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The UrbanGlass Art Quarterly

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ON VIEW NOW!

the **SALMON SCHOOL**

CURATED BY JOSEPH ROSSANO AND BENEDICT HEYWOOD

Since its inception in western Washington, *The Salmon School* has traveled the globe on a circular journey, serving as a symbol of hope – hope that, through awareness and community building, we can inspire real change in the preservation of wild salmon populations.

Now, *The Salmon School* returns home to reinvigorate the local conversation on conservation, environmental stewardship, and the role we all play in protecting native wildlife.



Joseph Gregory Rossano. *The Salmon School*, detail. Blown and mirrored glass. Photo by C.B. Bell. Photo courtesy of the artist and Bellevue Arts Museum, Bellevue, WA.

Tacoma, Washington
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LOWE

order up!

THE POP ART OF JOHN MILLER

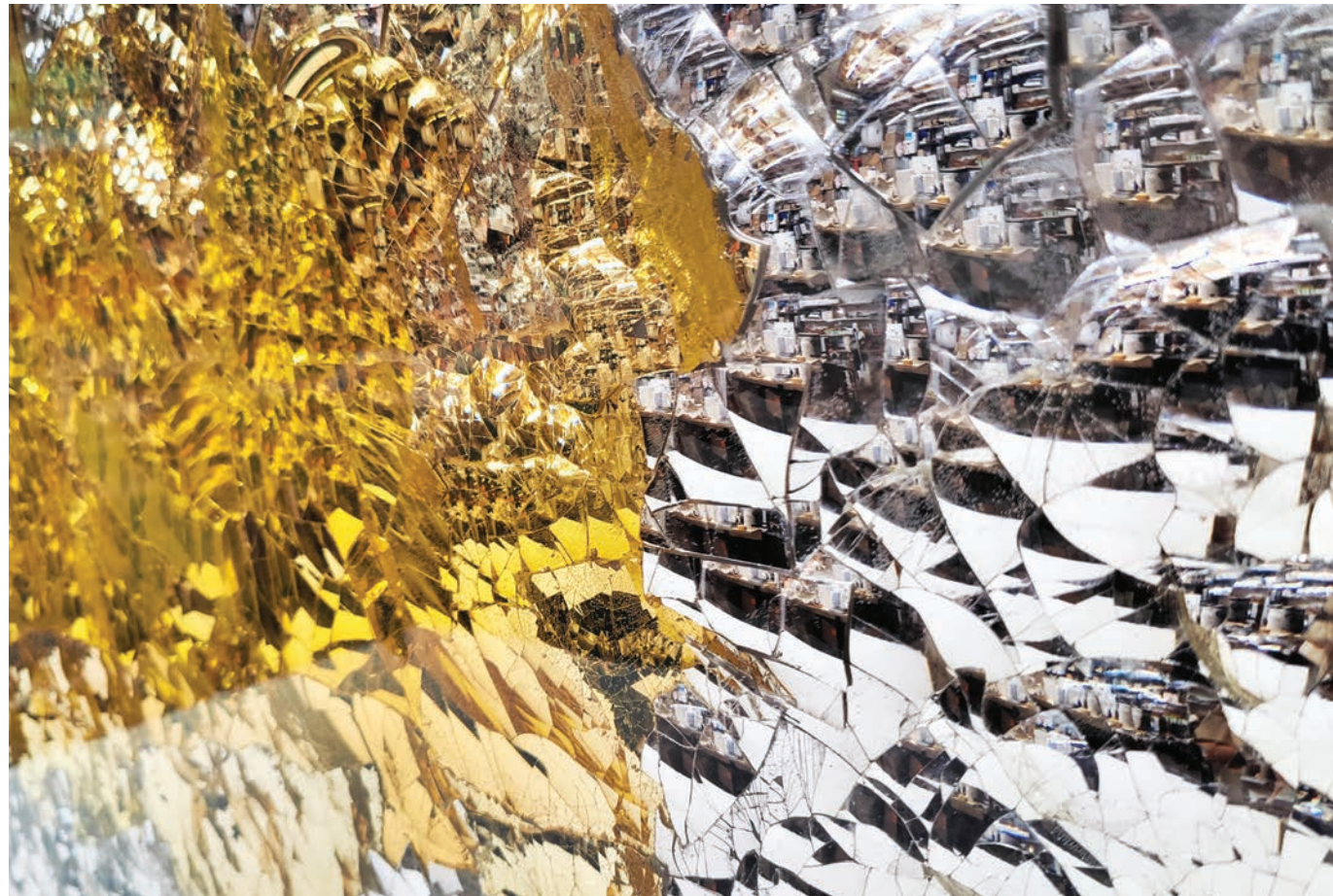
Oct. 27, 2023 - Jan. 14, 2024



John Miller, *Blue Plate Special Grouping and Ketchup*, 2023. Glass, dimensions variable. Photo: John Miller © John Miller

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Anjali Srinivasan, *Sunset Body*, 2023. Blown mirrored glass on silicone, epoxy, stainless steel, wood. H 48, W 24, D 2 in.

Group Exhibition

**“CONTEMPORARY GLASS SCULPTURE”
NEW BEDFORD ART MUSEUM
NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS
JUNE 13-AUGUST 26, 2023**

Gender is a common conceit in the curation of group shows. A show that proclaims “women artists” as its thematic glue often adheres to a narrative of visibility. It’s a noble intention. Might it also represent a certain unreality? After all, art-about-gender is categorically different than art made by a person of a certain gender. They can overlap, but they’re not synonymous.

“I identify as both an artist and a woman, but rarely do I head into the studio thinking: ‘Time to make some women’s art, like the woman I am!’” wrote Sarah Rose Sharp for *Hyperallergic* in 2018.

