building, or a human-made found object, it is the very architecture of the form that intrigues him – the way that the thing was made, designed, or how it occupies or might exist in a given space. Were it not for the lure of glass, it is possible that Engerer might have been an architect. His sculptural forms are like buildings, temples, or shrines – there is always balance, space, 'intentionalism,' and something sacred in their timelessness. One of the principal founders of the now defunct guerrilla arts collective “Skunkworks / Outlaw

Neon,” Engerer's interests also translate well into his hand-blown neon installations but he integrates what feels like a fourth dimension. Mixing in various colours while blowing and pulling his tubes, he achieves brilliant results rarely associated with neon work. As his tubes undulate and spread like acrobats through a given site-specific space, you get the sense of being witness to a dazzling sequence of events. These installations call to mind images of light dancers, or perhaps stars and spirits travelling through a night sky. Lately, he has been re-using some of his tubes and slumping and fusing them onto ceramic tiles in what could be best described as glass paintings. However, there is nothing static about these wall works in which numerous dimensions seem compressed down to a two-dimensional image. When spending time with these 'paintings,' a fleeting moment of vertigo sets in as new dimensions come alive and one is drawn into and through a universe of lines, blobs, textures, and colours.

Francis Muscat's organic architectural mixed-media sculptures reflect the artist's love of beauty and design while conveying a sense of geological or archaeological narrative. Speaking of the innate harmonious connection between glass and stone, Muscat sees “a relationship there that is metaphysical; one comes to and goes from the other.” Whether working with kiln-casting, fusing, cold-working or a combination of several techniques, Muscat prefers to preserve an element of mystery and surprise for the viewer by subduing “its polished quality to take advantage of its translucent

qualities”<sup>vi</sup> while employing an openness to using a variety of media in his work. For example, his *Small House* sculptures that rise like obelisks, feature cast glass houses resting atop striated layers of glass, stone, and other materials denoting time-passing, whether within the house as its occupants alter its interior, or through exposing the archaeological layers of our forbearers who once lived at yet undiscovered depths beneath the house.

Lou Lynn creates sculptural works that are inspired by the design and use of implements and objects that are inspired by architecture, archaeology, and industry throughout the history of humankind. During an archaeological dig, anthropologists can tell us more about how an ancient society lived by trying to make sense of the tools they used.

However, it is the structural form and shape of a given tool that determines its use which most intrigues her. Bringing these ideas into glass and metal sculptures, her contemporary forms provide a sort of conundrum for the viewer. As tools, they seem impractical no matter what their mysterious purpose. Rather, they evoke the possibility of ancient and undiscovered architecture, sacred devices, and even perhaps non-earthly contraptions.

Additional interpretations of these ideas are



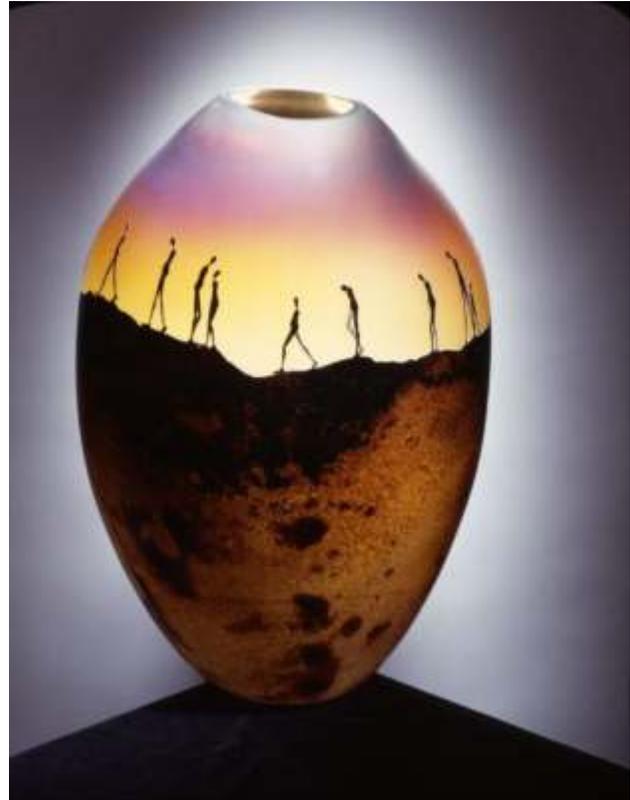
found in the 'pate de verre' cast glass forms by Donald Robertson. He describes his interests as “revealing the links between ideas and their visible manifestations, transitional moments of balance in energy and matter, thought and action. They are expressed using the visual power of material and form, often making reference to mythology, history, and natural science.”<sup>vii</sup> An inventive artist with an alchemical predisposition, he celebrates the mysterious properties of glass that allow both the interior and exterior shapes of his sculptures to co-exist, inform, and reflect each other when light dances through its facets and thicknesses. Robertson brings his full presence in his observation of the natural world while exploring symbolic transcendence, which adds multiple layers of meaning to his work. For instance, in *Ripple* (2009) he suggests the movement and lapping of water, and in *Moon Shadow* (2010), he interprets the phases of the moon and its perceived cyclical effects on the planet and its inhabitants.

