

This is the original draft to my **Juror's Essay** for *New Glass Review 41*. It was so, so, so way over the permitted word count, but there was a lot to chew over at the time. And I wanted to sort those things out.

The following wasn't submitted, but it was the first draft to what I eventually cut down to 500 words...a purging of thoughts, reflections, and speculation put onto paper as an effort to find my footing in a funny time.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'd. Schnuckel', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David Schnuckel

One of the things that moved me during the jurying experience was letting in the fact that the contemporary glass field is still so, so very young. So new, still, is this Studio Glass Movement here in 2020 that the probability for one of us to put something inventive out in the world involving glass is quite high, as is the probability of those kinds of contributions happening quite often.

In addition to its youth, our field – even as an international cohort – is a relatively small one. So small of a field, in fact, that it dawned on me that *anyone* has a chance to be recognized within it. Anyone! No matter who they are, what nation they live in, where they work, how much or how little they know, whether they show or not, where they've studied (...if they've even studied glass at all.) Anyone has a shot at being recognized for having impact on the trajectory of contemporary glass. I love those things for us. I love that we're still on the ground-ish floor of this studio glass thing. Anything is still possible and any one of us can leave a meaningful impression on its direction... at any given time.

Pairing up these observations above indicate that glass practitioners of this time are positioned quite fortunately to have their work not only acknowledged within the field, but to have that work be a notable part of the movement's story. Let alone potentially having impact on its trajectory. Both near and far. And I thought about things like this, gratefully, as I engaged my review process.

In turn, it is important for me to disclose the fact that my selection process was not supporting submissions that I necessarily "liked." That wasn't a metric for me. I didn't approach this as a process of highlighting what I prefer or what I'm fond of in glass making and/or glass thinking, but as an effort to keep an eye out for submissions that represented important conversations, pivot points, and thinking patterns being had within the field in this time and place with what work had been submitted.

To assist that mission, I made the effort to select and support submissions from artists who had not been recognized within the past 3 issues of the *Review*. Although difficult to pass by notable work by makers and thinkers I deeply admire, it was important to me to use this opportunity to rely on artists on the outer margins of our field who are enriching this moment that I didn't want to get overlooked.

Aside from that caveat, the work I responded to didn't follow a uniform logic. In fact, the work I stand behind within this publication reflects many contradictions with one another. For instance, I'm drawn to ideas that implement technical excellence as a means to challenge it; but I'm also drawn to ideas that rely on guttural, rough, intuitive methods of questioning. I'm drawn to ideas where artists know glass so well that their effort to break its rules speaks of something provocative in equally spectacular fashion; but I'm also drawn to ideas where the artist barely relates to glass and, in turn, enables something accidentally innovative because of their not knowing it. I find resonance and strength in quiet gestures. But I'm also captivated by efforts where spectacle intersects with smart. I'm just as much a proponent for work that transcends glass protocol as I am in work that distances itself from it, dismantles it. Even displaces it.

So, if there is a tie that binds all the submissions that spoke to me it would be that each work collectively grounds itself in the present, but not without a recognition of the histories it extends from – pasts both near and far – while, in most cases, hinting at future directions for our field in theory and/or practice. Some entries doing that purposefully. Some accidentally so.

The many ways in which glass is being engaged that mostly appeals to me culminates in work that poses questions, not work that gives answers. Even in work that relies on common phrasing. In *Time Will Tell*, **David Fox** navigates abstracted ideas about language and coherency where words reveal themselves in a peculiarly glass-centric way. Where the hand torch serves as pen and borosilicate tubing serves as page, the memory of the written message is rendered visible through remembered strain and stress when subjected to a polariscope. What is said is much more conceptually layered than it lets on; what is unsaid is mysteriously just as expressive and articulate.

Some of my favorite moments in the field reside in work and research that doesn't involve glass within its resolve yet was blatantly manifested due to glass-based thinking at the helm of the artist's questioning. **Josie Gluck** has illustrated an approach to this within two different works that diagram ideas of joinery (both literally and figuratively) through the elements of time and temperature as an assistant during a production day of stemware. One work, *Triangulation*, lives as a digital rendering in which all her movements as an assistant are tracked through the hot shop in repeated gather, delivery, and discard of glass for the sacred avolio moments within the day.