“Contemporary Glass Sculpture,” recently on view at New Bedford Art Museum, used gender as its organizing principle—albeit in a low-key way, as the generalized title suggested. Per Suzanne de Vegh, the museum’s executive director, the exhibition comprised six “talented female artists who deploy glass in some unexpected ways.”

Sure enough, “unexpected ways” of making, morphing, and doing glass emerged as the prominent theme in my walk-through. Maybe that speaks to my own lacuna. Or it just confirms that this show was less interested in reifying an entire gender’s creativity than in showcasing material cleverness.

Take Anjali Srinivasan, an internationally exhibiting artist and associate professor at

MassArt. Here she provided some glass bodies that asked audiences to interact. The floppy *Quiver Vessels* (2023), made from silicone and blown glass, were displayed with a pair of white cotton gloves for handling. An invitation to touch can be rare in regional art venues, especially with oh-so-precious glass. I’d felt these bowls before, but not in a quiet museum on a Thursday afternoon. Pawing these *Quivers* was an amusing and welcome respite from the typical walking and looking.

Srinivasan offered fodder for the latter, too. One of her characteristic techniques is a cracked mirror surface. Its most intriguing use here may have been *Sunset Body* (2023), which portrayed a slosh of yellow swimming across a stream of broken mirror, the color somewhere between horizon and egg yolk. Was it a

human body abstracted, or some other sentience entirely? Who knows? Srinivasan’s body of work amounts to improbable bodies that are hard to define, as they’re ever metamorphosing.

What the exhibiting artists also shared is a regional education: Each of them trained in Massachusetts. This additional theme gave an intended regional flavor to the presentation. I was reminded of my Portuguese grandparents and their once-sweeping backyard gardens with Kimberly Savoie’s *Garden for Grams* (2023), a wall-mounted collection of blown glass florals. I imagine Savoie, whose Celadon Glassworks is based in nearby Westport, had similar inspirations in mind.

