

Clearly Brilliant

A Decade of
Pilchuck Glass School's
Emerging Artists in Residence



TACOMA **ART** MUSEUM



Pilchuck Glass School has been a source of education and inspiration for artists working in glass since 1971. Now approaching its thirtieth summer, Pilchuck, located near Stanwood, Washington, about halfway between Seattle and Vancouver, British Columbia, serves as a melting pot for the international glass art community, bringing together faculty and students from traditions as diverse as those of Venice, Japan, Germany, and Australia—to share, to work, to learn, and to create.

From May to September each year, Pilchuck offers a series of five intensive residential sessions that have attracted novice and professional artists from more than thirty-seven states and twenty-five countries. Five classes run concurrently through each two-and-one-half week session. Instructors include leading international and American glass artists as well as university faculty. Classes are limited to ten students, and each course is designed to emphasize experimentation, teamwork, and the development of an individual creative voice.

With its ratio of one staff person to every student, twenty-four-hour access to many studios, and sophisticated facilities, Pilchuck gives both new and experienced glass artists the opportunity to make tremendous conceptual and technical progress in a very short period of time.

The Emerging Artist in Residence Program

Pilchuck's Emerging Artist in Residence (EAiR) program was initiated in 1990. The program was designed to provide artists in the early stages of their careers with financial support, time and space to explore innovative approaches, to pursue special projects, or to develop a body of work. "Because glass is such a costly material to use, it's hard for artists just out of school to continue their work in the medium," explains artist and Pilchuck Trustee Joey Kirkpatrick, who helped initiate the program. "As EAiRs, young artists can find a community and a place to further their creative process."

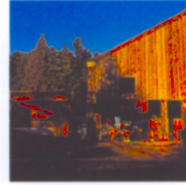
Admission to the EAiR program is competitive, with six artists selected each year. The program takes place during eight weeks in the fall, after the completion of the summer academic session. With the students away, the EAiRs enjoy open access to Pilchuck's extensive studio facilities and free run of the school's spectacular, fifty-six-acre campus. The isolated setting becomes an important element of the program, allowing the artists to focus on the creative challenges at hand. The presence of the other participants is perhaps even more significant, providing opportunities for shared exploration and innovation.

"Our vision was to offer young artists a supportive environment in which to pursue their dreams and

establish their voices as artists," says Kirkpatrick. The program's success in realizing this vision is reflected in the many strong voices that speak through *Clearly Brilliant*.

Catherine Currie Lange
Director of External Relations
Pilchuck Glass School

Introduction



When you are new at something, you have to work harder. Whether it is a new job, a new language, new associates, or a new location, you have to think harder, listen closer, read more, and look longer. At what point do you decide that you have done enough? In A. S. Byatt's story "Crocodile Tears," she asks, as she is looking at a painting, "How do you decide when to stop looking at something? It is not like a book, page after page, page after page, end. How do you decide?" When an artist is searching for an individual voice, whether the search comes early or late in the course of a career, that decision is a difficult one. Many times validation comes only after long hours in the studio, a level of mastery in technical expertise, and discussion with colleagues. The ideas must be refined, reworked, and made clear.

For an artist choosing to go into a medium as top-heavy with technique and equipment as glass, the question is even more taxing. With its establishment in 1990 by several visionary artists and patrons, Pilchuck Glass School's Emerging Artist in Residence (EAiR) Program has proven to give these artists the necessary tools to develop a particular idea and to work thoughtfully in what were once called nontraditional glass forms.

Clearly Brilliant presents a selection of the work of thirty-four of the fifty-five artists who have participated in this innovative program over the past decade. But the exhibition is not simply about glass. It has much more to do with the ideas sparked by a chance meeting of artists entering a new way of working. And it is a selection of work that demonstrates the depth and quality of the inquiry that they were able to achieve at Pilchuck. Overall, and keeping in mind the access to the many shops, the technical assistance, and the idyllic—albeit damp—settings, the artists resoundingly said that it was their fellow artists that were the most important element. The chance to enter parallel explorations of intersecting ideas provided a wonderful catalyst for the work the artists are now creating. No longer emerging, the artists here show a new maturity in these works. They have clearly found the answer to how long to look and now invite us to see for ourselves.