The celebration of pureness and simplicity of form is also found in the luminous cast glass sculptures by David James. Working with optical glass or lead crystal, James plays with our perceptions of mass and solidity. Where the exterior form of *Portal* invites the eye to pass through, when activated by light, the piece becomes translucent and another doorway is revealed. James also masterfully populates some of the interiors of his sculptures with veiling and bubbles with which he conjures up effervescent wisps of new dimensions – worlds full of energy and

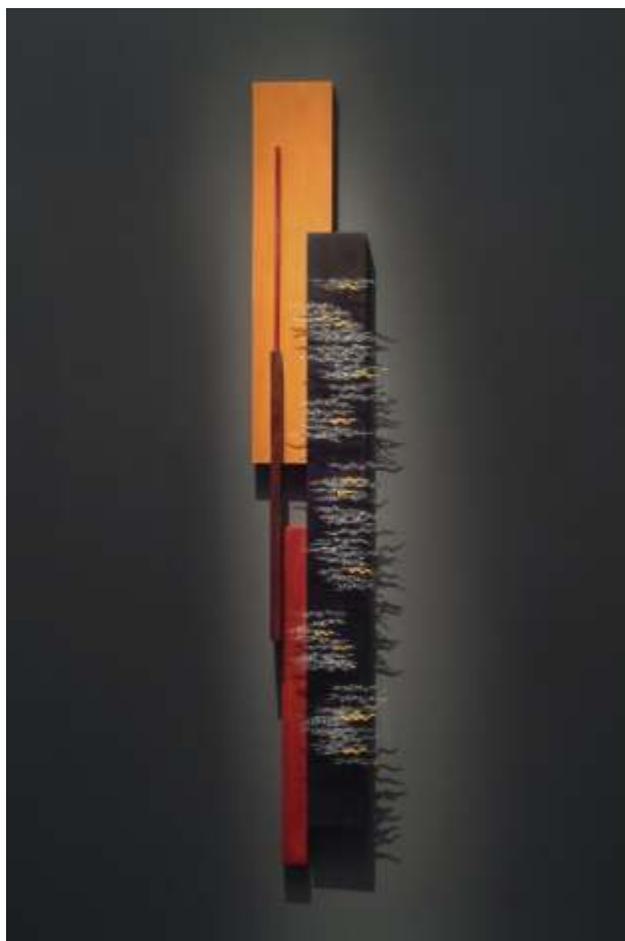
movement where one might perceive astrological bodies or celestial beings dancing through time and space.

Ione Thorkelsson's recent work, a series of cast glass skeletal busts resembling unfamiliar hybrid species speaks to alternate kinds of self-awareness, of loss, mortality, and possibility. With the onslaught of global warming, would it not be plausible that numerous species would eventually need to adapt to new environments? Might other species evolve into consciously self-aware beings? Might unwelcome environmental change later be seen as the dawning of a lost paradise to those far into the future? Gathering bones, skulls, and other natural elements near her home on an ancient escarpment in Manitoba, Thorkelsson moves back and forth through geological and evolutionary time to present her version of what could be or might have been. Taking inspiration from nature and its inhabitants, yet considering the potential for mutability and change, her forms are "poetic investigations into the science of evolution and the spirituality of existence,"<sup>viii</sup> and through her direction, the viewer might contemplate the same.

For Catherine Hibbits the notion of landscape spreads across many different worlds but she is most especially interested in the intersection of landscapes between nature, humanity, and their discovery. Wild nature and its grand design exists regardless of human existence and cognizance but it is the conscious presence that humanity brings to observation, recognition, and appreciation



that makes nature beautiful because humans have the ability to understand their own part within a larger whole. Whereas the bee is attracted to the flower for its colour and shape and its promise of nectar, humans are drawn to the flower because of its precious, delicate, arresting colour, and ethereal scent - the flower powerfully awakens meaning and yet it is through the senses that we first appreciate it. We cross-project both the beauty and form of the body onto the landscape and back again. From the land, we gain our sustenance and after the Great Return, we are consigned to it. As long as post-modern societies



continue to deny this connection, we will continue to pillage and be strangers to our birthright - the land. Hibbits's glass forms, that conjure images of water flowing over rocks and stones or her hot-formed iconic silhouettes, take us back to that moment of contemplative and experiential appreciation that speaks to the beauty, preciousness, fragility, and balance in all that is living.

Moving to more existential questions are Susan Edgerley's flame-worked glass and multi-media sculptures and installations that explore ideas about the complexity of living, being, and feeling. The works acknowledge human fragility yet searches for ways to transcend limitations without judgement – recalling the state of molten glass the shines and glows through the light while still in the fire. She compares glass with the human condition and elaborates by saying: “with its enticing transparency yet solid impregnability, it remains a seductive and elusive medium full of contradictions.”<sup>x</sup> In its hot form, it is fluid and malleable. When cool, it is resilient yet fragile - opaque, colourful, translucent, or completely transparent yet full of depth. Glass can act like a lens or reflect multiple views, speaking of the one or the group, of the individual or the community, and of the potential mirroring of each other thereby underlying “the complexity of human existence.”<sup>x</sup>

Meanwhile, Michèle Lapointe and Irene Frolic boldly explore the darker parts of human experience where haunting memories tell stories of the Sacrificial Innocents to evil. Lapointe interprets the fluctuating and fleeting memories of little girls subjected to sexual abuse and rape. In one of the works from her installation entitled *Contes muets* (Silence Tales),<sup>xi</sup> she references the horrors of priests abusing children. The sculpture is composed of a glass pillow that rests atop a box filled with found objects and photographs of broken dolls, walls, garbage, and graffiti representing lost innocence, place, devaluation, disregard, and filth. The glass

pillow distorts the composition below and one must look through the pillow at varying angles in order to get the full picture. Likewise, Irene Frolic's earlier work speaks of her own childhood experience as a Holocaust survivor during which she and her mother narrowly escaped being murdered at the hands of the Nazis. These opaque, highly textured, and scarred kiln cast sculptures of a downcast face resting on a solid neck seem caught in a moment of expressionless contemplation, fear, and terror, yet they remain powerfully present by Frolic's surface treatments that suggest the weathered traces of life experience. Frolic says that "somehow this whole idea of glass and fires of annihilation and the fires in the kiln and everything - it just took hold of me and held me gently and fiercely for almost ten years while I worked through certain things in my work."<sup>xii</sup> In these works, she was making associations between the psychology of the human face and the geological narrative of the Canadian landscape. However, in her more recent work she uses colour, light, and beauty to celebrate the inner force that prevails imperviously deep below the scars.

