



glass

The UrbanGlass Art Quarterly

SPECIAL BONUS
Our fully-updated directory
of glass education programs
and suppliers to the field.

How the Pandemic is
Transforming Glass Education

Mortality and Impermanence
Center Stage at Beth Lipman's
Museum Retrospective

"Studio Glass in Venice" Charts
a Cross-Cultural Synapse

COVER
Michael Glancy's
Not-So-Simple Perfection

US \$11 | Canada \$12
Display until March 31, 2021



No. 161. Winter 2020-21

Joanna Manousis

"FOCUS"
HELLER GALLERY
NEW YORK
SEPTEMBER 17-OCTOBER 24, 2020

Mel Douglas

"DEFINING SPACE"
OCTOBER 1-NOVEMBER 14, 2020

Joanna Manousis's silvered wall assemblages are impossible to miss. Her first solo exhibition occupied the front windows of Heller Gallery, where the mirrored surfaces of her wall-hung assemblages were alive with the shifting outdoor light streaming in from the wide Tenth Avenue windows on a slowly reopening New York City. Titled "focus," the works are elaborate assemblages of exquisitely crafted components—some cast, others blown into digitally formed molds—that radiate light from their complex reflective surfaces and dazzle the eye even as they incorporate the mirror image of viewers into the visual splendor of intricate compositions that explore her theme of the universality of human experience.

Her virtuosity as a maker is on view in the sheer range of impeccably cast

shapes, as in *Indra's Web* (2015) and its faceted polygons, which evoke cut jewels, but their molded and cast forms create intentionally imperfect shapes that pulse with intrigue and tension. *Chrysalis (Morpho-Eugenia)* (2020) features squat hexagonal components with intense geometry that multiply reflections into multifaceted images of the viewer, allowing us to see ourselves from all angles and perspectives. These installations celebrate humanity, and visualize how the individual impacts the collective. Just as our independent beliefs and decisions have consequences both immediate and delayed, local and far-reaching, Manousis's assemblages can be configured in multiple ways on a wall, the placement of each individual component impacting the placement of the others and, ultimately, the form of the installed work, which resonates with the interplay of light, perspective, and layers of historical reference and contemporary meaning.

The Golden Thread (Diamond Point) (2019) and *The Golden Thread (Hex Decanters)* (2019) convey this interdependence more directly. The three clear cast bottles, with surface embellishments and faceted stoppers, each have a segment of a twisting and turning glass "thread" that is visually linked as it runs through each of the bottles, with the thread in the center bottle appearing knotted. Although the wall installations are easily the star of this show, the gold within these triptychs commands attention similar to the silvered mirror, and shows the artist's range of ideas and technical chops as it has evolved over the past half-decade of her prolific studio practice.

Where Manousis's work is illuminated by its dispersal of light, the mood is much more inward in the adjacent room, where Mel Douglas's interpretation of the triptych took center stage. *Volume and Capacity* (2020) is a grouping of three large black blown and coldworked bowls that have been elaborately coldworked into opaque works that interact with light in much more subtle ways. Each has line patterns on either the interior or exterior



Joanna Manousis, *The Golden Thread (Hexagonal Decanters)*, 2019. Cast glass, gold. H 11, W 11, D 3 ½ in.
COURTESY: HELLER GALLERY

of the vessel that are either trailed onto the bowl in the hot shop or engraved; the opposite surface is left untouched. Theirs is a subtle radiance, and they glow with a soft light that draws a viewer into her contemplative, minimalist works.

In her practice, Douglas aims to merge object and drawing into one entity by making marks on glass, sometimes with glass itself or by hand-grinding and engraving. She often thinks about line, so much so that she developed her own taxonomy of line for her Ph.D. research: mapping, inscribing, highlighting, rendering, transcribing, and tracing. On view in “Defining Space” were examples of work from five out of the six categories, which examine the potential for combining mark-making and glassmaking. *Volume and Capacity*, for instance, is an example of a work in the mapping category, which defines and identifies space. The additive and reductive lines explore the concave and convex surfaces of the three forms, defining these spaces as separate from the other.

Another new series of work from 2020 falls into the tracing category—glass drawings made by screen-printing glass powder directly into the kiln to fuse, then adhered to paper and framed on the wall. These drawings capture the glass lines and the negative space between them, and blur the lines (if you’ll forgive the pun) between the two-dimensional and the three-dimensional.

In addition to the hours of labor it takes to engrave lines into flat or blown-glass surfaces, it also took many attempts to successfully create the glass drawings. Hours of research contributed to the taxonomy she created, derived from the work of anthropologist Tim Ingold, who developed his own taxonomy of line and also applies it to various contexts like growth, materiality, varying perspectives, themes that faintly parallel those in Manousis’s work as well in how they apply to the essence of humanity.

The way Joanna Manousis and Mel Douglas approach the concepts they explore in their practices and the way they create are similar—both seemingly



Installation view of Mel Douglas's exhibition "Defining Space," with the blown, coldworked, and engraved glass installation *Volume and Capacity*, 2020, in the foreground.

COURTESY: HELLER GALLERY

think in glass, and are willing to do as much experimentation, analysis, labor, and trial and error as needed to manifest their concepts. Many of the works in both exhibitions were completed this year, which demonstrates an impressive commitment at the best of times, but particularly during such a difficult year. Although it was not planned in the Heller Gallery's original exhibition schedule for the year, it is serendipitous that these two exhibitions were on view at the same time.

That both exhibitions were able to open to in-person viewing was good fortune, considering that the past several months have been defined by online catalogues

and virtual artist talks and exhibition walk-throughs, and audiences may be starting to fatigue of participating in digital cultural experiences from home. While the Heller Gallery's online catalogues have great photography and an easy-on-the-eyes layout, they don't compare to seeing the rainbows that reflect on the gallery wall from Joanna Manousis's *Indra's Web* (2015) or stepping forwards and then backwards to observe the intricacies in Mel Douglas's glass drawings and the textures of the engraved surfaces of works like *Overlap* (2019).

LINDSAY WOODRUFF is the managing editor of *Glass*.