

VOLUME 42 Number 2 | FALL 2018

FUSION

A MAGAZINE FOR CLAY AND GLASS





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A MAGAZINE FOR CLAY AND GLASS

Editor: Margot Lettner Advertising: FUSION
 Design & Production: Derek Chung Communications
 Date of Issue: Fall 2018



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Please address editorial material to fusion.editor@clayandglass.on.ca or to FUSION Magazine, 1444 Queen Street East, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4L 1E1.

FUSION Magazine subscription is a benefit of FUSION membership and is included in membership fees. FUSION Magazine subscriptions are also available. To apply for a FUSION membership, or to purchase a one year subscription (three issues), please visit www.clayandglass.on.ca/page-752463 for details. Back issues are available.

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FUSION gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the Government of Ontario through the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Recreation and the Ontario Arts Council.



IN THIS ISSUE

Editor's Note
 Margot Lettner 5

Trajectories: New Landscapes in Glass
 Sheila McMath 6

Inside Us An Infinity: The Transformative Glass of Irene Frolic
 Lera Kotsyuba 12

Up Next: Zachari Logan and Audie Murray
 Sheila McMath 16

The New Materiality: FUSION's Inaugural *Breakthrough* Exhibition
 Leslie Menagh 20

***Breakthrough*: New Space for Emerging Artists** 24

Six Meditations in Glass
 Leslie Menagh 25

FUSION Magazine Spotlight, Featured Student Artist - Ceramics
 Catharina Goldnau 29



ON THE COVER

Irene Frolic, *Go to Your Well*, 2018, detail
 Image Credit: Lera Kotsyuba
 (see Lera Kotsyuba, *Inside Infinity: The Transformative Glass of Irene Frolic*)



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FUSION

A MAGAZINE FOR CLAY AND GLASS

FUSION MAGAZINE

Volume 42, No. 3 Issue: Winter 2019

Editorial and Advertising submissions

Deadline: **November 16, 2018**

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~

The Fall 2018 issue of FUSION Magazine returns to one of our core elements. Sand.

A year ago, Heather Read brought Canadian glass preserving jars to these pages from the archives of the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) (see Heather Read, *Beauty and Utility: A Brief History of Preserving Jars in Canada*, FUSION, September 2017, Vol.41 No. 2). In this issue, FUSION celebrates contemporary glass art and glass artists.

In 2018, as part of its 25th Anniversary events, the Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery presented two exhibitions. *Trajectories* featured recent works by seven artists who won the RBC Award for Glass between 2008 and 2016. Sheila McMath, gallery and show Curator, reflects on the work of three of the artists featured who exhibited works that directly address the Canadian landscape, both its beauty and its vulnerability: Cheryl Wilson-Smith, Benjamin Kikkert, and Julia Reimer.

Then, Now and Next featured work by six acclaimed Canadian artists, three of whom you'll find profiled here. Eminent Canadian glass artist Irene Frolic, a detail from whose *Go To Your Well*, 2018, graces our cover, talks about her lifetime of work in conversation with Lera Kotsyuba; see *Inside Us An Affinity: The Transformative Glass of Irene Frolic*. In *Up Next: Zachari Logan and Audie Murray*, Sheila McMath returns with a look at two emerging artists who, through their work in multiple media, express and contest ideas about identity and culture.

This spring was a first for Sheridan College: *Six*, at the Sandra Ainsley Gallery, Toronto ON featured work of the first graduating class of its Honours Bachelor of Craft and Design (Glass) Program, a showcase for emerging glass artists Paola Di Barbora, Giovanni Buda, Jessica Gneith, Kat Looby, Nadira Narine, and Jade Usackas. In *Six Meditations in Glass*, Leslie Menagh explores how glass, in their hands, carries both narrative and technique. In June, FUSION launched its inaugural *Breakthrough* exhibition for emerging glass and clay artists; in *The New Materiality*, Leslie reflects on the intersections of culture, story, and art in their work. And, finally, we celebrate ceramic artist Catharina Goldnau, FUSION's Featured Student Artist.

The Fall 2018 issue also continues the content and

design changes we began a year ago to refresh the magazine. Although we'd broadened coverage of Carved In Stone, FUSION's events listing, to cross-Canada and intermedia exhibitions, you told us in the FUSION Reader Survey that you rarely read it. And it's hard for a quarterly magazine to be accurate when online listings have the advantage of daily posting. While Carved In Stone moves out of the magazine to another platform (details to follow), it makes room for more of the ideas, perspectives, artists, and work that you also told us you find most exciting and inspired.