Another work from Gluck, *Exchange: Cadence*, also uses the avolio as a contemplative plaything in the form of a mark-making device in another abstracted

gesture of cartography. The bit is discarded after delivery onto paper, falling however it might, wherever it might. The measured and mechanically repeated step of the avolio process for the gaffer lends way to a wide variety of chance-based, combustion-prompted imagery for the assistant after the bit has been cast away. The ironies of control and coincidence within such a strict and rigid process of blowing glass are not lost on me, but even more fascinating within Gluck's work is the presence of role-reversal; where the role of the assistant is not simply to help in the production of art objects, but the focal point of an artwork entirely all its own. Work that lives in the observance of the residuals of her actions within a day's work. Work that transcends the art objects she's physically a part of generating. A means to a conceptual end that you just can't punty up to.

In another instance, **Shari Mendelson** illustrates an interesting relationship to glass in considering it as a conceptual propellant culminating in a body of non-glass work. In her case, historical referencing and trompe l'oeil direct Mendelson's upcycling of discarded plastics littering the neighborhood into exquisite depictions of just about any vessel we've ever seen housed within the Greek, Islamic, and Roman chapters of an art history textbook. Conceptual parallels run abundant within this glass-adjacent work between the current day objects made and of objects of historical standing they connect to; parallels between materiality and making processes between glass and plastics; parallels navigated between commercial manufacturing and an artist's independent making practice. In turn, this work holds a lens to ideas of the remnant and serves as a gesture to redirect the destiny of industrially produced plastics from contemporary litter-hood to one of contemporary artifact.

Previous performance work by **Kim Harty** that translated the glass objects catalogued in the 1960 publication of *Old Venetian Glass* through slow-exposure light drawings of them is recontextualized in *Memoria Technica*. A work of translation from 2015 begets even further translation within the past year - perhaps even coming full circle - in the effort to give selected light drawings a tangible life in objecthood under two fronts: the human effort to meticulously recreate the drawing as a blown glass object in the hot shop and a meticulously truthful 3D print of it.

Instances where performance art intersects with glass that is navigating some truly performative gestures that I'm most excited about are leaving behind the spectacle of the hot shop as a venue and the theatrics of molten glass as a prop. **Judith Roux's** *The Space Between Us-My Warm Breath on Your Hands* relies on a humble sheet of sandblasted glass as a translucent divide between the performer and the unsuspecting audience participant holding it. Efforts by the performer to expel hot

breath and to lick the porous surface are in the hopes of establishing visible access to the participant on the other side - a perfect stranger - who is powerless to help as their side is still glossy and transparent. As a work that is one part messy, one part sexual, one part jinxed, and all parts vulnerable, Roux's integration of glass is a very simple component to a provocatively ambitious interactive work that is driven by notions of desire and connection.

So...

...it should be mentioned that, as I write this essay for the *Review*, it is late March of 2020. I am quarantined here in the US, as is most of the world. ((Which is why this essay is WAY over the word count.)) The jurying process for this publication was just a hair over a month ago and yet the current day-to-day conditions of a COVID-19 reality make it seem that those few days spent in Corning were a lifetime ago. In this moment studios are shut down. Schools have gone online. Grocery shopping now gives us anxiety. Some of our jobs are now done from home. Some of us are now unemployed. Exhibitions have been postponed. Exhibitions have been cancelled. Summer programming at various summer-based glass institutions is up in the air. Some of us are sick. Some of us are scared. Some of those around us - perhaps even close to us - are hospitalized. Perhaps dying. Perhaps even the very worst thought that comes after that. It's a lot. And the level of uncertainty regarding just about everything as we move further and further into a life contextualized by a pandemic is the space where I've been writing this essay within.