Greg Bell
Curator of Contemporary Art

Foreword



Cultural organizations have a special gift for bringing communities together. The Tacoma Art Museum's exhibition, *Clearly Brilliant: A Decade of Pilchuck Glass School's Emerging Artists in Residence*, presented with the endorsement of Pilchuck Glass School, has brought together our collective communities of artists and audience to realize a superlative exhibition. Here, the Pilchuck Glass School, which in its role as an international leader in the glass art movement has given countless emerging and leading artists a place to create, joins with the Tacoma Art Museum in its continuing commitment to artists whose work extends broadly across media. We are proud to present *Clearly Brilliant*, which gives voice and vision to our shared institutional passions.

Photo Captions

Page 2

- Pilchuck Lodge by architect Tom Bosworth.
- Pilchuck Artist in Residence Kiki Smith with gaffers Jim Mongrain and Paul DeSomma.
- Buster Simpson's treehouse.

Page 3

- EAiRs working in Pilchuck Cold Shop.
- Pilchuck Hot Shop with neon installation by Cork Marcheschi.
- Hanae Mills.

Page 4

- Ceres Madoo's work.
- Pilchuck studio building.
- Sarah Chase's work, 1996.

Special appreciation goes to Barbara Johns and Marge Levy for their leadership in initiating the project. We also extend our thanks to the staff of Pilchuck for their enthusiastic endorsement. And we add sincere thanks to Jack and Becky Benaroya and Sam and Althea Stroum, longtime friends of emerging glass artists, whose support helped to make possible the publication you are about to enjoy. On behalf of the Board and staff of the Tacoma Art Museum, a warm note of thanks to the communities of artists, supporters, and glass art lovers whose response and receptivity makes our work both possible and infinitely rewarding.

Jeanne A. Upp
Executive Director

Page 6

- Pilchuck Lodge.
- Eva Vlaskova with students in studio building.
- EAiRs 1996.
- EAiRs 1999: Victoria Brailsford, Masami Koda, Æsa Björk Thorsteinsdóttir, Laura DiMeo, Chuck Lopez.

Page 7

- Flat Shop with neon.
- EAiRs 1999. Æsa Björk Thorsteinsdóttir, Laura DiMeo, Chuck Lopez, Celeste Starita; Tech: Mark Morris.
- Pilchuck campus.
- An evening view into the Pilchuck Lodge.

Reflections in Risk-taking Glass Works by Pilchuck Emerging Artists in Residence by Reena Jana

To work with glass as an artist is to take a risk. There is the obvious physical risk: one cannot ignore the inherent fragility of the medium, its delicateness, the constant threat of it breaking into sharp shards. And then there is the issue of the ubiquity of glass in our daily lives, which poses a different kind of art-making risk, one that involves the artist's defense of the medium itself as a legitimate fine-art form. For everyone lives with glass, sheets of glass that serve as windows and mirrors, glass shaped into drinking vessels, cups, saucers, plates, lights. We encounter glass every day, and it is far more familiar than, say, oil paintings or bronze or even stone sculptures. Glass artists must thus insist that their work in glass is art—that is, work that differs from that of a craftsperson.

Why look at work by recent Pilchuck Emerging Artists in Residence in the context of risk-taking? Our larger culture, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, is one shaped by the concept of risk. It's impossible to read the newspaper, to watch the nightly news, or even to engage in a casual conversation without encountering some reference to an Internet start-up company, possibly the most recognized symbol of risk-taking of our time. While dot-coms and glass might seem worlds apart, and mentioning them together is ostensibly an odd

way to begin a catalogue essay on the work of recent Emerging Artists in Residence at the Pilchuck School, we must remember that Pilchuck itself was, after all, established in a manner that reflects the start-up mentality. In 1971, Dale Chihuly founded the school on a forty-acre tree farm owned by the Seattle art patrons Anne Gould Hauberg and John Hauberg, with almost no budget. Now, despite its humble beginnings, Pilchuck is known as a major international center for artists working in the medium of glass.

