

RISD MUSEUM

Recent Acquisitions in Glass, June 18, 2004-October 10, 2004

Over the past three decades, RISD has developed one of the foremost glassmaking programs offered by American art schools. The department's growth mirrors the rise of the Studio Glass Movement in the United States, as glassmaking evolved from industrial production into the creation of fine art. It is not surprising that works in glass by RISD alumni and faculty dominate recent collecting by the Museum in this field, as the subject remains a vital part of the School's curriculum.

This exhibition presents a selection of glass acquired by the Museum through donation and purchase over the past decade. Some objects will be familiar to visitors; others are shown here for the first time. The range of date, scale, and technique is noteworthy, as is the variety of sculptural, functional, and conceptual modes. So diverse are the pieces that their only common aspect is the material of which they are made.

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Alfred DeCredico, American, 1944 - 2009, (RISD BFA 1966, Painting)

Toots Zynsky, American, b. 1951, (RISD BFA 1973; RISD Faculty)

Tortoise Tick, 1996

Glass

Daphne Farago Fund and Georgianna Sayles Aldrich Fund 1996.54

In this unusual collaboration between painter and glass artist, De Credico created "drawings" with small pieces of glass that under Zynsky's direction were fused and blown to create a vessel form. Pleasingly distorted in the process, the two-dimensional arrangement of line and color is fully transformed into a three-dimensional form.



RISD MUSEUM

Michael Scheiner, American, b. 1956, (RISD BFA, 1980)

Bottle with Four Stoppers, 1992

Glass with oil paint, graphite, and epoxy

Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Joseph A. Chazan 1998.59

Scheiner's sculpture intentionally defies the convention of glass as crystalline and precious. These two works present a brooding aspect, the result of dulling their surfaces with oil paint, metal wire, and areas of burnished graphite. Like Page Hazlegrove's *Cold Growth*, Scheiner's sculptures recall scientific equipment as well as plant forms arrested in decay. Scheiner also created the cast-glass *Vessel Doorway* (1991-93) that frames the entrance to the balcony overlooking this gallery.



Josiah McElheny, American, b. 1966, (RISD BFA 1988)

Studies in the Search for Infinity, 1997-1998

Blown glass (eight plates), fabric covered wooden shelf, framed text; ten parts

Museum Acquisition Fund 2001.71

The title of this work refers to the invention during the Italian Renaissance of single-point perspective to create an illusion of three-dimensional space in two dimensions. Each of the glass plates demonstrates a different glassblowing technique with a single vanishing point, while the adjacent text reminds us that painters used the same device to depict infinite space on a flat surface.

The recreation of a traditional museum display case and label disarms viewers inclined to accept this art-history lesson at face value. McElheny deliberately questions the boundaries between science and myth, art and history, and the ways in which museum displays create "fact" out of artful fiction.



Howard Ben Tré, American, b. 1949, (RISD MFA 1980)

Study for "Mantled Figure", 1992

Graphite and colored pencil on cream paper

Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Joseph A. Chazan 2002.115.5

This is one of a group of works on paper in the Museum's collection that Ben Tré used in the studio during fabrication of his various glass sculptures installed throughout the state of Rhode Island. The drawing on view records the outline of the monumental *Mantled*

RISD MUSEUM

Figure (1993), which stands just inside the front entrance to this building.

Dale Chihuly, American, b. 1941, (RISD MFA 1968, Ceramics)
Carnelian Red Venetian with Jungle Green Leaves, 2002
Blown, colored glass
Gift of Dale Chihuly in memory of Hardu Keck 2003.137

Over the past thirty years, Dale Chihuly has helped to establish the field of contemporary studio glass for artists, collectors, and museums. In 1976, the Museum at RISD purchased its first work by him, an Indian blanket cylinder made in that year and inspired by Navajo weavings such as those displayed upstairs. Chihuly was then creating the RISD program in glass, teaching in the new department from 1969 to 1980 and returning as an artist in residence during the 80s. This piece is a recent gift of the artist in memory of Hardu Keck (1940-2003), a RISD instructor when Chihuly was a student here and in later years a professor and then provost.



Toots Zynsky, American, b. 1951, (RISD BFA 1973; RISD Faculty)
Lucente, 2001
Thermo-formed glass threads
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Joseph A. Chazan 2002.79

The technique of creating hair-thin threads of glass is one that Zynsky helped develop. To build her bowls, she arranges hundreds of layers of intensely colored threads on a flat surface. The heat of the furnace fuses the threads, which allows her to place the solid sheet into a bowl-shaped mold to cool. Reheating allows the vessel walls to be shaped into billowing folds that juxtapose the colors and textures of their interiors and exteriors.