Karl Schantz and Tyler Rock explore the vessel from an architectural perspective while shunning functionality. Previously the Studio Master at Sheridan College's glass studio, Karl Schantz developed and led a glass arts program at the Ontario College of Art (OCAD University) in 1981. This glass studio was noted for its open approach and acceptance, encouragement to artists, craftspeople, and designers from the college's myriad disciplines and beyond (of which this writer

benefited). This environment was credited with the nourishment and the career development, both initially and ongoing, of many glass practitioners, many of who are still in active glass practice. Schantz's own practice was initially functionally based as he explored technical and aesthetic precedence in historic works. Given his inherent preferences and interests, it was inevitable that he would co-opt, adapt, and reinterpret



the widespread contemporary movements of abstraction, Pop Art, and design as amply demonstrated in his multi-media asymmetrical colourful constructions. In contrast but bearing the artist's stylistic hallmark, his other works made of blown and cut glass and assembled Vitrolite, reveal his fascination with ancient Egyptian and Aztec architecture where “the amalgamation of past, present, and future apparent in these structures creates a universal or timeless quality.”<sup>xiii</sup> Schantz's works represented in this exhibition, although autonomous pieces, might also be interpreted or perceived as models or dioramas for full-scale live-in applications for the built environment.

Tyler Rock is perhaps the finest master glass blower that Canada has to offer. In his artist statement, he talks about the 'edge' as being a place where “ideas about limits and connections, boundaries and frontiers meet”<sup>xiv</sup> and goes on to explain that he has always been “drawn to the point where the forest meets meadow or where water meets land.”<sup>xv</sup> This is an important place because ideas and concepts arise from being observant with a stilled mind and this is so in Rock's work where the edge becomes contemplative and revealing. Like a call to prayer, his vessel sculptures resemble turrets from an ancient Indian temple or a Buddhist monastery – mirrored by a calm body of water and acting like directional portals to worlds above and below.

Previously working as a Toronto fire fighter, Orest Tataryn's passion for light was awakened during an experience while at the

scene of a major fire. In the environment of heat and smoke-filled compartments with sagging glass windows in motion, he saw a neon sign that was still lit, swinging, and still readable through the smoky haze. Learning about neon in his spare time, he eventually co-founded the now disbanded guerrilla art collective “Skunkworks / Outlaw Neon. Since then, his explorations have included neon colour field assemblies, mixed media sculptures, and installations, all of which consciously incorporate the Fibonacci Sequence (also known as the golden ratio, divine proportion, golden mean).<sup>xvi</sup> This mathematical principle found in art, design, the natural world, and many other areas is based on the premise that humans are intuitively drawn to a certain proportional ratio that is considered most aesthetically pleasing. Ultimately, his Minimalist light sculptures and wall works incorporate ideas of balance, proportion, and spatial (or sensory) transformation through light. Tataryn says “with light, there is always a second factor and that factor is colour.”<sup>xvii</sup> Creating theatre, illusion, and magic with light, shadow, and colour for over twenty years, Tataryn has become an all-encompassing artist of light.

Koen Vanderstukken's works oscillate between revelation and deception. For over twenty years, the artist made cast glass sculptures and wall works with highly textured surfaces where time, perception, and elusiveness were predominant themes in his work. For instance, his *Earthborn* (1991-2000) works resembled prehistoric statues of a long forgotten civilization while his *Faces*

(2000-2002), a series of monoliths, discs, and seemingly eroded architectural-looking masks evoked the idea of sacred place markers. The *Changes* series (2002) alluded to time passing, and his *Rip* series (2003) of fossilized markers or traces. Those works imparted a feeling of stone or ceramic in their opacity but beyond this armour, there remained that seductive glow of glass that might perhaps reference a moment of clarity or truth. In his latest works, Vanderstukken continues to challenge our preconceptions about history, time, and place as turns our focus to the very question of what is reality in his series of interactive sculptures. Living in our own time, we are accustomed to such a barrage of moving images that we forget to question the validity – or reality – of the images in question. In these works, flat mirror-like and transparent monitors are conjoined with interior computer and video components that are neatly sandwiched between sheets of glass. The viewer either can see right through the monitor, have his or her image reflected through additional angled panes of glass, or is able to activate an additional image by viewing the sculpture through common Polaroid sunglasses. Vanderstukken sets up a brilliant scene where viewers become active participants in making distinctions between actual reality, virtual reality, or might question the reality of the image to begin with. As with his earlier works, each sculpture oscillates between futuristic architecture and sacred shrine, except that here glass becomes not only the media, but also the message.