I am in Ohio right now. I am sitting in the dark. I've made home in the apartment of someone I love and have been here for a little over three weeks. The day is overcast, gloomy...raining here and there. I sit in a kitchen chair I placed in front of a large window, uninterrupted by muntin bars or casing; just a colossal glass pane the size of a twin bed interrupted only by speckles of drops and drizzles from outside. My cat is over to my left, deep in sleep (famously in her shrimp-pose) on a couch she rips to shreds no more than twice a day. Her chest heaves silently in its own innocent rhythm and I type away at this. Sometimes I look up at the rain to think. And then I type away some more. It's mostly quiet here in this place, in this moment. All but the sound of the second hand of a clock nearby. If you were to walk in behind me, you would see a dimly lit somewhat melancholy scene in cool, neutralized color palettes...looking like one-part Edward Hopper painting, one-part early Sam Mendes film still.

The ticking of the second hand of a nearby clock is the perfect score to a life story now prompted by the notion of waiting. Waiting for an explanation. Waiting for good news. Waiting for a medical breakthrough. Waiting for a curtain of uncertainty to raise... about my well-being, the well-being of those I hold in my heart, about the future of a sustained need for the arts, for glass, for education...ultimately curious - perhaps more so concerned - about some unforeseen domino effect about to be cosmically set in motion. In a worst-case scenario, perhaps one that may play out into some kind of Walking Dead post-apocalyptic survival thing. But, in a much more realistic worst-case scenario, I do wonder if this virus and all its unknowns have significant economic impact that may eventually topple over a future in these careers I have chosen: the higher ed thing, the art career thing...and, to add the niche-iest cherry on top, those pathways of professional purpose and personal fulfillment within the context of contemporary glass. I'm thinking about how strange the basket is that I've put all my expertise-based eggs in this moment. No regrets about it. Quite charmed still by how quirky the hill is that I've built my livelihood on. But I sit here in the dark, in the rain, after something pulled the e-break on me as I was tearing through a world of career-fueled go, go, go. And the stillness is allowing things to surface.

It's quite amazing to experience this collective moment where everyone all over the world is in the dark about everything. It could all be fine, though. Maybe next week some expert in the sciences will accidentally stumble on a fix to bring us back to normal. Almost like finding lost car keys the second you stop looking for them. Then they'll solve this problem in a gesture as simply as one might flip a light switch on or something. And they'll do it with a dumb grimace of duck lips and a long shoulder shrug. And we'll all laugh about it, like a sitcom landing its 28-minute dismount - conflict fully resolved, laugh track mixed with canned applause, end credits rolling, the show theme jingle playing us out. But, in the meantime, I wait for something, nonetheless. In the dark, with the rain, and the cat. And the second hand of the clock is the stiff, patient cadence of my anticipation for *something*.

Writing this essay for the *Review* has given me an unexpected sense of calm. It has allowed me to dwell in the past tense; to write about an incredibly fulfilling and informative professional experience as a juror this past February in a time when life was what we had describe as "normal." (And to dwell in the past tense at this particular present, weird moment is an unexpected perk of this required writing, for sure.) But the quiet, the solitude, and the damn near inactive status of a making practice while in quarantine has given me many moments of pause to

consider the impact of this moment of lockdown on the future trajectory of glass. Both short- and long-term.

For those of us who identify as artists who engage a practice where glass is a major component of our creative output, we know that we are a very high maintenance kind of practitioner. Our making is based on a very hands-on, tactile working experience with material; one that is as high maintenance as we are. Glass is a substance that relies on a very specific set of resources like specialized tools, equipment, and facility spaces to make the magic happen (...or the mess that may or may not lead to said "magic"). There are some of us who are self-sufficient on the resources front; those of us who have our own gear and our private studios and spaces to fill the time in quarantine with continued artistic output. Kudos to you. Go forth and slay. But there are perhaps a greater number of us who relied on having access to spaces and studios that have been closed down and, as part of the residual effect of the national lockdown, finding ourselves deserted as glass-reliant practitioners.

In turn, I think about what kind of glass practice *could* be happening if a field like ours is cut off from the studio resources we typically rely on to conduct our work:

...maybe some of us have been locating areas in our glass practice that could step in and take priority with what we know we can do from home: conceptual development through reading and research, formal development through drawing or digital rendering, writing, resume updating, or website redesign to name a few.

...maybe some of us are locating alternative ways of creatively relating to glass without being able to "make" with it: maybe through capturing moments of glass-like phenomena through items found around the home with our phone or tinkering with glass-related processes that translate well in the kitchen (i.e. casting objects in ice in the freezer).