A series of random encounters – an errand, a library shelf, a book – led me to a single glass bead, *High Bush Cranberries*, 2000, by contemporary glass artist Leah Fairbanks of Oregon and an instructor with The Studio, Corning Museum of Glass.¹ I grow these berries in my garden; the cedar waxwings like them. Beads were the first things made with glass, "small yet profound, a sort of time capsule with communicative value...a form of cultural cross-pollination."² Beads, like the glass of their making, are windows into seeing.

~

*Here I am sitting by the window. I am washing in light coming through colour.... A small bird singing, cherry blossoms opening, a slow cloud dragging its rain in the distance. The window frames these things. A proper window, according to my architect friend, tells a story. The eye is guided. The viewer cannot look just anywhere but is directed by the desires of the designer.... And so looking out a window is not only a story but also an interaction.*³

Margot Lettner
Editor

¹ Leah Fairbanks, *High Bush Cranberries*, 2000, in Larry Scott, ed., *Masters: Glass Beads, Major Works by Leading Artists*, New York: Lark Books, 2008, p.50.

² Sage Holland, in Larry Scott, ed., *Masters: Glass Beads, Major Works by Leading Artists*, New York: Lark Books, 2008, p.250.

³ Alana Friend Lettner, *Windows of Japan*, unpublished essay, 2018.



Leah Fairbanks, *Lampworked Azalea Branch Series Glass Bead*, retrieved September 10, 2018 through Gardens of Glass/Opal Illusions
www.ebay.com/str/opalillusions



Trajectories: New Landscapes in Glass

Fig. 1, Cheryl Willson-Smith,
Promises and Lies: Keeping Score,
2015

Image courtesy of
the artist

The group exhibition *Trajectories*, at the Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery, Waterloo ON, January 14 - March 18, 2018, featured recent works by seven artists who won the RBC Award for Glass between 2008 and 2016.

These artists, in addition to sharing the distinction of winning the Award, also share a commitment to the exploration of glass as an experimental and seductive medium. While some make use of traditional glass manipulation techniques – including casting, blowing, and sandblasting – others incorporate investigation of 3D printing and digital manufacturing methods into their practice.

Trajectories affirmed the gallery's commitment to showcasing the strength and diversity of glass artwork in Canada. Several of the artists exhibited works that directly address the Canadian landscape, both its beauty and its vulnerability. In these reflections, I will focus on these artists.

Cheryl Wilson-Smith works from her studio in Red Lake, "on the granite and gold of the Canadian Shield and surrounded by Boreal Forest" in the far north of Ontario. Wilson-Smith's signature style involves working with multiple layers of frit glass that are fused together through a labour-intensive process. This layering references natural phenomena

such as the formation of sedimentary rock or ice. Through her work, viewers are confronted with the starkness of the northern landscape, as well as the isolation inherent in living and working here.

With calculated precision yet poetic sensibility, Wilson-Smith also integrates other sculptural materials in her artwork. Dramatically, in a work called *Promises & Lies: Keeping Score*, 2015 (Fig.1, see page 6), the fragile layered glass is "impaled" in its centre by worn metal spikes that disrupt the beauty of the surface. This juxtaposition of material has associations with historical imagery related to the Crucifixion, creating a palpable psychological tension in the work.

Making use of a saturated and seductive red hue, other works such as *Dearg Mur*, 2015 (Fig.2) and *Bent But Not Broken*, 2016, are more "purist" glass art that have a quiet and meditative quality. The simple form and shape of these works calls to mind the pages of an open book, while the saturation of red has a visceral quality that references the body. A more direct and narrative work called *House of Cards*, 2017 (Fig.3) features classic "head shots" of Canadian political leaders and images of people casually gathered in the northern rural landscape. The glass cards are precariously "set against" each other in triangular formations, like the children's game



Trajectories, gallery view, Clay and Glass Gallery, Waterloo ON. Image Credit: Karl Griffiths-Fulton



Fig.2, Cheryl Wilson-Smith, *Dearg Mur*, 2015. Image courtesy of the artist

House of Cards; suggesting, perhaps, that political leaders often make decisions that affect the North but without consulting its citizens.

Benjamin Kikkert, who received much of his formative training in Ontario at Sheridan College and Harbourfront Centre, has established his professional practice on the west coast of Canada. With bodies of work called *Landmarks* and *Marine Artifacts* and a dominant palette of intense greens and blues, Kikkert's work is directly influenced by his geographical surroundings. In *Winter Pools*,

2018 (Fig.4) and *Jennings Cove Mussels*, 2016 (Fig.5) Kikkert creates deep "pools" of saturated colour that are contrasted with more rugged surfaces resembling rocky shorelines and barnacles.

While referencing and celebrating these elemental forces of nature, Kikkert's work equally reminds viewers that water is a threatened and increasingly politicized resource. His assemblage sculpture *Final Harvest: Hollow Catch*, 2017, has an overall circular form made of reclaimed metal that references a trap used for commercial fishing.