The story of contemporary Canadian glass art

is told by the artists who consciously brave the voices of the Sirens to enter a world of danger, seduction, romance, and ecstasy of the medium. Fire the Creator, the Destroyer, and The Purifier, is a fundamental requirement for working with glass but then so are Earth, Water and Air – all original elements of our planet. However, glass comes into being with a Fifth Element: Light. The final appearance or desired reading of the object depends on how the object holds and transmits this essential ingredient. This consideration is controlled through the manipulation of initial chemistry, massing or density, colour, and final surface treatment.

A material that encourages creative collaboration, Alfred Engerer speaks about working with glass as “being trapped in a short or long moment of creation because the medium affords that possibility.”<sup>xviii</sup> These moments are forever frozen in time and the resulting works are the evidence of their existence and passage.

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Christian Bernard Singer, Curator  
Canadian Clay & Glass Gallery

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- <sup>ii</sup> Robin, Jon Paul. From the artist's statement about his work, 2010.
- <sup>iii</sup> Copping, Brad. From the artist's statement about his work, 2010.
- <sup>iv</sup> Copping, Brad. From the artist's statement about his work, 2010.
- <sup>v</sup> Muscat, Francis. From the artist's statement about his work, 2010.
- <sup>vi</sup> Copping, Brad. *Francis Muscat: Men and Houses* at Pentimento Fine Art. Contemporary Canadian Glass Magazine. Canada: Glass Art Association, March 22, 2010.
- <sup>vii</sup> Robertson, Donald. From the artist's statement about his work, 2010.
- <sup>viii</sup> Delacretez, Helen. *Ione Thorkelsson: Hypothetical Pasts, Constructed Futures*. May 1, 2010.
- <sup>ix</sup> Edgerley, Susan. From the artist's statement about her work, 2010.
- <sup>x</sup> Edgerley, Susan. From the artist's statement about her work, 2010.
- <sup>xi</sup> Contes muets was exhibited at the Canadian Clay & Glass Gallery from September 21, 2008 to January 25, 2009
- <sup>xii</sup> Geyer, Robert. *Interview with Irene Frolic*. Transcript from an interview organized by Robert Geyer for his glass history course, *Living Glass History* at the Alberta College of Art & Design. Calgary: ACAD, November 5, 2009.
- <sup>xiii</sup> Schantz, Karl. From the artist's statement about his work in *Voices of Contemporary Glass*. Corning Museum of Glass, 2006.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Rock, Tyler. From the artist's statement about his work, 2010.
- <sup>xv</sup> Rock, Tyler. From the artist's statement about his work, 2010.
- <sup>xvi</sup> The Fibonacci sequence, named after Leonardo of Pisa, is a series of numbers where, after two starting values, each number is the sum of the two numbers that came before it.
- <sup>xvii</sup> Tataryn, Orest. From the artist's statement about his work, 2010.
- <sup>xviii</sup> Engerer, Alfred. From the artist's statement about his work, 2010.

**Image list for Christian Bernard Singer's  
Glass Factor: Luminaries in the Canadian Art Glass Scene**

**David James**

*Jubilatuin, citrine*, 2010

45% lead crystal,

10.4" x 12.75" x 7.25"

Photographer: André Cornellier

**Brad Copping**

*Middle of Somewhere*, 2007

Glass, topographical map, steel shelf

4" x 89" x 3.5"

Photo: Trent Photographics

**Alfred Engerer and Orest Tataryn**

Installation View, 2010

Mutual Group Tower Gallery

Photo: CCGG

**Francis Muscat**

*Small House series #59*, 2010

Laminated glass, cast glass, slate, limestone

3" x 3" x 17"

Photographer: Francis Muscat

**Catherine Hibbits**

*Journey*, 2010

Blown and sandblasted glass

12.25" x 8"

Photo: Catherine Hibbits

**Susan Edgerley**

*Flow*, 2008

Flameworked glass and wood

79" x 14" x 7"

Photo: Michel Dubreuil

**Karl Schantz**

*Madam X (XJ19 Series)*, 1985

Laminated cast glass and Vitrolite

21" x 5.5" x 4"

Photo: Myron Zabol



Installation View: Peter Powning, Donald Robertson, and Ione Thorkelsson. Douglas Wright Education Gallery

## Glass Education in Canada – A Fluid History

Nancy Schnarr, Curatorial Research Assistant

## Glass Education in Canada – A Fluid History

The birth of the studio glass movement in North America began during the 1960s with glass blowing courses offered first by Harvey Littleton in 1962 in Toledo, Ohio.<sup>i</sup> The movement moved quickly North, and during the 1970s studio glass became part of Canada's artistic consciousness.<sup>ii</sup> This development was marked by the establishment of glass programs across the country, which have trained or employed some of Canada's most prominent glass artists, including many of those featured in *Glass Factor: Luminaries in the Canadian Art Glass Scene*, curated by Christian Bernard Singer. These programs, along with private galleries and arts organizations, encouraged artists and increased access to glass as an artistic medium, jump-starting glass sculpture in Canada.