The museum’s own surroundings in New Bedford’s charming and nautical downtown were echoed most in the work of Taliaferro Jones, who contributed a series of kiln glass crystal sculptures matched with large photographs of



Michiko Sakano’s work, titled *Color Ring Slices*, is an inquiry into spatial relationships and material contrasts.

ocean water, most of them dating to the early 2000s.

But arguably most appropriate for our current zeitgeist were works by Lindsay Marshall. Her *Investigation Table*—a lineup of glass specimens that looked nothing like glass—proposed a new vocabulary (or maybe several) for the medium.

I hesitate to indulge the potential cliché that these works sported a “post-Covid” aesthetic. But they did look like giant germs, or petri dishes, or eggs from outer space. Glittery crusts, impacted surfaces, and mimicry of fungi all suggested the uncontrollable and the abject. Marshall may have made these works in her Ipswich studio, but “studio glass” they were not.

Also terrestrial, or at least architectural, was a piece by Juyon Lee, *Looking Through Reversed Blinds and Woven Lights 1* (2023). On a tall-legged table were two photos, julienned, reassembled, and then framed back-to-back in elegant white wood. The images were apparently made with handblown glass lenses.

Lee’s arrangement felt like entering a room but forgetting why you entered. Installed alone in an alcove, it opened up a space not unlike Kay Sage’s Surrealist paintings: dreamy, vast but empty, a thought stilled for so long it becomes habitable.

If any objects here linked to an actual household, it was those of Michiko Sakano, who gave museumgoers the contents of a kitchen cupboard with utility forms like

cups and plates. But she also added unexpected contaminants.

In an untitled piece from 2019, a table setting of three cups and saucers was made of yellow blown glass, glass rocks, and fusing. It cast a plutonium glow. A radioactive dinner? Another piece—the tilted bronze platter of *Centerpiece for a Party on Mars* (2019)—imagined revelry and good cheer even without oxygen.

Speaking of space: that phenomenon of entering a room only to forget what we came to do? It’s called the doorway effect. Space creates boundaries; transgressing them can trip us up for a moment. If gender is a perimeter, what might be outside it? A body made of sunlight, alien bacteria, a dinner of rare elements? Powerful candidates all, and all of them summoned by the artists in this exhibit.

ALEXANDER CASTRO is a Rhode Island-based writer, curator, and regular contributor to *Glass* since 2017. He serves as exhibitions director at Roger Williams University, curating and installing exhibits at the school’s new gallery, ROGER THAT.

Baptiste Debombourg

**“UNUSUAL PASSAGES”
MAISON HAZEUR
QUEBEC CITY, QUEBEC
JUNE 22-OCTOBER 9, 2023**

You’re not supposed to touch artwork, of course, much less stand on it. So naturally I was feeling very uncertain as I gingerly took my first steps across a layered, broken-glass assemblage installed in a Quebec City gallery space. I wasn’t worried about getting in trouble—the public was allowed to traverse the installation—but I was afraid the cracked glass might buckle under my weight, possibly gashing my leg in the process. But I also felt a certain thrill of freedom because all the rules I follow in galleries and museums had been shattered.

French artist Baptiste Debombourg frequently works in broken laminated glass, often recycling cracked car windshields to make his large-scale immersive works. He is expert at mining the powerful



In her work *Investigation Table*, artist Lindsay Marshall set out to make glass that didn’t look like glass.



Baptiste Debombourg, *Dark Tide*, 2023. Broken laminated glass from VitroPlus, black lacquer, wood, nails, silicone tape. Site-specific installation at 27 rue Notre Dame, Quebec City, Canada.
COURTESY: PATRICIA DORFMAN (PARIS), KUK GALLERY (COLOGNE), IPERCUBO GALLERY (MILAN), VITROPLUS, SODEC / © 2023 BAPTISTE DEBOMBURG | ADAGP

effect of fractured silica for its multiple expressive properties, referencing war and terrorism in works he made several years ago, and now tapping into broken ecosystems brought on by climate change.