Fig.3, Cheryl Wilson-Smith, *House of Cards*, 2017
Image Credit: Karl Griffiths-Fulton



Fig.4, Benjamin Kikkert, *Winter Pools*, 2018. Image courtesy of the artist



Fig.5, Benjamin Kikkert, *Jennings Cove Mussels*, 2016. Image courtesy of the artist

The sculpture's "innards" contain no fish; just worn, weather-beaten, glass forms that are encrusted with glass barnacles. As sculpture, it also testifies to his practice of combining hot glass with mixed media. A lyrical and cautionary work, it reminds us that the earth's water is finite – and compromised.

Julia Reimer made new works for *Trajectories*, inspired by the vastness and simplicity of the Alberta landscape. Reimer has heightened sensitivity to small details in nature: she regularly gathers source material, in the form of photographs and objects, from the surrounding landscape. She then translates and interprets details like the bark of a tree, a spider web, or animal tracks, into the imagery of her glass. The central work that Reimer created for the exhibition was the *Gossamer Series*, 2017 (Fig.6) a grouping of

over 20 vessel forms in muted shades of blue, purple, and grey. As the title suggests, the vessels have a light and airy quality in and of themselves. Yet, when gathered into a grouping that had both verticality and density, they became a substantial presence that resembled a tree line on the prairie landscape.

Trajectories was an invitation to previous winners of the RBC Award for Glass to show new work. As such, the exhibition illustrated the growth in artists' practice stimulated by winning this prestigious award. Also featured in the *Trajectories* exhibition was the work of Ito Laïla Le François, Aaron Oussoren, Brad Turner, and Rachael Wong.

In 2016, RBC ended its funding commitment to the Award. To ensure continuity of this significant recognition of



Fig.6, Julia Reimer, *Gossamer Series Landscape*, 2017. Image Credit: Galla Theodosia

Canadian glass artists and their work, the 2017 Award for Glass was generously funded by a group of Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery supporters and friends.

Trajectories was, in part, an opportunity to pause and reflect: to acknowledge that emerging glass artists in Canada were generously supported through this award for a substantial ten years; and to appreciate the work that support enabled. It will be fascinating to watch the careers of these committed and talented artists; and it has been my honour to have had the opportunity to work closely with each of them.

To learn more about the *Trajectories* exhibition, including a video of the Opening Reception, go to Clay and Glass Gallery. To see work by the artists discussed in these reflections, go to www.cherylwilsonsmith.com www.benjaminkikkert.com and, for Julia Reimer, www.firebrandglass.ca The quote from Cheryl Wilson-Smith is taken from her website.

Sheila McMath is the Curator of the Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery, Waterloo ON.

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Inside Us An Infinity:

The Transformative Glass of Irene Frolic

“Glass is a hard mother.”¹

Irene Frolic, whose three-decade career in glass art has seen her work transform from explorative figuration, to abstract form, to beautiful object, explores the human body time and again. Returning always to the forms of head and hands, she engages the breadth and depth of glass as a medium, pushing its physical material limits while exploring its ability to convey emotional depth. Under Frolic’s hands, glass becomes a flurry of contradictions: malleable yet resilient, fissured yet whole. Fundamentally, Irene Frolic’s practice has always been to push not only the limits of the medium, but of herself.

This spring, the glass and clay community celebrated both Frolic’s legacy and her continuing engagement with glass art. One of six featured artists in *Then, Now and Next*, a 25th Anniversary exhibition of The Clay and Glass Museum, she also gave the Artist Talk on April 7, 2018. For Frolic, who also showed in the gallery’s inaugural exhibition, it was a rich homecoming. In a quiet moment at home after the celebrations, I had the pleasure of sitting down with Irene for this conversation.

¹ I. Frolic, personal communication, May 17, 2018.



Fig.1, Irene Frolic, *Twice Born*, 1991
Image Credit: liveauctioneers.com

Frolic began her artistic career in glass when she took a workshop at Sheridan College, fell in love with the medium, and followed her passion to study at the Ontario College of Art. Always mixing materials – glass and clay and metal – her experimentation is fuelled by deep curiosity sharpened by a fascination with duality and transformation. Using cast glass, adding copper, varying kiln conditions: she unearths shifts of colour, wrinkles, cracks, changing glass from before-to-after the kiln, transforming it through fire.

Heads: their copper surfaces, cracked. Shells as if from molten rock, the human emotion they carry born intimately from their geology. Frolic’s work wears its duality.

Charred, rough, surfaces evoke the disquiet of pain, loss, or fragmented memory; yet they speak of the triumph, to have emerged from the intense heat of the flame, the pressure of the kiln.