The studio at Sheridan College in Mississauga, Ontario, the first educational glass studio in Canada, was founded by Robert Held, a Californian potter who headed Sheridan's Ceramics Department.<sup>iii</sup> Held began working at Sheridan in 1968 and, after studying at the Penland School of Crafts in North Carolina with Mark Peiser,<sup>iv</sup> opened the hot glass studio at Sheridan in 1970.<sup>v</sup> Sheridan's glass department flourished and, after only one year, students had the option of choosing glass as a Major. In 1975, Karl Schantz joined the faculty after being invited by Held to participate in glass blowing demonstrations in Toronto.<sup>vi</sup> Up to this point, the focus of the Department was on the basics

of glass blowing and the manipulation of the material. Schantz infused his own interests into the program, establishing a cold-working studio and introducing glass blowing techniques that used traditional methods in modern ways.<sup>vii</sup>

The end of the 1970s brought with them major changes in the Department at Sheridan. Robert Held left in 1977 to work in Calgary at Canadian Art Glass, eventually travelling to Vancouver where he established the Skookum Art Glass company, now known as Robert Held Art Glass Inc.<sup>viii</sup> Karl Schantz became studio master and then left Sheridan in 1979 for the Ontario College of Art (OCA) to develop their glass department, which would provide training to Alfred Engerer, Irene Frolic, Kevin Lockau, and John Paul Robinson.<sup>ix</sup> After Held and Schantz left Sheridan, the program was taken over by Daniel Crichton, an influential glass artist in his own right, who was the Head of the Department until his death in 2002. Crichton was responsible for designing the studio space that the program occupies today, under the direction of Koen Vanderstukken. The program has expanded to include instruction in a wide variety of glass art techniques, along with the courses originally initiated by Held and Schantz.<sup>x</sup> Since its creation, Sheridan has been a very important educational facility; former students include Laura Donefer, Catherine Hibbits, François Houdé, Donald Robertson, and Susan Rankin.<sup>xi</sup>

While it is widely acknowledged that the studio glass movement in Canada began with Held's work at Sheridan, there were

prominent artists working with glass in other areas of Canada around the same time. After seeing Czech glass art at the Expo in Montreal in 1967, Gilles Desaulniers was inspired to work with glass, and founded a second glass educational program in Canada. Desaulniers went to Europe and studied glass in Prague with the great master glass sculptor Stanislav Libensky. Returning to Quebec, he opened a cold-working studio at the Universit du Québec Trois-Rivieres in 1971, followed by the establishment of a hot glass studio and classes.<sup>xii</sup> The studio is currently run by Jean-Paul Martel who took over as the Head of the program after Desaulniers retired, and offers a Fine Arts Degree with a focus on glass, the only program of its kind in Eastern Canada.<sup>xiii</sup>

The 1970s was a decade of major activity for studio glass schools in Canada. In 1971, the same year that glass became an available Major at Sheridan, Roman Bartkiw left the school to set up a program at Georgian College in Barrie, which was responsible for introducing Francis Muscat and John Paul Robinson to glass.<sup>xiv</sup> Also during the 1970s, the Alberta College of Art and Design (ACAD) was the first school in Western Canada to add glass art to its curriculum. The program was created in 1974 by Norman Faulkner, who was working as Sheridan's ceramic technician when he attended a workshop given by Mark Peiser, and changed his artistic focus to glass. ACAD is now considered one of the major Canadian glass art schools, offering students a BFA in glass.<sup>xv</sup> The program, currently headed by Natali Rodrigues,<sup>xvi</sup> has had many prominent artists

as instructors, including Marty Kaufmann who served as Head of the program from 2004-2006, and Tyler Rock who was Department Head from 2006-2009.<sup>xvii</sup>

One of the prominent features of the Canadian glass art community is the exchange of talent and technique driven by the movement of artists across Canada and North America. Many glass artists have travelled between the major Canadian glass departments as students, artists, and teachers.<sup>xviii</sup> It was perhaps the impulse to work amongst other artists that led to the establishment of schools like Espace Verre, which was started in 1987 by François Houdé and Ronald Labelle with the opening of the Centre des mtiers du verre du Qubec in Montreal. The aim of Espace Verre was to support glass artists by providing them with studio space as well as access to the latest in glass art technology.<sup>xix</sup> The school encouraged the interaction between professionals and students, bridging the gap between educational space and functional studio, allowing artists the opportunity to learn, teach, and create.<sup>xx</sup> The original mission is still relevant at the school today, which has facilities to develop a wide range of glass art techniques. There is no designated department head, allowing the program to adjust according to student interest and instructor expertise, which has included the talents of Susan Edgerley and Michèle Lapointe.<sup>xxi</sup>

Many students of Sheridan, OCA, ACAD, and Espace Verre went on to become some of Canada's most prominent glass artists, often

becoming teachers at the same institutions that they studied.<sup>xxii</sup> One of the interesting things about the glass art education community is that it was very common for artists to go elsewhere to teach or continue their own education, after completing a formal program. Many of the initial founders of the major Canadian glass schools collaborated with each other, and taught at what could be considered “rival” schools at some point during their careers. François Houdé, for example, studied at Sheridan and taught at the Ontario College of Art before moving on to co-found Espace Verre.<sup>xxiii</sup> The desire for collaboration and interaction amongst glass artists is demonstrated by the movement of artists between schools, as well as membership in associations like the Glass Art Association of Canada, or GAAC, which currently has Brad Copping as its president.<sup>xxiv</sup>

GAAC is another way for artists to interact with one another, as well as continue their glass education. Established in 1983, the main purpose of the GAAC is to coordinate conferences, exhibitions, and seminars that provide artists with an opportunity to learn and teach, no matter the stage of their careers.<sup>xxv</sup> The GAAC has involved artists such as David James and Peter Powning as speakers, administrators, and article authors.<sup>xxvi</sup> They also produce a monthly magazine that keeps members informed about glass art in Canada and around the world.<sup>xxvii</sup>