...maybe some of us are identifying the key thematic components that are prompting our making and engaging the ideas of *memory* or *identity* or *trauma* or *time* or *systems* or whatever the conceptual "*it*" is that our glass work hinged around through new media on hand in the home (i.e. paper folding, drawing, collage, sound recording, sewing, iPhone photography, etc...)

...or maybe as one door closes another door opens...maybe some of us will be redirecting our expertise as makers into unanticipated career paths as published writers, sponsored podcasters, digital curators, or digital workshop teachers.

...or maybe some of us just can't right now. Maybe some of us are allowing ourselves to sit in a creative holding pattern until brighter days.

It is no doubt that as glass-specific people, some of us being denied access to our usual resources are seeing this moment as a real deal-breaker in our creative development and output. But, as a closeted optimist, I see this lockdown as a glass-making equivalent of constrictive writing:

How many ways can those of us glass folks up for the challenge cultivate some sense of critical engagement with glass in this current moment of constriction and uncertainty? What innovative projects might accidentally be developed in response to some of us who feel shipwrecked and stranded? How far off the beaten path of conventional "glass practice" will those things take us? ...and how could these constrictive gestures possibly change everything we thought we understood glass, glass making, glass teaching, and glass learning were all about?

This kind of thinking exercise is ripe with many yet-to-be-discovered solutions to the question of how a glass artist can maintain a practice - and a relationship with glass - when stripped of access to both a studio and to a material while under lockdown. If some of us are curious to give it a go, how might we abstract our relationship to glass in a figurative sense of working with it? Not through glass-based creative engagement, but *glass-related*?

Whether this is to be something short-term or long-term, it's safe to assume that we'll all come out of this COVID-19 experience as different makers and/or thinkers. Some of our evolutions may be enriched by this moment and its many limitations. Some may suffer. Some may cease altogether. My heart does break for those in our field whose livelihood relies entirely on orders, exhibitions, fellowships, teaching, and residencies that are now cancelled or put on indefinite hold; opportunities that were needed to keep their head above already turbulent waters whose sole occupation is that of an independent artist. But as I wrap up this essay, looking out my window into a dreary March day of 2020, I catch a tinge of hope for what might possibly turn out to be one of the most interesting

moments within our field at the hands of artists, educators, and students who are naturally wired to make good use of a bad situation; folks with a knack for finding opportunity in limitation. I'm curious how sudden studio abandonment might possibly cultivate some sort of unforeseen innovation within our field. In whatever way that might mean...

So, to bring back around the *Review*, I'm curious how this moment might rub off on the international glass field for those game to play along in this confined creative space we find ourselves in. I'm curious how this moment will be archived in the upcoming New Glass Review 42...hoping that, regardless of whether we are possibly *still* under quarantine through next February or not, the publication will continue its annual mission.

If so, I'm curious about the contextual framework of how the Coronavirus impacts the work created within the dates of eligibility for the next issue. I'm curious how it will impact what work is submitted to the *Review*...and how diversified the notion of glass practice will manifest itself in those submissions through works which may have nothing to do with glass literally but extend from glass figuratively through non-glass materials and methodologies (that "glass-related" thing I mentioned up above). I'm curious what jurors will be invited to assess and select; jurors invited specifically knowing that the glass world game might've drastically changed because of the pandemic (directly and indirectly); jurors invited specifically knowing that a year in glass production not only may have been significantly affected by the virus by the time the call for applications roll out, but perhaps redefined "glass production" in ways that transcend glass, glass making, and glass art as we've previously defined those things pre-pandemic. I'm curious if the jurors will be chosen not only for their respective expertise, but what kind of eyes they might have to potentially see "glass" in a highly abstracted or figurative sense in the case that a lot of us within the field might be tasked to reinterpret a glass practice through non-glass means. I'm curious if those kinds of submissions will even be allowed. I would hope so, and if true, I'm curious not only about what would be submitted, but what kinds of non-glass-but-glass-related-like work would be seen as fit for inclusion...

...and then what happens to what's submitted to and selected for publication in all the issues after 42 if the world goes back to normal? Will non-glass-but-glass-related-like work become off limits again?