Frolic's figures are imbued with strong spirit and captured emotion. Faces are pre-eminent. In *Twice Born*, 1991 (Fig.1), a form of glass emerges from a dark crust, akin to a shell or mask, with metal wires protruding bare like ribs; a cavity exposed to the world, its turmoil captured upon the face. Glass fissures the surface in a study of bright contrasts between materials, and between medium and emotion. As light diffuses through glass, elation comes forth through calamity.

As her practice evolved, and after a light brush with abstraction, Frolic came to the following advice guides: "Subdue your monkey brain," concentrate on that which is important, rid yourself of the clutter; "Accept all gifts," use everything you are given; "Go to your well," you have a hidden wealth of knowledge and creativity within you, use it.

How Frolic weaves her figurative and material practices together is integral to her work. Returning again to texture and mixed materials in *Go to Your Well*, 2018 (Fig.2 and Cover), her handling of the glass vessel reflects the artist's gesture. Sculpting in the lost wax technique, she infuses this gesture, its faces and hands, with feeling raw and unrefined. Coarse shapes move over the surface as the Well, with hands as guardians, keeps onlookers at bay. Faces emerge from its lip, mask-like in their stoic contemplation of a viewer's trespass. It is upon glancing into the well, deep and unfathomable, filled with shards of iron, that no discernable end is found.

A single hand is also within the Well (see Cover image), referencing the earlier work *My Hometown*, 1991 (Fig.3 and 4, from Frolic's *News From Europe* exhibition of the same year.) There, a hand rests in blessing. Here the hand gestures in protection, hiding and giving shelter from the gaze of a trespassing



Fig.3, Irene Frolic, *My Hometown*, 1991, detail
Image courtesy of the artist

onlooker. This hand, small yet arresting, may be many things: gatekeeper, physical gesture, stamp of an artist. Whatever its metaphor, and however it may change over time, it remains as both protector and the very thing to be protected: the artist's hand and well of creativity. And hidden in the well are scarcity and plenty, the ever-present duality in Frolic's work.

"Inside us, is an infinity."² This is how Irene Frolic describes the essence of what she has seen and felt deeply over her life and practice; what she still sees and feels and creates in her glass art: the transformative power of our human spirit.

Lera Kotsyuba is an art historian and curator based in Toronto. Working across disciplines in architectural history and craft, Lera recently edited a new book by Sarah Hall entitled *A Thousand Colours*, and convened a session at the 2017 Canadian Craft Biennale on Craft and Public Art. She is currently the managing editor of *Studio* magazine.

www.lerakotsyuba.com

² I. Frolic, personal communication, May 17, 2018.



Fig.2, Irene Frolic, *Go to Your Well*, 2018
Image Credit: Lera Kotsyuba



Fig.4, Irene Frolic, *Accept All Gifts*, 2012
Image courtesy of the artist



UP NEXT

Zachari Logan and Audie Murray



Fig.1, Zachari Logan, *Fountain 1*, 2013 ongoing. Image courtesy of the artist

In 2018, the Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery celebrates its 25th Anniversary. Over the spring and summer, as part of its anniversary events, the gallery presented an exhibition called *Then, Now and Next*. The exhibition featured work by six acclaimed Canadian artists. Established artists Irene Frolic and Susan Edgerley share a unique historical connection with the celebrations: both were featured in the gallery's inaugural exhibition in 1993, curated by Alan Elder. Distinguished artists Peter Powning and Samantha Dickie were also presenters at the FUSION 2018 Annual Conference in June, held to coincide with the gallery's anniversary.

Building on both the legacy and continuing creative practice of these four extraordinary artists, *Then, Now and Next* drew equal attention to and celebrated two "next generation" artists: Zachari Logan and Audie Murray.

Zachari Logan works in multiple media, including drawing, ceramics, installation, and performance. His work consistently explores identity, masculinity, and sexuality; and how these themes, deep concerns of contemporary art, are linked to art history, mythology, landscape, and the sacred. Place is a touchstone for Logan: although his career has taken him to multiple residencies around the world, he consistently returns to his home in Regina, Saskatchewan.

Logan and others describe the Canadian prairies as a "difficult beauty," with a starkness, a barren quality, that can be terrifying. Rooted in his fascination with landscape and botanicals, Logan's work in ceramics began developing around 2011 and was encouraged in its early stages by curator Wayne Baerwaldt. Logan describes his early work with ceramics as tentative, "small works that I kept hidden in my studio for a time." On seeing these ceramics, Baerwaldt encouraged

Logan to invest in this part of his practice through a residency at the Alberta College of Art & Design.