The artists whose diverse projects are included in this exhibition create work that reflects the risk-taking, innovative spirit that characterizes Chihuly's own legacy at Pilchuck. At Pilchuck, the artist took American art glass, which had only two or three masters in its short history, namely Louis Comfort Tiffany, Frank Lloyd Wright, and James La Farge, to new levels, experimenting with the medium of glass with abandonment, unafraid of new forms, and developing new techniques.

As Barbara Jepson writes, today's glassmakers have "more to do with the major movements of twentieth-century art than with elegant tableware."¹ The artists included in this exhibition convey an awareness of themes and approaches that reflects the boldness of important modern and contemporary art. Some work

aesthetically echoes pieces by such diverse artists as Damien Hirst and Raymond Pettibon—artists whose names might seem unlikely to be uttered in the context of the studio glass movement. Others conjure references to a surrealist or dada sensibility; and still others may recall the minimalist style of Sol LeWitt. Because they place glass-making in the context of recent art history, these thirty-four alumni of the Emerging Artists in Residence program find themselves not only at the cutting edge of studio glass, but also of sculpture and, in some cases, of painting itself, making it possible to fold their work into a larger discourse on art-making, and pushing glass far beyond the sphere of craft.

A work like Mitchell Gaudet's *Penance* references the original risk-taking Pilchuck artist—Chihuly himself. Gaudet's sculpture, consisting of cast-glass figures that appear to be many crucified bodies hanging as if they were individual components in a chandelier, is not only visually and technically spectacular but also packs a surrealist punch.

Another group of work here plays daringly with the public's notion of kitschy glass "collector's items" in the same way Jeff Koons has played with that of kitschy ceramic figurines. Alison Chism, for example, creates whimsical sculptures that illustrate a joyful corpulence à la Botero or Reubens, as in



My Lady of the Big Bananas, which features a pleasantly plump nude female figure frolicking between two giant bananas as if they are all chorus line dancers. Roberta Eichenberg's *Animal Farm Board of Directors* presents caricature-like animal faces rendered as if they were boardroom portraits, and Michiko Miyake's *Recycle Series, Globe* presents cartoon-like renderings of Coke bottles. All display a pop-culture sensibility that conveys both the power and the potential irony of kitsch.

A number of artists make reference to everyday or mundane objects, perhaps as a nod not only to kitsch but also to the surrealists' use of the everyday, such as Lynne-Rachel Altman's *Tuna, Carrots, Bread and Apple . . .*, and Elizabeth Cheatham-Wild's collections of clear glass tumblers, wine glasses, and other stemware rimmed with a striking band of red tool-dip coating. Others create more off-beat sculptures: Ceres Madoo's *The Ultimate* appears to represent a torture device of sorts made of soccer balls chained together on a handle/stick. Elisa Nappa creates a series of *Intricate Cages*, slightly distorted structures conceivably made for holding animals. Katrina Hude's *Frivolity Pushpins* look like giant bulletin-board tacks, created in a bright palette of red and yellow. Michael Goldman's *First Aide*, a steel, tree-like structure whose

branches hold tin boxes and cigar boxes, is topped with a glass vase holding a tulip, making a clever reference to the public's expectations of what glassmakers should create.

Other artists find glass an appropriate medium in which to convey a sense of the fragility of the human body. Lise Autogena's *Spine* series involves abstractions of the human skeletal system; Ann-Mari Edström's *Under My Skin* incorporates X rays; Æsa Björk Thorsteinsdóttir's stunning installation consists of giant half-spheres that look like the irises of the eye; and the tender nature of human breath is made visual in Jill Reynolds's *Exhalation*.