Probably; Bohemian

Vase, mid 1800s

Glass, overlaid, cut, and engraved

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Spink Davis 2001.46.1



Michael Scheiner, American, b. 1956, (RISD BFA, 1980)

Hung for Observation, 1989

Glass, copper wire, oil paint, graphite

Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Joseph A. Chazan 1995.065

Scheiner's sculpture intentionally defies the convention of glass as crystalline and precious. These two works present a brooding aspect, the result of dulling their surfaces with oil paint, metal wire, and areas of burnished graphite. Like Page Hazlegrove's *Cold Growth*, Scheiner's sculptures recall scientific equipment as well as plant forms arrested in decay. Scheiner also created the cast-glass *Vessel Doorway* (1991-93) that frames the entrance to the balcony overlooking this gallery.



Venetian

Footed Bowl, ca. 1500

Colorless mold-blown glass, applied blue threading and bands

Mary B. Jackson Fund 2000.91.1

When it was created around 500 years ago, the ribbed form of this bowl made reference to ancient Roman glass. During the Italian Renaissance, intense interest in classical literature, philosophy, and art led to a widespread revival of classically inspired objects for the homes of educated collectors. In this period, Venice dominated Mediterranean trade between Europe and Asia and emerged as the leading production center in Europe of luxury goods such as glass. Only faint traces remain of a broad band of gilding, which would have set off the blue thread of glass quite dramatically.



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Mt. Washington Glass Company, American, 1876-1894

Vase, ca. 1880-1890

Glass

Gift of Mrs. Harold Leavitt 2001.47.4

At the end of the Victorian era, ornamental glass with rich surfaces and bright colors became popular at the same time that American glass manufacturers were eager to demonstrate their technical prowess. As their names suggest (peachblow, satin, coralene, amberina), these tablewares often simulated materials other than glass. They were made for display rather than daily use.



Page Hazlegrove, American, 1956-1997

Cold Growth, 1996

Glass, blown; heat-resistant glass; cast ground glass powder (pâte-de-verre)

Gift of Peter Kenyon 2003.94

Hazlegrove's work refers frequently to industrial glass, a family tradition dating back to 1873, when her forebears founded the Illinois Glass Company (later Owens-Illinois Glass). By combining hand-blown clear glass with cast opaque forms, *Cold Growth* evokes a poetic tension between physical and psychological forces. The thorny branches suggest an improbable science experiment or a transfusion between delicate roses trapped inside their jars. The pâte-de-verre technique gives the flowers a ghostly appearance, while the clear but dead branches seem strangely alive.



Mary Shaffer, American, b. 1947

Untitled, 1994

Glass, slumped; wrought-iron tongs

Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Armand Versaci 1998.1

Mary Shaffer makes expressive use of glass, allowing it to cool (slump) while closely positioned with discarded but still functional tools. In this piece, the contrast between the fluid glass and rigid iron is pronounced, but it is a happy marriage. The glass has settled into the tongs' embrace.



Isabel De Obaldia, Panamanian, 1957
Captive Spirit, 1999
Glass, kiln-cast, lathe-engraved
Nancy Sayles Day Collection of Modern Latin American Art 2000.7

Trained as a painter, de Obaldía first began experimenting with glass in the late 1980s at the Pilchuck Glass School in Stanwood, Washington, cofounded by RISD alumnus Dale Chihuly in 1971. During the past decade, she has continued to explore figural sculpture in cast and engraved glass. This piece is one of a series of winged spirits created in 1999. Its bulk makes flight unlikely, while the body's tree-like trunk and leafy wings insure that it remains earthbound. Color and texture animate this work, as de Obaldía uses random inclusions of glass as well as engraving and polishing to create rich and expressive surfaces.



Daniel Clayman, American, b. 1957, (RISD BFA 1986)
Pater's Last Days, 1993
Cast glass; copper
Museum purchase: gift of the Artists' Development Fund of the Rhode Island Foundation 1993.022

Clayman is a master of creating solemn forms that recall ancient objects but are in fact original creations of his imagination. This sculpture has the presence of a Bronze Age vessel and the color of ancient Chinese jade, but its translucent body and stepped surfaces are unmistakably modern.



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René Lalique, French, 1860-1945
Le Mans Vase, ca. 1925
Glass
Gift of Carolyn D. Cumming 2003.18



Mt. Washington Glass Company, American, 1876-1894
Vase, ca. 1880-1890
Glass
Gift of Mrs. Harold Leavitt 2001.47.1

At the end of the Victorian era, ornamental glass with rich surfaces and bright colors became popular at the same time that American glass manufacturers were eager to demonstrate their technical prowess. As their names suggest (peachblow, satin, coralene, amberina), these tablewares often simulated materials other than glass. They were made for display rather than daily use.



European; American
Tumbler, ca. 1880-1890
Glass, mold blown
Gift of Mrs. Harold Leavitt 2001.47.7

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Bohemian; Probably

Vase, 1800s

Glass, overlaid, cut, and engraved

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Spink Davis 2001.46.2