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Antenna: Glass makes new waves

Stunning works, both old and new, are turning all sorts of artists, architects, sculptors and crafts people on to the seemingly limitless possibilities of this very demanding medium. Meredith Etherington-Smith reports

I had been musing on all sorts of exciting, hot new developments in contemporary glass for this week's post when up popped something a bit older on my Instagram — six centuries older, in fact. It reached me via an eagle-eyed colleague on the floor at [TEFAF in Maastricht](#): a polychrome and wood sculpture of Christ on the Cross by La Roldana, known as Luisa Roldán, who was active in Seville and Madrid in the last half of the 17th century, at London dealer [Danny Katz's](#) stand. It had a detail that caught my colleague's eye — the drops of blood dripping down the body of the sculpture were made of red-tinted and clear glass. As the 18th Century Reverend Sydney Smith once remarked about George I and George III, 'There's nothing new under the Son, nor under the Grandson either.'





Luisa Roldán called La Roldana (1652-1706), *Corpus*, Seville 1650 – Madrid 1704. Polychrome wood with glass.
Courtesy of the Daniel Katz Gallerv.

Accordingly, there haven't been many new waves in the world of glass since the modern brilliantly coloured, free-form organic pieces coming out of Murano and Venini in Venice in the 1950s and '60s — now much collected by the Mid-Mod crowd, notably collector and philanthropist David Landau — nor after Finland's sculptural glass masters of the '60s, including Timo Sarpaneva and Tapio Wirkkala. Finnish glass is overdue for a revival, which will no doubt be stimulated by *Il Vetro Finlandese*, an exhibition that opens on 14 April — a month before the Venice Biennale — at La Stanza del Vetro, on the city's Isola di San Giorgio Maggiore. Some 300 pieces curated from the Bischofberger Collection will be featured.

Crossing the millennial line, the early 21st-century work of seminal contemporary glass *meisters*, such as Dale Chihuly, has turned all sorts of artists, architects, sculptors and crafts people on to the seemingly limitless possibilities of this very demanding medium. Chihuly was first exposed to glass while studying interior design at the University of Washington in Seattle. He continued his studies at Rhode Island School of Design — where he established a glass programme — going on to found the Pilchuck Glass School in Washington State. Large in scale, brilliant in colour, organic or undersea in effect, Chihuly's work has made waves — and earned him a vast international following.



Carol Milne, *Bent*, 2014. Kiln-Cast lead crystal knitted glass & needles.

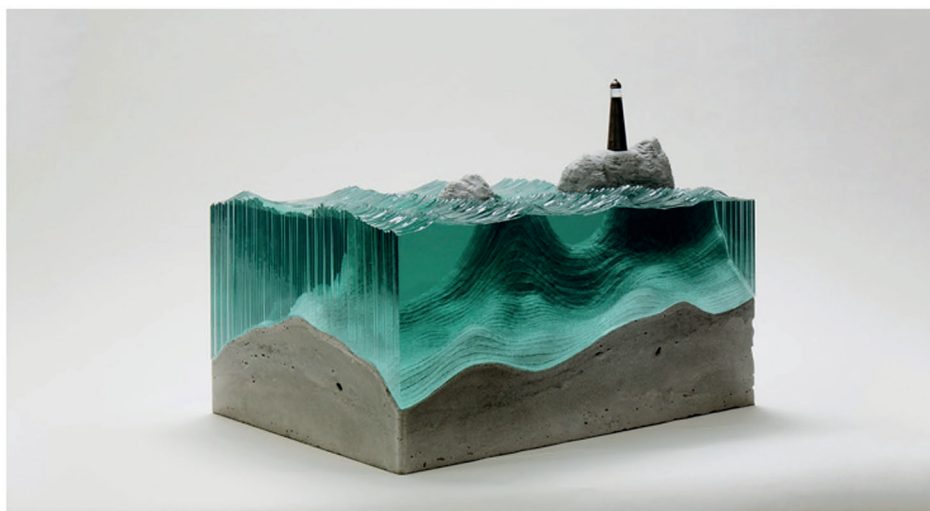
There seems to be something in the Pacific Northwest air that is pushing the boundaries of glass into hitherto undreamed of areas. Take Canadian-born Carol Milne, now a Seattle-based artist, who is known for the technique of knitted glass. Her ten-year-old process incorporates knitting, cire-perdue wax casting, mold making and then kiln-casting, and the results are truly extraordinary. There's a book about Carol's work,

Carol Milne Knitted Glass: How Does She Do That? by Steven Isaacson, in which she demonstrates the process, start to finish. Washington State seem to show and sell her work on an almost permanent basis, and she is also very much admired and collected in Japan.



R. Martin du Gard, *The mind is everything. The material is the servant of spiritual*, 2012. Feuilleté glass, wood, nails, white painting. Courtesy Galerie Krpic Kersting — KUK — Cologne — Allemagne.

At the time an anonymous Spanish carver was pensively and effectively adding drops of blood-red tinted glass to his polychrome Christ, the Brauweiler Abbey in Germany might well have commissioned a stained glass window. But as this is the 21st Century and not the 15th, a tsunami-like wave flows into the calm stone cloister in the form of a glass work by French conceptual artist-cum-architect Baptiste Debombourg. The piece effects the force of water having pushed in panes of clear glass from the sanctuary windows, which were then left shimmering puddles all over the floor. Glass apart, his other conceptual work, particularly the architectural interventionist pieces, are also very well viewing, which can be done at Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Paris-La Villette until 29 March.



Ben Young, *The Beacon*. Laminated Glass.

Ben Young, a Sydney-based New Zealander, is a self-taught artist who has been making three-dimensional glass sculpture built up of flat coloured panes for over ten years. Colossal, Christopher Jobson's must-read blog for those interested in the intersection between art and craft, recently featured Young's very beautiful work. I suspect the artist is a grown-up surfer permanently and wistfully in love with the Next Big Wave. Each piece begins as a drawing, then come into being with hand-cut glass panes that are crafted, layer by layer, to create remarkable evocations of waves, their movement and depth frozen in motion. 'I love watching the two dimensional shapes evolve,' explains the artist, who clearly sees the medium as the next best thing to water. 'I love the liquid qualities the glass brings with it . . . it enables me to play with lighting and watch the glass react.' Young is available for collaboration and commissioned works.

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