An organic, yet not necessarily corporeal feel—an earthiness that is a departure from the expected manufactured smoothness of glass—is present in works by Victoria Brailsford, Chuck Lopez, and Patricia Davidson, and points to nature and the animal kingdom. Brailsford's *Lexicon* presents abstract forms that are textured with what look like rings in the cross-section of a tree trunk or fingerprint grooves. Lopez's *Repose* offers a pile of smooth forms that recall dinosaur eggs or stones. Davidson incorporates materials such as wood, twine, and rope in pieces such as *Avatar*, a slightly abstract work that suggests the form of an animal's horned head.

Others seem to refer to science and invention, and to the risk-taking that scientists and inventors also face. Deborah Dohne has invented the podlike *Rocket Science*, an open-sided vehicle (captured in a photograph also on view here) that appears to be very fast but possibly not very safe. Pam Gazale's *Medicinal Still Life* (made of carved salt, and reminiscent of frosted-bottle installations by contemporary artist Tony Cragg) and Ute Stender's *Medicine, Nichts* and *Medicine, Lust* each experiment with the bottles that hold elixirs, and make the viewer ponder the power of such vessels in convincing us that new "cures" might really work.

Two artists use the glass display case as a major theme in their work, perhaps as a reference to the controversial, risk-taking British artist Damien Hirst, who often encloses his disturbing installations featuring preserved and often dissected animals in cases of this kind. Jung-Suk Kim's *Senses* series and Karin Richardson's *Diviner* series explore the role of glass in creating boundaries between the viewer and what is viewed. They dare to provoke us with the questions, What is worthy of display? And how do we look at objects differently when they are encased under glass? At the same time, these pieces also bring to mind the minimalist, cube-and-box constructions of Sol LeWitt.



Several artists here have decided to work with women's fashion as a theme—a very timely one, since fashion and contemporary art have been recently crossing over into one another, as evident in the risqué, Gucci-sponsored performances staged by Vanessa Beecroft, for example. Maki Hajikano's ethereal *Dress I* and mysterious *Half Sbird* point to clothing design, and Sarah Peters's *Hair-do Installation* and *Wig #1*, as well as Jennifer Parker's *Wigger*, all refer to the art-like nature of meticulous grooming and beautification.

Two artists dared to present work made of colorless glass, and without bland results. Celeste Starita's minimalistic *Untitled* gives us clear blocks that look startlingly like ice, with ghostly, opaque forms within. Harumi Yukutake's *Untitled* series also incorporates clear glass, but manipulated to appear partially broken or with protruding spiky forms that convey the danger of glass.

Some artists appear to be exploring abstraction in their work. Elaine Jennifer Williams and Lisa Zerkowitz create mixed-media sculptures that seem to rely on the interaction of colors and forms rather than any specific subject matter, much in the way Suprematist painter Kasimir Malevich attempted to create nonobjective expressions of pure artistic feeling in his early-

twentieth-century works. Kristin Gudjónsdóttir's *Stone Bonding I* reminds one of either a gourd or a top—the type of simple children's toy that spins on its base; Masami Koda's *Shiziku* consists of fishlike forms that might just be beautiful shapes that suggest animal-like qualities; and Patrick Martin's *Untitled* incorporates knoblike constructions that also remind one of nipples. All of these artists seem to be creating their own individual worlds, in idioms that incorporate the geometrical and the organic in intriguing three-dimensional constructions.

Finally, two artists here seem attracted to work within the idioms of two-dimensional art, such as drawing or painting, creating a picture plane on a flat surface of glass as if it were paper or a canvas. Laura DiMeo's *Elementary Images* series are basically abstract paintings, only created with wax and oil paint on mirrors, while Carl Hasse's *Bachelor Pad* and *Untitled* portray a van and van parts with a hand-drawn quality reminiscent of Raymond Pettibon's cartoonlike drawings.

One must remember that Chihuly himself took a risk when deciding to work with glass. His first encounter with the medium in fact didn't occur until he received an assignment to utilize a nonfabric material in a weaving while studying at the University of Washington.

