

FINDING THE BEAUTY IN THE WASTE

By

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## **ABSTRACT**

The focus of this research is based on finding new ways of utilizing traditional glass making methods in a contemporary manner. The contradiction between traditional glass making and the contemporary art scene will be discussed in detail through form to the qualities of the material. The research will focus on the current trends in glass and the broader art world, a move from media in the art world and how glass identifies with this. The body of work will be relying on traditional methods, but demonstrate the ability to operate within these contexts as a whole.

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Glass has been known as a craft material for a long time. This is the reason that glass as a material for art has struggled to find a place in the broader art scene. However, glass has been finding its own place in the art world as of late. I find it interesting both as art and a craft material. The idea in this research is being able to use both disciplines in one exhibition. The use of craft for production and use of art for installation. There is a strong connection between these two practices. In this research, I will focus on using both in a harmonious way.

This research aims to find ways to utilize any type of production that comes from an artist. A work which does not fit today's craft market standards can still have the potential to find a place in the art market. This side of the art scene gives me inspiration to use craft in a more flexible way. It gives me the opportunity to create without the limitations of technique. Explain this better. Using the technique for your benefit and not getting limited by it can be very challenging and is what I would like to overcome. In the daily practice of an artist or a craftsman, technique and skill building can be addictive very quickly.

The production for this exhibition is inspired by a very technical Venetian style of glass making that entered the United States in the 1970s and practiced still today as a foundation of the American Studio Glass Movement. These are techniques that have been practiced for the last thousand years and recently elaborated upon through the addition of larger teams. As with the American Studio Glass Movement, I am developing a series of work that reflects this growth and the trial and error that occurred.

The process of trying, failing and trying again will be captured in the work. I am trying to learn from these failures and to use them for my benefit. Studying individual elements of a goblet or a vase can be inspirational to find a new aesthetic. This should be considered a visual research endeavor. This research paper is the documentation of the preparation and development of the body of work through experience.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **CONCEPT**

As a studio art student, practicing traditional techniques to be able to work with different materials has been always interesting to me. This practice was directed by the materials that I had a chance to experiment. During my graduate studies, I had a chance to focus my efforts on glass blowing and decided to focus on the technique as a conceptual concern, similar to that of David Schnuckel. Glass blowing is a craft that must be mastered through extensive repetition. Building the muscle memory and gaining speed takes a tremendous amount of time, failure and dedication. For this research, quality means a work that is refined enough for today's art market standards. Learning and mastering the technique means achieving this quality. The failures are the pieces that end up breaking on the floor or dealing with defects. It appears as a failure only if there is the aim of achieving a quality.

This struggle of achieving a certain quality is not only about glass blowing or personal practice. For many artists, there is a long process of practice and failure before success. So, for artist, there is a line of work that is not usable. In this research, I am questioning the purpose of this unusable work. My goal is to try to find ways to utilize these artifacts of the process to essentially raise its value. The craftsmen are often

sensitive about the quality of their work. It is not common to go to a craft show and see broken or half-finished pieces on display. Every part should therefore be resolved and finished and this is the point I am making. The art of learning can become a work in itself. The contemporary art scene is very different in this manner. Artists can use anything if it fits the concept. Looking at a piece of glass from a craftsman point of view can be very technical and limiting. Looking at the same piece of glass from an artist point of view can be helpful in finding the hidden beauty.

Instead of looking at these unsuccessful pieces as individual pieces, I look at them as a group of works. This gives me the ability to create a new aesthetic with this body of work. More importantly, it changes its concept from a single failed piece to a big waste for the maker. Almost like a factory, an artist needs to produce waste to be able to produce a product. It is the nature of making.

I believe the waste has a distinct visual aesthetic. Things that humans produce visually reflect the energy that is put in to them. Waste definitely is a strong reflection of this energy. It does not carry a burden of being pretty. It represents the spontaneity and randomness. Other than visual elements, waste has a history, a history we do not think about or record unless it starts to create problems. In my point of view, this is a big part of the historical aspect of production.