Fountain 1, 2013 ongoing (Fig.1), exhibited in *Then, Now and Next*, was among the first of his more fully realized ceramic works. *Fountain 1* is made of over 100 hand-sculpted ceramic flowers, accumulated and assembled into a monumental column. The first iteration of this sculpture was influenced by Logan's time in Vienna, an ancient city with many elaborate tombs, graves, and other monuments to death. As part of his research



Zachari Logan installing his work, *Fountain 1*, 2013 ongoing
Image courtesy of the artist

he also investigated the grave of Oscar Wilde, in Paris. He was struck by the way that mourners interacted in a tactile way with the grave, leaving the rough surface covered with a "patina" of lipstick-kiss marks.

When first exhibited in 2013, *Fountain 1* contained exactly 112 loose ceramic flowers, one for every year since Oscar Wilde's death. Logan describes *Fountain* as an ongoing project: he adds new ceramic flowers each time he exhibits the work, so continuing his meditations on mortality, memory, and loss.

Audie Murray is a Métis artist who

embraces an expansive and multi-disciplinary approach to making. Born in Saskatchewan and raised in Regina, Murray now conducts her artistic practice on the unceded territories of the Coast Salish people. Her work includes photography, installation, and performance. She also works with found objects and natural materials that she modifies through the overlay of delicate glass beadwork. Ordinary objects, through Murray's conscious act, come to celebrate ornamentation and her Métis culture.

In *Pair of Socks, 2017* (Fig.2), Murray took a slightly-worn pair of striped athletic socks (think: 1970s, Adidas brand) and placed an intricate and vibrantly coloured floral pattern from heel to toe. Her subversive modification covers the sole of the foot, the part that would touch the land. Murray states that the beads "have their own energy and personality and that they 'intervene' on the object through my work."



A related work, *Fragments of Language: Birch & Beads, 2016*, was featured in the exhibition. The original version was an intricate beadwork created on birch bark that was then pinned on a tree, within a landscape. The text on the birch bark greeted viewers in three languages: French, Cree, and Michif. Invited to show this work in the gallery despite the challenges

of its original placement in the landscape, and working through several options to create this second iteration, she resolved that the beaded work would be sewn onto an elk hide with sinew and then installed in the exhibition space.

Equally poetic and political, Murray's *Fragments of Language: Birch, beads, skin & stitching, Li kors/lii rasaad/peu di enn bish 2018* (Fig.3) is a meditation on the continuing



Left. Fig.2, Audie Murray, *Pair of Socks, 2017*
Image courtesy of the artist

Above. Fig.3, Audie Murray, *Fragments of Language: Birch, beads, skin & stitching, birch bark, glass seed beads, elk hide*
Li kors/lii rasaad/peu di enn bish, 2018
Image credit: Karl Griffiths-Fulton

need for Canadians to learn about the contemporary experience of Indigenous peoples and the history of this land, about the fragility and resilience of culture, language, and nature.

To learn more about Zachari Logan and Audie Murray and their work, go to www.zachariloganart.com and www.audiemurray.com *Then, Now and Next* showed April 8 - September 2, 2018 at The Clay and Glass Gallery, Waterloo ON. Also view the gallery's 25th Anniversary video by Tara Cooper and Terry O'Neill [here](#) and listen to Zachari Logan's Artist Talk [here](#)

Sheila McMath is the Curator of the Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery, Waterloo ON.

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The New Materiality:

FUSION's Inaugural
Breakthrough
Exhibition



Above, Fig.3,
Evan Morris, *Bystander*

Below, Fig. 4,
Samantha Tsang,
Young at Heart

Breakthrough: An Exhibition of FUSION's Emerging Artists presented the work of 28 emerging clay and glass artists from across Canada. A first for FUSION, it was held in conjunction with the organization's Annual Conference – this year held at Wilfred Laurier University – as well as with the 25th Anniversary of The Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery and the 50th Anniversary of the Waterloo Potters' Workshop. It's a big year! Hosting the exhibition was the university's visual art centre, the Robert Langen Art Gallery. I made my way there on a quiet Monday in June.

So what does the work of Canada's emerging clay and glass artists look like? Incredibly accomplished, for a start. For materials so laden with the baggage of function and utility, clay and glass – the stuff of earth – are rendered in their innumerable iterations as versatile as any sculptural medium. The time-honoured vessel has given way largely to conceptual work that is both relevant to our time and expertly handled, technically. A few of these pieces rose to the top for me.

If Zara Gardner's work were installed in a coral reef, you might not notice it. Her vessels are primarily white, textured with small, barnacle-like protrusions, and delicately hued in aqua blues and earthy yellows. They would be flawlessly camouflaged. Her forms are porcelain replicas of a plastic pop bottle, also, sadly, a familiar sight in the sea. This collection of five vessels, entitled *Reproduction* (Fig.1) reconciles her love of nature with its rapid decline, producing a hybrid object compelling in both its beauty and tragedy.