The boundary between spectator and artwork is as frequently broken as the material of glass in Debombourg’s emotionally charged vision and the rent, deconstructed sculptures he exhibits internationally. A Fall 2015 profile in *Glass* (#140) investigated his perspectives on war and the potency of raw masculinity. His most recent creation, *Dark Tide/Marée noire* (2023), was commissioned for the “Unusual Passages/*Passages Insolites*” exhibit, an annual public-art festival in Quebec City. Now in its tenth year, the event takes place each June through October and brings an array of works, including sculptures, murals, architecture, and immersive environments, to several historic districts in the provincial capital’s Old Town. Drawing on the talents of artists from the province, the nation, and around the world, it is presented by EXMURO, which describes the program of art on display as injecting “a dose of magic and poetry into the utilitarian logic of a functioning city.”

Many of the pieces on exhibit in “Unusual Passages” explore issues of history, memory, and societal inquiry. Debombourg, whose works border on social commentary as much the realm of unique creation, was invited by the festival’s founder, Vincent Roy, to envision an installation for the show. In response, he created two site-specific artworks that are strikingly different in composition. The first, *Dark Tide*, uses glass to address issues of climate change and environmental disaster, and is contained in an interior space in the well-traveled tourist district, Place Royale. His second piece, *Radical Nature/Nature radicale* (2023), also has an environmental theme but, in this case, uses stone and other materials and is situated on the walkways of Quebec City.

The proposed location for the *Dark Tide* installation was on a floor of a historic building, the Maison Hazeur. In his conception for the space’s conversion to artistic use, Debombourg noted that many aspects of the old stone structure were retained while modern features, including metal and glass, are interspersed throughout the building.

He chose to depict an office complete with furnishings, using the space to

create a scene of destruction that is a meditation on the effects of climate change. Working in collaboration with the Quebec-based VitroPlus, a manufacturer that installs and replaces car windshields, the artist used broken windshields covered with a black lacquer to develop his concept.

Once inside the Maison Hazeur, one can see the calamity unfold. As in a catastrophe, black fragmented glass thrusts into this interior space and spills from the ceiling to the floor to blanket the majority of the room, engulfing office furniture, tables, and chairs in crushed pieces. Whether from a volcanic eruption oozing magma through the landscape, or a tidal wave that has crested beyond the coastline, it is a disaster caught at its apex; it has crystallized and is now frozen in time.

Dark Tide speaks to our lived reality, where instances of climate change, including torrential storms, flooded rivers, and breached dams, send water into inhabited regions. Cresting at the point of impact and cascading into the crevices of interior and exterior spaces, these broken glass elements are pieced together to create something new, different, and dangerous to the touch. Color is also a subtle yet continuous element at play here. The body of the fractured sculpture reflects a changing pattern of daylight as it seeps in through the windows, spreading across the gallery and transforming the black lacquer into a brilliant turquoise, with white accents mimicking the ocean. Cracks in the broken windshields are also heightened due their dark color; they appear with innumerable, white veined patterns that add another, sculptural dimension to the piece.

The exhibition also allows visitors a unique experience due to the strength of laminated glass—the opportunity to walk across the surface of the installation. When I entered the space, the gallery attendant invited me to examine portions of the exhibit at closer range by stepping onto the glass itself, assuring me that the glass would not break. My fear took hold, and I immediately wanted to step away and

bring an abrupt end to my gallery visit. While apprehensive at first, I accepted her offer to put cloth slippers over my footwear, and stepped onto the work. The full dimensions of the installation were revealed as I traversed its many layers. And, as she promised, the glass did not move under my weight.

Debombourg says he was “inspired by the character of the [architectural] refurbishment to design the glass installation and the dynamics of the cataclysm. The covered furniture is an integral part of the installation ... Wooden sculptures made on the model of a desk [or] chair ... each angle, each position ... was thought out specifically—like its glass covering—to amplify the total effect of the black glass.”