The establishment of formal training programs was undoubtedly an important part of the development of Canadian glass art, but there were also private galleries and studios

that made their mark on the Canadian glass community, and many important artists received their training outside formal institutions, such as Lone Thorkelsson, who is virtually self-taught,<sup>xxviii</sup> and Orest Tataryn, who took courses in neon at Robert Reichhardt's neon studio in Toronto. Reichhardt was also responsible, along with Alfred Engerer, for starting an unofficial program to teach hand-blown neon tube production to OCA students working at both the OCA studio and Reichhardt's studio.<sup>xxix</sup> Opportunities for learning also exist at places like the Craft Studio at Toronto's Harbourfront Centre, and the Living Arts Centre in Mississauga, which offer workshops and classes for anyone interested in learning about glass.<sup>xxx</sup> The Craft Studio supports glass artists by providing access to partially subsidized studio space for artists-in-residence, including space to work, exhibit, collaborate with visiting artists, teach glass workshops to the public, and sell their work.<sup>xxxi</sup> The studio space is unique because the studio is in full view of visitors and gives the public an opportunity to see how glass sculpture is made,<sup>xxxii</sup> which ultimately increases public understanding and awareness of contemporary Canadian art as a whole. It can be considered an educational as well as commercial space, but exists outside a formal educational institution. Other places in Canada that offer glass courses include the Haliburton School of the Arts, as well as Red Deer College in Alberta, which has included Lou Lynn as an instructor,<sup>xxxiii</sup> and the Red Barns Studio in Prince Edward County, Ontario.<sup>xxxiv</sup> These institutions offer courses and intensive programs in glass, allowing access to training outside the more

formal programs.<sup>xxxv</sup>

The use of glass as a creative medium in Canada is still relatively new, but since its introduction Canadian artists have made glass art their own, and the enthusiasm for the material has made the rapid growth of educational programs possible. Unfortunately some of the glass programs established during the early period of growth are no longer available. The program established at Georgian College in 1971 ran until the mid-1980s, and the glass program founded by Karl Schantz at OCA was shut down in 1996.<sup>xxxvi</sup> The OCA studio was taken over by Alfred Engerer and others to found the Geisterblitz studio – Toronto's only hot glass co-operative – which, thanks to new patronage, will continue to support experimentation and collaboration among glass artists as it moves to a larger space in early 2011 under the name of GeisterBlitz Art Glass Works. In addition to featuring a large blowing studio at affordable rates, the new state-of-the-art glass studio facility will offer other studios for casting, slumping and fusing, flame-working, cold-working, and fine-coldworking. Meanwhile, many of the first glass programs have not only survived, but continue to thrive as they develop their programs. Today glass artists can still train at Sheridan, ACAD, Espace Verre, and the Universit du Québec Trois-Rivieres, as well as through apprenticeships, workshops, and courses.

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- <sup>ii</sup> Layton, Peter. *Glass Art* (London: A&C Black, 1996), 68.
- <sup>iii</sup> Hickey, Gloria. "Gathering Momentum: The Studio Glass Movement in Canada," in *Glass in Sculpture: A Canadian Contribution* (North York, ON: Koffler Gallery, 1988), 7.
- <sup>iv</sup> "A Short History of Penland School of Crafts" from *Penland School of Crafts*, <http://penland.org/about/history.html> retrieved 08/24/10. The Penland School was established during the 1920s, and added glass as a medium during the 1960s when the enthusiasm for glass in the United States was high, Mark Peiser was the first artist-in-residence at the glass studio there.
- <sup>v</sup> Hickey "Gathering," 7.
- <sup>vi</sup> Morrison, Rosalyn J. "A Study of Canadian Glass" from *Canadian Glassworks 1970-1990* (Toronto: Ontario Crafts Council, 1990), 5.
- <sup>vii</sup> Morrison, "Canadian Glass," 6.
- <sup>viii</sup> Morrison, "Canadian Glass," 6
- <sup>ix</sup> Layton, *Glass Art*, 68.
- <sup>x</sup> Julia and Yolande Krueger "A Brief History of Glass Education in Canada." *Contemporary Canadian Glass* 5, no. 3, Winter 2006, 25.
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- <sup>xvii</sup> Krueger and Krueger, "Glass Education," 26
- <sup>xviii</sup> Morrison, "Canadian Glass," 17 The genealogy chart shows the movement of artists between schools during the early years.
- <sup>xix</sup> Layton, *Glass Art*, 68
- <sup>xx</sup> Morrison, "Canadian Glass," 9
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<sup>xxiii</sup> Hickey "Gathering," 8

<sup>xxiv</sup> "Contact GAAC" *Glass Art Association of Canada*, <http://www.glassartcanada.ca/contact.php>, retrieved 09/13/10.

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<sup>xxvii</sup> "Contemporary Canadian Glass: Magazine of the Glass Art Association of Canada" *Glass Art Association of Canada*, <http://mag.glassartcanada.ca/> Retrieved 08/24/10.

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<sup>xxxi</sup> Hickey "Gathering," 15

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<sup>xxxvi</sup> Krueger and Krueger, "Glass Education," 26.



Installation View: Brad Copping, David James, Catherine Hibbits, Francis Muscat, Irene Frolic, Tyler Rock, and Koen Vanderstukken. Keith and Winifred Shantz Gallery.

