

Made from the earth: Clay and Glass

By ASHLEY IDLE

Every glass you pick up is made of tiny crystals of silica sand that have been fused together through intense heat so that you can have a cold drink. It's not something we think about every day, but, when looked at in its raw form, sand, and the finished product, glass, we should keep in mind an amazing transformation has taken place.

It's no wonder people choose to make it into art.

The Clay and Glass (formerly the Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery) is a gallery in uptown Waterloo open to the public. It shows off the best of Canada and the world in clay and glass sculpting. With free admission, the gallery is a great place to go on a weekend outing to give yourself some intellectual calisthenics.

Right now is the beginning of the fall season at the gallery, and with the beginning of the season comes new exhibits. This season features Glass Factor: Luminaries in the Canadian Art Glass Scene. The exhibition features 18 Canadian artists. They are: Brad Copping, Laura Donefer, Susan Edgerley, Alfred Engerer, Irene Frolic, Catherine Hibbits, David James, Michele Lapointe, Lou Lynn, Francis Muscat, Susan Rankin, Donald Robertson, John Paul Robinson, Tyler Rock, Karl Schantz, Orest Tataryn, Ione Thorkelsson and Koen Vanderstukken. These artists represent some of the premier glass sculpting coming out of Canada, and some of their best works are on display for the public to enjoy.

The gallery is laid out in an open fashion to allow visitors to explore freely. The setup was curator Christian Bernard Singer's idea. This is Singer's first exhibition as curator of the Clay and Glass. "The curator chooses to make order out of the chaos. He shapes the show into something relevant and beautiful," said marketing manager Heather Majaury.

"This is an excellent show for people looking into the eclectic nature of glass," said Majaury. "It's a total celebration."



The sculpture XJ21 Series: Lotus #9 was created by Karl Schantz. Schantz is one of the 18 artists featured in the Glass Factor exhibit. People can visit Clay and Glass Tuesday to Friday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday, 1-5 p.m.

The gallery underwent a bit of a transformation to allow this kind of inviting observation space. "We started the process of restructuring the space to be more open," said Majaury. "We want people to spend time at the gallery." To that effect, they have added seating areas and a small cafe.

The gallery's is open to the community. Majaury talked about how it was important for the area to have a place where residents could go to appreciate art and culture. Volunteer and former Conestoga College student Jonathan Plummer also spoke about how it was important to support local endeavours and local artists. "Local is always a good thing," he said. And they do support local artists at the gallery, as one of the artists featured lives in the Waterloo area.

The art invites people in; the atmosphere makes them want to stay.

"This is a beautiful place. It's a secular space with a lot of spiritual content," said Majaury.

The glass factor exhibition will be on through the fall until Jan. 2. The gallery invites all students to come and visit them.

"Galleries are known to help relieve stress," said Majaury. She also points out that it is a good place to help stir up creative thoughts, and that it is a great place for the student on a budget to go for a nice, cultural date. The gallery shop also offers some unique gifts for those people who have everything.

Keep an eye out for new exhibitions coming to the Clay and Glass such as Julie Oakes's exhibit, Swounds, which will be making its way to Waterloo on April 3.