The viewer’s gaze is immediately drawn to the most recognizable forms—the furnishings and the plunging wave against the wall—but also taken in by the details, such as the weblike tracings present in each of the glass panels that comprise *Dark Tide*. There are conjoined realities converging in this work: a commentary about climate change combined with the challenge of interacting with a landscape of broken glass. In viewing the work, I was beset by an underlying feeling of peril. Could the glass break again? Might a piece become dislodged and penetrate my footwear, causing harm? Would I slip on the smooth glass surface and risk injury while reporting on this artwork?

Debombourg confronts such questions from the public head-on, noting, “The aim of this experience, to walk on this magma, is to question our environmental awareness.” The notion of sustainability is one that he takes seriously. His sculptures reuse broken glass and, for temporary exhibitions, the glass is again recycled, either returned to the manufacturer or taken to a recycling center. Oftentimes it is combined with other types of materials to make asphalt.

Bringing together broken elements to create a unified though rough-edged whole, Debombourg continues his exploration of lacquered glass—also seen in *Taurines* (2021) and *Dark Matter/Matière noire*

(2015)—as a material for exhibition. Presenting *Dark Tide* in Quebec, with its allegorical references to climate change, references current events in the region, which was struck by devastating wildfires this year. Occupying space in a repurposed building alongside other works that comment upon societal norms, he works within context to engage, provoke, and invite the viewer to have an immersive experience in the medium of glass.

KINSHASA PETERSON is the managing editor of *Glass*.

Group Exhibition

**“DISRUPTIVE INNOVATION”
VETRI GALLERY
SEATTLE
AUGUST 3–SEPTEMBER 2, 2023**

“Disruptive Innovation” is a bold title for an exhibition, with its implication that the works therein upend the status quo of glass art. With the field as wide open as it is these days, that may be a bit of a stretch, but disruption can occur in many ways. The varied, experimental, even radical techniques used by the artists in this group show at Vetri erupt into new pathways of creative and personal expression.

Works by Anna Mlasowsky set the stage for the weird and wonderful art assembled in the show. On one side of the gallery, a gloriously iridescent and lumpy table catches the light. The three panels that balance to form the low table are made from an experimental technique of diachronic film applied to blown kiln-worked glass. The result is a playfully odd and magical structure.

On the other side of the gallery, a quite different sculptural assemblage by Mlasowsky oozes with ambiguous narrative. Two hands and an arm—self-cast in black-hued cement from the artist’s limbs—emerge from two milky-white Rhino glass forms. Titled *The Pair (Love Handle & Nap)*, the installation is tenderly unnerving in its bodily references.

At first, it’s surprising to learn that such different works are from the same artist, let alone the same series. Yet, according to a statement on the artist’s website, the variety grows directly from the goal of that series, titled “Things That Talk.”

During a period of four months in early 2023, Mlasowsky promised herself to “work intuitively,” resulting in “humanoid but not figurative sculptures that ponder, visualize, and play with the experience of being a woman while rejecting traditional expectations of womanhood.”

Joe Hobbs also recontextualizes limbs in his “illustration” works, which use an inventive technique that transfers glass drawings onto blown glass forms, a process that won Hobbs the innovation award at Pilchuck Glass School in 2023. When Hobbs’s strongly linear, symbolic drawings are applied to votives, they take on the air of devotional icons. When applied to sculptural arms and hands, the reference instantly shifts to tattooing. Most compelling is a white blown glass hand, densely covered with outlined symbols, its palm gracefully tilted back to form a perch for a red glass bird. The whimsy surrealism fuses strikingly with the gritty savviness of body art.

In the realm of abstraction, the F5 Collective—comprised of Nathan Sambar, Lynn Everett Read, Phirak Suon, Brandyn



Anna Mlasowsky, *Hand Made XXII*. Blown, sandblasted, hand-folded glass. H 12, W 14, D 7 in.
COURTESY: VETRI, SEATTLE