## The Works

**Brad Copping**

*Domestic Fuel*, 2009

Blown and enamelled glass, found object

69.25" x 12.5" x 9"



Photo: Brad Copping

**Laura Donefer**

*Private Stigmata*, 1994

Blown glass figure, copper and antique  
nails, white dog fur, horsehair and burrs  
partial lobster trap, red paint, horsehair.  
19.75" x 29.25"



Photo: Fandy Photography

**Susan Edgerley**

*With/Within/Without/Through*, 2009

Pedestal sculpture on reflective black base.

Sandcast and diamond wheel cut glass  
elements, frameworked glass, wood

54" x 12" x 6"



Photo: Michel Dubreuil

**Alfred Engerer**

*Wave*, 2010

Hand-blown and pulled, neon

Dimensions: Various



Photo: Rafi Ghanaglounian

**Irene Frolic**

*Autumn Gold*, 2008

Lost wax sculpture

22" x 9" x 9"



Photo: Rebekkah D'Amboise

**Catherine Hibbits**

*Waterwall*, 2010

Blown forms laminated  
on five plate glass panels  
Installed: 10" x 38" x 6"



Photo: Catherine Hibbits

**David James**

*Portal, amber, 2010*

kiln cast crystal

24 x 18" x 4"



Photographer: André Cornellier

**Michèle Lapointe**

*Le Songed de Nelly*, 2010

Hot-formed glass, digital print, cotton and  
linen paper, wood

8" x 18" x 14"



Photographer: René Rioux

**Lou Lynn**  
*Puller*, 2009  
Glass & Bronze  
10" x 4.5" x 6.5"



Photographer: Janet Dwyer

**Francis Muscat**

*Meditation #2*, 2005

Assembled tumbled glass

24" x 24" x 18"

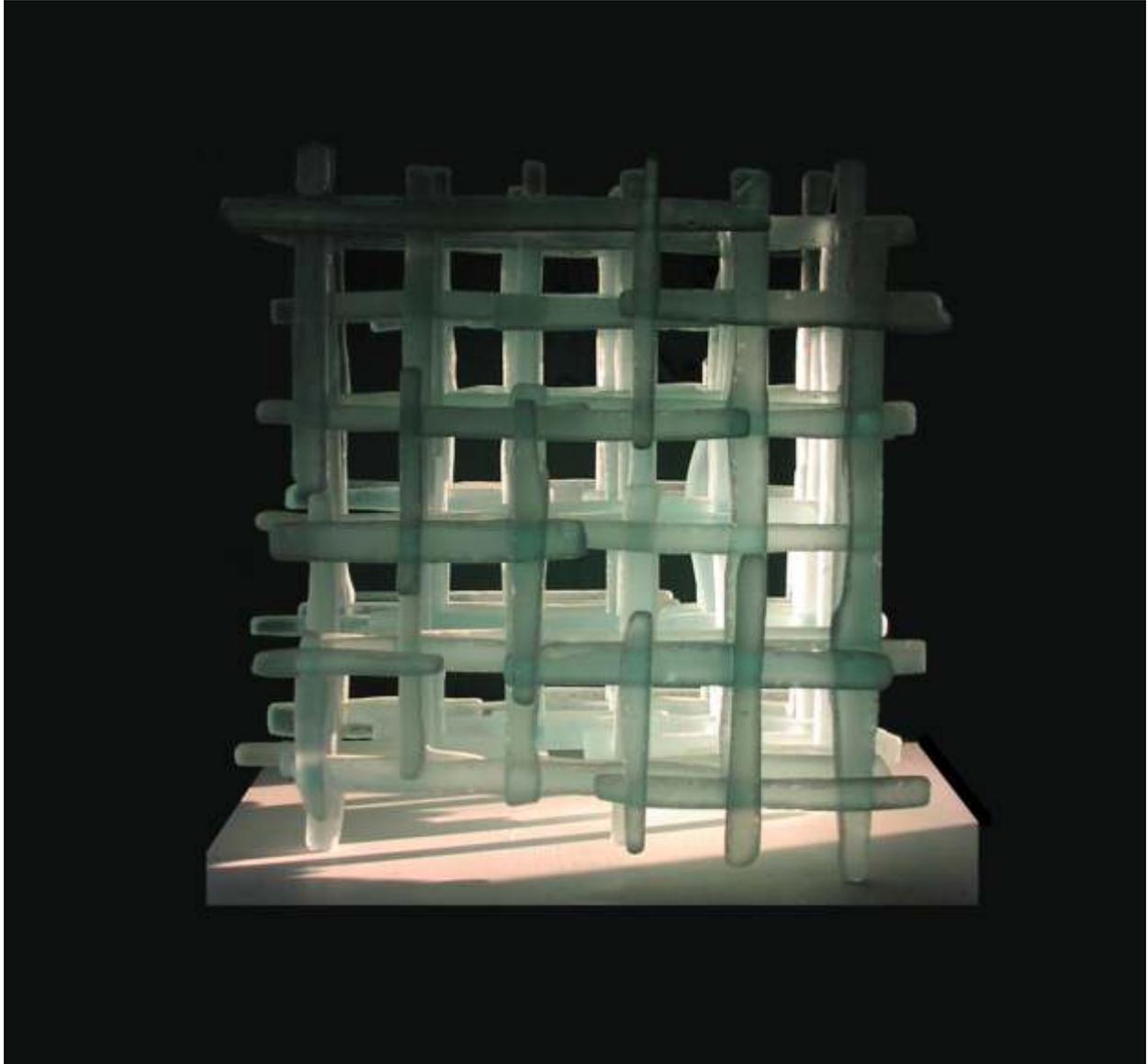


Photo: Cat O'Neil

**Susan Rankin**

*Salmon over Chartreuse Orange Flowers, 2008*

Blown and solid worked glass, sandblasted surface.