After graduating in 1965 with a degree in interior design, he later hopped to the University of Wisconsin to study with Harvey Littleton, considered the founder of the American studio-glass movement. And before that Littleton himself took a risk when deciding to work with glass. The son of a physicist who worked at Corning Glass, Littleton was obsessively driven to prove that glass could be blown and melted in contexts other than industrial factories. It was Littleton who went on to create the small-scale furnaces and the glass formulas that involved less-intense melting points that made it possible for artists to experiment with glass-making in the studio. Their experiments created the legacy of vision, experimentation, and risk now being carried on by the artists in this exhibition—whose work is certain to inspire future artists to dare to work at the cutting edge of glass.

1. Jepson, Barbara. "Glorious Glass," in Hampson, Ferdinand, ed., *Glass: State of the Art 1984*, Huntington Woods, MI: Eliot Johnston Publishers, 1984, p. 6.

Reena Jana, a National Arts Journalism Program Fellow at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism, is a frequent contributor to *Artforum*, *Wired*, the *New York Times*, and other publications. She is a Contributing Editor at *World Sculpture News* and *Asian Art News* (both in Hong Kong), and a U.S. Correspondent to *Flash Art International*.

**Asa Björk
Thorsteinsdóttir**

Born in 1970 in Reykjavik, Iceland
Lives in Bergen, Norway
1997 M.Des., Edinburgh College of Art, Scotland
1995 B.A., Edinburgh College of Art, Scotland



Lost d'Vision, 1998
Glass, cement, and projected video
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

EAIR by Year

1990

Stephen Paul Day	Baton Rouge, LA
Deborah Dohne	Syracuse, NY
Ann-Mari Edström	Lund, Sweden
Roberta Eichenberg	New Orleans, LA
Amy Hamblin	Seattle, WA
Jill Reynolds	Cambridge, MA

1991

Patricia Davidson	Seattle, WA
Pam Gazale	Seattle, WA
Michiko Miyake	Kanagawa-ken, Japan
Elisa Nappa	Spokane, WA
Michael Wood Stewart	Oakland, CA

1992

Lise Autogena	London, England
Kevin Dubois	Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
Catherine Pell	Midland, TX
Woo Mee Suh	Seoul, Korea

1993

Tina Betz	Clayville, NY
Gitty Duncan	West Reading, CT
Carl Hasse	Seattle, WA
Ceres Madoo	Los Angeles, CA
Jennifer Parker	Oakland, CA

1994

Mitchell Gaudet	New Orleans, LA
Michael E. Goldman	San Francisco, CA
Kait Rhoads	Alfred, NY
Harumi Yukutake	Toyama, Japan

1995

Elizabeth Cheatham-Wild	Los Angeles, CA
Alison Chism	Seattle, WA
Kristin Gudjónsdóttir	Chapel Hill, NC
Julia Haack	Seattle, WA
Patrick Martin	Emporia, KS
Ute Stender	Lübtheen, Germany

1996

Lynne-Rachel Altman	Berkeley, CA
Blaise Campbell	Seattle, WA
Sarah Chase	unknown
Katrina Hude	Greenbank, WA
Jung-Suk Kim	Seoul, Korea
Hanae Mills	Honolulu, HI

1997

Jane D'Arensbourg	Oakland, CA
Somani Ferley	Toronto, Ontario, Canada
Maki Hajikano	Eugene, OR
Karin Richardson	North Bend, OR
Elaine Jennifer Williams	New Orleans, LA
Lisa Zerkowitz	Seattle, WA

1998

Jack Gunter	Stanwood, WA
Liz Marx	Santa Monica, CA
Charlotte Meyer	Seattle, WA
Lydia Neuman	Brunswick, ME
Sarah Peters	Seattle, WA
Laura Wessel	Seattle, WA

1999

Victoria Brailsford	Sheffield, England
Laura DiMeo	Boston, MA
Masami Koda	Bothell, WA
Chuck Lopez	Seattle, WA
Celeste Starita	Philadelphia, PA
Æsa Björk Thorsteinsdóttir	Bergen, Norway

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