At first, I overlooked Heidi McKenzie's porcelain and ceramic faceted, geometric shapes during my first round of the exhibition. Randomly printed with decals in sepia tones of old Canadian postage stamps, moreover, I assumed they would not hold my attention. When I re-approached them, however, I

began to see their poignant beauty. The forms themselves are seamlessly constructed into approximately 24 irregular, 3D polygons. And I found more images: those of brown-skinned children in hockey helmets, riding bicycles, and standing before wide-open landscapes.

The work, entitled *Postmarked* (Fig.2) is perhaps, most literally, about the geographic distance a postmarked letter or package travels. But it suggests, more intimately, a story about McKenzie's own identity; reading more deeply, reflections about the psychological distance between a racialized childhood experience and a Canadian identity, itself a questionable construct as seen in the iconographic imagery of the postage stamp, with its images of moose, loons, polar bears, the Queen, John A. Macdonald, "Indians" in head dress, and tepees. In a later email exchange with Heidi, she confirmed her "sense of alienation having grown up in a white community in the Maritimes in the 70's, at the corners of Canadian-ness, always trying to fit into a landscape where I didn't see myself reflected." I was humbled by the level of care in the work's execution, as well as by my own initial inclination toward dismissing it.

A contingent of artists worked to bring imaginary beings to life. Evan Morris' hand-building skill was certainly something to behold. *Bystander* (Fig.3) is a four-legged, tailed, creature that I thought must be a merging of clay and miscellaneous machine parts. Made simply of stoneware, every detail was meticulously constructed by hand to resemble used fasteners, pipe, and wire. The work was uniformly dusted with a powder blue. The uncanny likeness of spray-painted, anthropomorphized, inanimate objects conjures Tim Burtonesque narratives or, at the very least, suggests how such a sculpture could be a prototype for a stop-motion picture.



Fig.1, Zara Gardner, *Reproduction*. Image Credit: Jenanne Longman

Young at Heart (Fig.4) by Samantha Tsang is a series of six wall-mounted, humanoid characters. Their enlarged heads atop diminutive bodies liken them to babies, but their faces are old and wrinkled. Except for their proportional similarities, I cannot detect any particular narrative amongst them, but their nonsensical behaviour is endearing. One holds a carrot in each small hand. Another dangles a bra or bathing-suit top. Their oversized heads are decorated with polka dots, stylized plants, and Chinese script.

And lastly, the elaborate *You Must Carry My Bones Up From This Place* (Fig.5) by Joon Hee Kim, though largely still mysterious to me, kind of blew my mind. This work was a gothic-art-meets-day-of-the-dead-meets-gingerbread-house sort of altar. In the basic form of a rectangular dwelling with a pitched roof, and about the size of a child's dollhouse, the work is symmetrically decorated with skeletons, cherubs, lizards, horses, and a selection of semi-spherical and lacy protrusions. The roof appears to be a removable lid, under which a layer of stark red can be detected. Made entirely of porcelain, it is otherwise bone-white and detailed with blue glaze, gold lustre, and mother of pearl.

I promptly google-searched Kim, originally from South Korea, to find an impressive proliferation of casting works in both metals and ceramics. Another search revealed that the title of the work references a biblical passage about the sons of Joseph carrying his bones with them out of Egypt. Kim's "multilayered casting process" echoes the work's multi-dimensional appeal: it's an amalgam of influences, of cultural references. As noted in her artist statement, the work wishes to convey "the persevering burden of human relationships, behaviours...and reflecting personal and mysterious aspects of life." Well, I'm hooked.

When I view shows like *Breakthrough*, I often wonder how that age-old debate about craft versus art is coming along. In a brief chat with FUSION president, Chris Snedden, he offered that while these artists have demonstrated "outstanding technical ability, the works are largely conceptual, and each participant has their own distinctive narrative, their own influences, and biases."

The artists featured in *Breakthrough* are adept in both camps. Inventive and highly skilled, they merge clay and glass with non-traditional materials, infusing materiality with critical thought and new meanings. Perhaps



Fig.2, Heidi McKenzie, *Postmarked*. Image credit: Jenanne Longman

this best describes the work and practice of contemporary ceramic and glass artists: Here is a new fusion; where fine and decorative art, imagination and expertise, daring and functionality, question and comment, are becoming a new language to convey the beauties and challenges of our times. For a full list of the participating artists in *Breakthrough*, go to FUSION at clayandglass.on.ca. To see more of the artists'

work noted here, go to www.instagram.com/zara.gardner.artist www.heidimckenzie.ca and www.junniekim.com

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Fig.5, Joon Hee Kim, *You Must Carry My Bones Up From This Place*. Image credit: Jenanne Longman

Breakthrough: New Space for Emerging Artists

Breakthrough, FUSION's inaugural exhibition for emerging artists, was held June 1-29, 2018, at the Robert Langen Art Gallery on the grounds of Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo ON. FUSION created *Breakthrough* for early-career artists, specifically those who are currently students or within five years of their training, part of FUSION's commitment to provide space for new voices in Canadian visual and material art.