15" x 11.5" x 11.5"



Photo: Susan Rankin

**Donald Robertson**

*Ripple*, 2009

Lost wax crystal, cut and polished

Installed: 7.25" x 36.5" x 7.25"



Photographer: Michel Dubreuil

**John Paul Robinson**

*Resonant*, 2008

Solid glass, metal

5" x 34" x 5"



Photographer: Himagia

**Tyler Rock**

*Weight*, 2006

Blown glass, assembled

56.5" x 10.5"



Photographer: John Dean

**Karl Schantz**

*Lotus #9 from the XJ21 Series, 1985*

Laminated and etched blown glass and Vitrolite.

14.5" x 10" x 5"



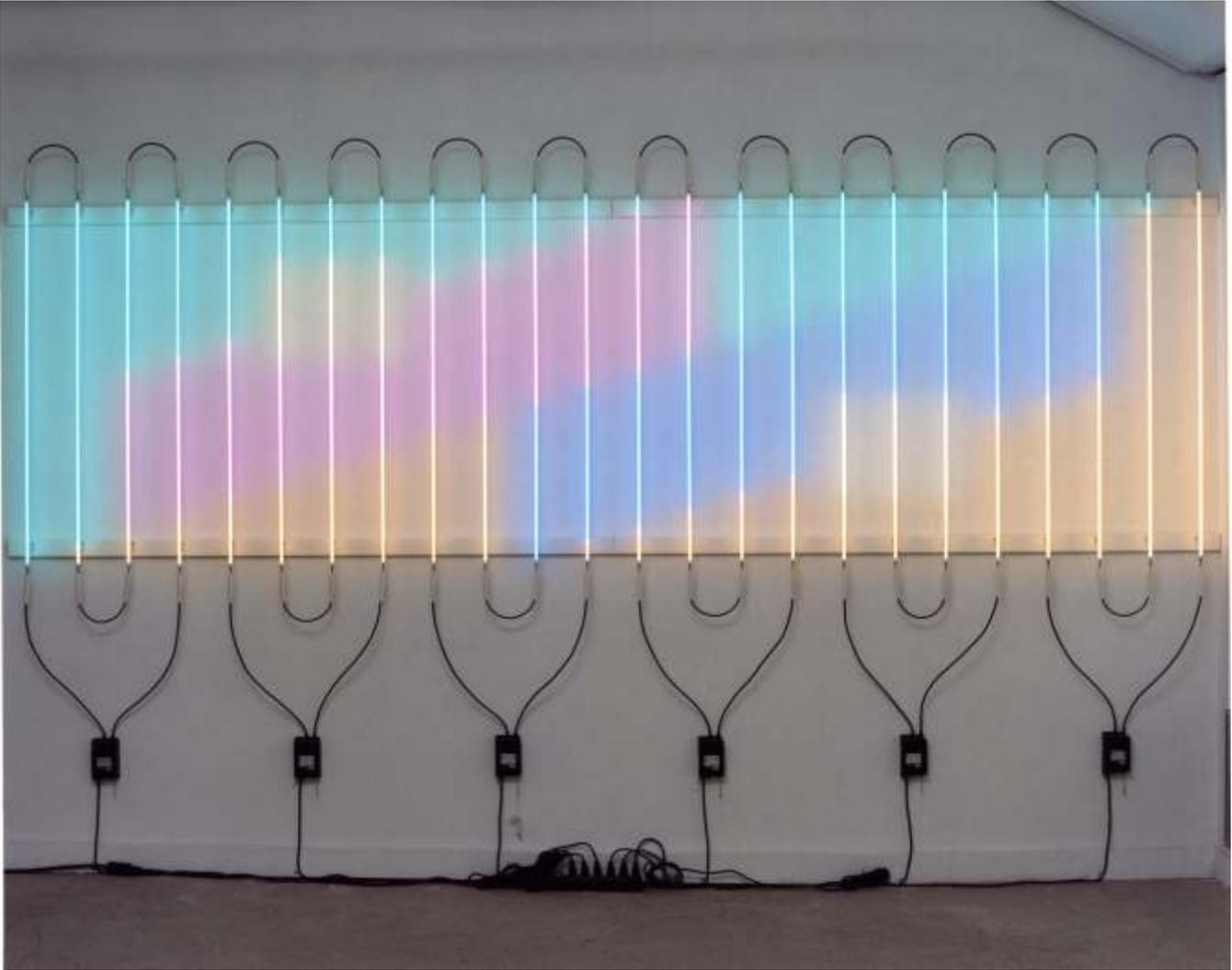
Photo: Myron Zabol

**Orest Tataryn**

*Pastel Geometric Colour Field #6, 2000*

Glass and neon

96" x 96" x 2.5"



Photographer: Cat O'Neil

**Ione Thorkelsson**

*Henrietta*, 2010

Cast glass

9.4" x 4.4" x 13.6"



Photographer: Ione Thorkelsson

**Koen Vanderstukken**

*My Reality*, 2010

Float glass, 15" LCD screen, camera, sunglasses.

19.5" x 14.25" x 14.25



Photo: Wilhelm E. Nassau (Inset photo: CCGG)



Installation View: James Grace, François Houdé, and Lisette Lemeux. Donald and Pamela Bierstock Circular Gallery.



Installation View: Francis Muscat, Brad Copping, Laura Donefer, and Susan Edgerley. Douglas Wright Education Gallery

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