Beyond the notion of being a resourceful artist under quarantine (...or speculating

on the next issue of *New Glass Review* as influenced by the pandemic) I'm curious how COVID-19 will impact our various practices once life gets back to that pre-pandemic "normal" I've referenced here and again. And, for now, I still assume it will. Whether we flatten the curve or a vaccine is approved or a cure is discovered or whatever it is that puts this virus thing behind us forever, I wonder what happens when we can return to the studios we were separated from; when we can return to the equipment, tools, and raw materials we used to know and work with so well. We turn the furnace back on. We rip open new bags of plaster and silica. We light up that torch and pull points. Do we still make the things we made before? ...like nothing happened? Have our questions changed that motivate our practice in the time away? As technicians, how rusty will we be? What will our bodies and hands forget? What of our processes will be remembered? Will I ever put my mouth to a blow pipe ever again? What will these small malfunctions and hiccups in our getting-back-in-the-saddle hinder us from doing? ...and where could our reactions to these small malfunctions and hiccups in our skills and process redirect us instead?

I expect that we will not be the same artist we were before the pandemic global hold, but, if we choose to stay the course, we will still be artists, nonetheless. Ones who were forced to take an interesting detour from what we would normally do and, quite possibly, gaining new recognition in a practice that deviates from what we were originally all about or normally known for. There's something kind of magical in anticipating just what that might be or how it might unfold. After all, an artist isn't defined by what one can do, but how one can adapt. And, quite, honestly, the job we as artists are truly tasked with is to make something meaningful out of any given moment, whether that be with things or circumstances. Especially in the thick of inconvenience...

Just how long will we be on lockdown? ...and how will we facilitate some sort of pro-active effort to continue evolving our practice and relationship to glass in this moment? ...a moment when our usual resources just aren't available? Time will tell. And who knows...perhaps this solitary life and livelihood will be lifted a week or two after I submit this essay to Silbert in early April. And all this musing was a waste of time (!). Perhaps this moment is just a tiny glitch within the calendar year and we will all look back on it relieved that it was so short lived...almost as if it were but a weird, weird dream. But maybe it'll last the rest of the year. Or longer. Yikes. Regardless, I suppose this is a long way of saying that I hope some of us provide models of innovative response to a constricted glass practice due to this global hiccup when included in *New Glass Review* 42.

I am so, so thrilled to have participated in the 41st issue of *New Glass Review*. I've studied the publication since first submitting to it back in 2002 and have thumbed through issue after issue many times over in my 20-year relationship with glass. I have been a student of its structure, its tradition, and its annual mission to observe and archive a year's worth of advancements to the field. I've even made the trek to The Rakow many times over just to look into the work that didn't get in within its archives... when submissions were only accepted in slide form. For I know the sting of the *Review's* rejection having applied 15 years in a row before knowing what acceptance feels like. Only to have the legacy of rejection pick back up the following year (and has continued up to this present moment).

I know that the *Review* is a public and permanent document that some people place a lot of personal and professional currency in by being published within it. I also know that it warrants a lot of doubt, cynicism, and/or objection directed at the jurors by those who weren't included. All this is to say that, ultimately, I knew (and know) the weight of this responsibility that I took on as a juror to lend my voice and my perspective in making selections for it this year. And I took the honor seriously.

Regardless...

...it is with a full heart that I get to write this essay as part of the job. Most of which will be cut for publication due to length and that pesky word count, I'm sure. But it's been a useful expenditure of creative energy in trying to make sense of this bizarre moment (both within the world and possibly also within glass) with some kind of productive take to it anyways. I am honored to have participated in the 41st *New Glass Review* as a juror and feel compelled to publicly acknowledge the leadership of Susie Silbert in guiding us guests of the review panel through the process so effectively and efficiently. It is also important to point out that the organization, preparedness, and support of The Corning Museum of Glass staff was truly the epitome of professionalism and excellence. Thank you all for this opportunity to bear witness to the most underacknowledged aspect of this annual forum: your dedication in facilitating it in the way that you do is nothing short of masterful. The field owes you a lot of kudos and gratitude for the labor putting on behind the scenes before, during, and after the NGR experience each year. Even the folks who will get - and have gotten - angry with the results.