Excited by a tremendous response – 48 artists from across Canada submitted 126 pieces for consideration – *Breakthrough* invited 28 artists to show their work. Vibrant, varied, engaging: this work surveys sculptural and functional work, as well as its cultural engagements and technical accomplishments, from the next generation of clay, glass, and intermedia artists.

FUSION thanks all artists who participated for a show both beautiful and challenging; and is grateful for the support of exhibition sponsors the Ontario Arts Council, Craft Ontario, Tucker's Pottery Supplies Inc., The Pottery Supply House, and Chris Snedden.

Breakthrough Award Winners, 2018

Best in Show: Daumante Stirbyte

Best in Clay: Joon Hee Kim

Best in Glass: Jennifer Glasser

Craft Ontario Affiliate Award:

Zara Gardner



Breakthrough, gallery view, Robert Langen Art Gallery,
Image Credit: Jenanne Longman



Reid Ferguson, *Forwell and Lexington*, glass and concrete bowl
Image Credit: Craft Ontario



Layne Verbeek, gallery view
Image Credit: Jenanne Longman



Jennifer Glasser, gallery view
Image Credit: Jenanne Longman

Six Meditations



in Glass

Fig.1, Jade Usackas, *Interstice I, II and III*, 2018, detail
Images courtesy of the artist

In an industrial locale in the Don Valley Parkway-Eglinton area of Toronto, I found the impressive Sandra Ainsley Gallery, arguably the country's foremost exhibitor of contemporary glass art. Navigating through the space, past the likes of Dale Chihuly, Lino Tagliapietra, and other big-gun glass wizards, I came to a grouping of works by recent graduates from Sheridan College on exhibition in a rear showroom.

Entitled *Six* (May 5-June 5, 2018) the exhibition featured the works of the first graduating class of the Honours Bachelor of Craft and Design (Glass) Program at Sheridan: emerging glass artists Paola Di Barбора, Giovanni Buda, Jessica Gmeth, Kat Looby, Nadira Narine, and Jade Usackas. In a collaborative learning space led by faculty who are themselves working glass artists, the program immerses students in all aspects of working with glass: blowing, sand casting, kiln casting, and flame work, as well as a full range of cold working techniques and electroplating. (As well as the show at the Ainsley Gallery, the six artists were also part of Sheridan's **MAKE/READY** Graduate Show 2018, held at The Gallery, Sheridan College, May 5 - 20, 2018.)

The first to catch my attention were Jade Usackas' pieces *Interstice I, II, and III*, 2018, from her body of work called *Alone/With You* (Fig.1). From a distance, these three sculptures look like the glowing anatomical models found in a doctor's office, like fetus-in-utero illustrations. But they are rough-edged chunks of clear and smoky glass featuring floating, nude, female figures moulded into negative space. Kiln glass cast from 3D printed models, whole body scans, and moulds, each piece holds two figures, folding into and being absorbed by one another, each figure becoming more visible depending on the side

from which it is viewed. The result is a cognitive riddle: how to locate interlocking body parts becomes a mysterious and compelling puzzle.

In Usackas' words, "As intimacy between two individuals grows, the spaces between who we are with them and who we are without them becomes smaller and smaller... Constantly reflecting on how what was lost creates what remains." As a backdrop, Usackas presented two photographic images, each appearing to be folds of flesh, seen through moving, bubbling liquid and through glass vessels. Together, the pieces formed an installation evocative of all kinds of intimacy, suggesting weight, bodies trapped under water, or captured in lava.

Usackas set the tone for me in seeing this show: her imagery reminding me both of the nakedness of glass; and of the alchemy that shapes sand with fire and manipulates solids into liquids and back, capturing life. In fact, all the work in *Six* references living bodies.

Paola Di Barбора showed two works: *No Comfort*, a wall-hung glass quilt; and *Nothing to See Here* (Fig.2) a table spilling over with egg cartons containing glass doll heads. The domestic and gendered nature of the materials makes the work's message plain. The chilly glass quilt, etched and patterned with



Fig.2, Paola Di Barбора, *Nothing to See Here*



Fig.3, Jessica Gneht, *The Birth of an Omen*

text that recalls familial trauma, conveying an organized eeriness. The table work, further unease: the transparent, disembodied doll heads presenting themselves for simple consumption.