In this exhibition, my main goal is finding the visual and conceptual connections between the waste product and the finished product. The finished and refined pieces will be exhibited along with the unsuccessful ones. One of the main goals is to visually show the process of refining the work. The unsuccessful objects will be used to reflect the story behind the finished work. Glass is a material with memory, it captures every single

movement of its maker and it remembers the previous movements. Therefore, all manipulation of the material must become intuitive in order to capture the desired result. This gives me the ability to capture and show my personal relationship with the material. It is not easy for the audience to realize the amount of work and practice that is essential and necessary for a single piece of art. Exhibiting the practice work with the finished work will give the audience a better point of view in this sense.



## **CHAPTER III**

### **MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUE**

The only material that I will be using for this exhibition is glass. All of the pieces that will be exhibited are made using the techniques of traditional glass blowing. It is a process of gathering the molten material from a 2100°F furnace and shaping it with the use of air, gravity and specific tools. It is a very old technique which has been developed and mastered for the last two thousand years. Murano is an island in Italy where artisans have practiced glass blowing since 1291. The technique is highly influenced by Roman and Middle Eastern traditional techniques but the decorative elements are purely developed in Murano.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the years, masters of Murano developed a very specific visual aesthetic with glass and kept their techniques secret. The glass blowers were not allowed to leave the country. The punishment for sharing these secrets was death. This changed in 1960s. The American studio glass movement started in 1962. Shortly after Italian glass blowers were invited to teach classes, specifically at Pilchuck Glass School. At the same

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<sup>1</sup> "Murano Glass." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 28 Mar. 2017. Web

time, American born artists such as Dale Chihuly and Richard Marquis are invited to the prestigious Venini factory as Fulbright scholars.

It is important to visit Murano for technique but what artists learned from the Muranese was the benefit of team work. Glass blowing is a team effort. It is very limiting to work by yourself. Dale Chihuly understood the importance of the team and used this inspiration for his work. He built some of the best glass blowing teams in the world. This allowed Chihuly to work in a larger scale than previously achieved by the individual artist.

Italian techniques have had a huge influence on the American glass blowing history, but the American Studio Glass Movement involves much more. Many other artists from different countries are still teaching courses, sharing different techniques in the United States. It would be a mistake to think that American glass blowing is identical with Italian glass blowing. It is more of a mix of different techniques from different countries. This is one of the main reasons that the big majority of the influential glass art have come from the United States for the last thirty years. Being open about learning different techniques and utilizing them for art's sake is the key for the success of the American Studio Glass Movement.

I started learning glass blowing in the United States-and consider my technique as a mix of American and Italian techniques. For this research, my inspiration comes from the traditional Italian techniques. It is an important step for a glass blower to achieve the level of finesse in the Italian technique. This is one of the main reasons that my practice mainly focuses on this technique for this research. The forms that I decided to use for the exhibition are very traditional forms. There are not many decorative elements that I used

for this work. I would like this work to reflect the simplicity of the form, without any distractions from decoration.

The rise of the Murano glass style took place between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Murano master Angelo Barovier developed a formula for the clear glass which is known as 'Cristallo'. This brought a new aesthetic to the island. It is the first time that glass makers understood the properties of transparent, clear glass. It is not only used for clear objects. It is used to case the color to preserve its quality. This brought a refinement to the color and decorative applications with reference to the form.<sup>2</sup>

There are five main traditional designs that I will be producing. These five designs are specifically picked because of their qualities. They all represent the aesthetic and the technique of Murano glass. All of these designs became internationally famous as soon as they were produced and did not diminish with time. There is still a market and interest for these specific traditional glass objects. The color or decorative applications will be made and considered in a minimal manner with regard to tradition.

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<sup>2</sup> "History of Murano Glass." *Murano Glass*. N.p., n.d. Web. 15 Mar. 2017.