Jessica Gneht's life-size free-standing crows, *Scorched* and *The Birth of an Omen* (Fig.3) are an apt depiction of the birds' darkness and magic, cast largely in black glass with bright metallic claws. Two pieces of jewellery were also featured in the exhibition – glass bird skulls set into silver.

Gneht's animal representations appeared throughout the show. Set onto a wall-mounted sheet of steel, *The Chase* presents a stylized fox and dog, coiled into a lemniscate. Though they appear to be sleeping, even at rest they are in infinite pursuit of each other. The fox is cast in a characteristic red with paws of clear glass; the dog, a primary blue. I have to wonder if this was an ode to the American story "The Fox and the Hound": both friends and foes, mutually curious and tentative.

Laid on the floor, Nadira Narine's *KINM* (Fig.4) is a larger-than-life beadwork. The multicoloured beads, the size of tangerines, are strung with aircraft cable into the likes of a patterned neckpiece. Born in Panama and inspired by Indigenous textile and bead patterns, Narine's origins reference her work to the traditional beadwork and body



Fig.4, Nadira Narine, *KINM*

adornment of Panama's Indigenous peoples. The sheer size of *KINM* implies the significance of her identity; and while at first, I wished the piece had been placed on a higher surface or vertically to facilitate viewing, I now see its placement as deliberate. *KINM* cannot be avoided in traversing the room. It calls on the viewer to look down at what lays underfoot – a floor, a foundation, the earth. And the aircraft cable seems to suggest that salient geographic distance between home places. This is where I am. This is where I am from.

Narine's work was illuminated Kat Looby's series of hanging overhead lamps (Fig.5). Focusing on customized lighting design for her graduate thesis, Looby created and curated a selection of textures, colours, and sizes of "shades" for clients to choose. For *Six*, her love of texture and colour were lovingly channeled into eleven mason jar-sized cylinders in muted shades of blue, yellow, and pink. Simple and stylish sources of light for any living space, I wished I could take an armful home.



Fig.5, Kat Looby, lamps
Image Credit: Owen Colborne



Fig.6, Giovanni Buda, *Genesis I, III, IV and Labrynth*

Giovanni Buda's elaborate pieces *Genesis I, III, IV* and *Labrynth* were also pretty spectacular (Fig.6). In what spoke of exceptional skill, Buda systematically coiled a maze-like and certainly delicate network of tubes and chambers into four exquisite, borosilicate glass instruments. They suggest a display of antiquated laboratory apparatuses for distilling potions and elixirs. Explaining the mouthpiece at the top of each of the works is Buda's expressed nod to pipe culture. Whether instruments for simply communing with one another for a smoke or for metaphysical travel, they are captivating.

"It just seems perfect for conveying loss, absence, and a more fluid sense of self. This work is about how heavy it can feel when a person is gone from your life."

In *Six*, there is a pursuit of artists' origins, and a plundering into relationships and personal histories. Among some of the highest-calibre glass artists in the land, these six artists bravely and confidently hold their own.

To see more of the work of the *Six*, visit their artist websites at www.jadeusackas.com paola@dibarbora [@jessica.gneth](https://www.instagram.com/jessica.gneth) nadirajn.myportfolio.com [instagram.com/katloobyartist](https://www.instagram.com/katloobyartist) and [@Giovanni Buda @obzrvr_g](https://www.instagram.com/GiovanniBuda) See also, www.sandraainsleygallery.com and the Glass Art Association of Canada at <https://en-gb.facebook.com/GAACanada/> All work c.2017, except where otherwise noted.

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Six, at the Sandra Ainsley Gallery, Toronto ON
Image Credit: Glass Art Association of Canada





**FUSION MAGAZINE SPOTLIGHT
FEATURED STUDENT ARTIST,
CERAMICS**

CATHARINA GOLDNAU

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Growing up in the rural countryside among fields and trees, I now work in a large urban centre, immersed in concrete and bombarded with a plethora of media. I find my headspace oscillating between these poles: my work striving to be a coupling of both, inviting the viewer to contemplate a piece of earthiness within the context of a fabricated object. We need nature to regenerate our soul, culture to challenge our minds.

Using hammers and sandblasters on my ceramic work has opened the door to new processes with unconventional results. My work combines craggy rocks, engineered porcelain, bloated stones, glazed surfaces, and shards of screen-printed newspaper articles about earth and environment-related issues. Meaning is created in a tension that I see as nature vs. culture.

What is nature's place in our urban, cultured lives? How have culture and tradition changed over time? Where is the healthy balance between nature and culture; and how can we maintain it? I mix fragments of culture and craggy nature to build objects that tell a story to their human observer.

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