## Veronese

The Veronese vase was designed by Vittorio Zecchin, a painter from Murano. He was the artistic director of the prestigious Venini factory from 1921 to 1925. Zecchin gained inspiration from a painting by Paolo Veronese, called 'The Annunciation'. One of its main visual qualities is its lightness. Its proportions and form create the feeling that the vase is floating in the air like a balloon. The proportions are very natural. It has a thin neck, large shoulders and a thin waist, very close to human proportions. The first Veronese was made in 1921. Today many glass artist use this form for their creations and as a mark of technical prowess and achievement of the impeccable form. This form has the capacity and versatility to adapt many different colors and patterns. Veronese is still one of the most famous product of the Venini factory and has become the company's logo.<sup>3</sup>



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<sup>3</sup> "Veronese -." *Venini*. N.p., 03 Nov. 2015. Web. 14 Mar. 2017.

## Ampollina

Ampollina is a vessel which is well known for its long spout. It is commonly made in small scale so that it is easily accessible and user friendly. Part of the tradition of glassmaking encompasses the maker's consideration for the end user and the tactile properties that are required for the production and then translated to the handling by the end user. For this exhibition, I am enlarging the traditional size by elongating the handle and neck. It can have decorative elements on the neck and the top of the handle. Very similar vessel forms of metal and clay vessels were made in the Middle East before Murano, but Murano is the place where the form found its body in glass. There is not a certain date for the birth of the first glass Ampollina. Corning Museum of Glass has a refined example, one which is believed to be made between 1600 and 1725.<sup>4</sup>



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<sup>4</sup> Gudenrath, William. "Ampollina." *Ampollina | The Techniques of Renaissance Venetian Glassworking*. N.p., n.d. Web. 15 Mar. 2017.

## Venetian Goblets

Goblets have been produced by the glass makers since the Roman Empire. Murano glass makers developed a certain aesthetic for their goblets that is recognized as an example of elegance and exquisite form. The most specific qualities of a Venetian goblet are the thin cup and feet. Manipulating thin glass can be harder than thick glass. A thin goblet is a determination of the skill level of a glass maker and raise the value of the object. There are many different designs for goblets. The purpose of the goblet is related to the design. It is common in Murano glass to see the use of decorative elements, such as a figurative or geometric stems. The design that I use is a clear cup and foot with a decorative optic ball on the stem.<sup>5</sup>



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<sup>5</sup> "Corning Museum of Glass." *Artists and Instructors* | Corning Museum of Glass. N.p., n.d. Web. 17 Mar. 2017

## Amphora with Handles

Amphoras are traditionally a utilitarian object. They are mainly used for the transportation and storage of wine. Old examples of this form are made out of clay. Romans, influenced by the Greeks, made successful examples of glass amphora, such as the Portland Vase. The Murano amphora is inspired by the Roman version. There are only few differences in the designs. Roman amphora have a wider neck, while the Murano amphora is mostly taller and has narrower neck. The handles are shorter and thicker in Roman design as well. The Murano tradition focuses on thinner and more elegant glass making. The handles that are used in the Murano Amphora are longer, thinner and captures more of the potential movement that is implied. The design that I utilize is derived from the Murano design. The body is made out of a transparent color in contrast with opaque handles. <sup>6</sup>



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<sup>6</sup> "The Portland Vase." *British Museum*. N.p., n.d. Web. 14 Mar. 2017

"Amphora." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 13 Mar. 2017. Web. 14 Mar. 2017.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **REFERENCE ARTISTS**

#### **Edward Burtynsky**

Edward Burtynsky is a Canadian photographer known for his industrial landscape photography. The length of geological time in comparison to human time is a bold element of Burtynsky's work. It is the comparison of the time that a forest takes to develop naturally and the time that it takes humans to destroy it. Burtynsky focuses on the artifacts of mass production. Burtynsky's work often captures industrial sites and the waste that is collected around it. The work does not carry a concern of capturing a bad image of the waste and the environment. The image actually captures the visual beauty of it. This is what makes Burtynsky's work unique. The work laments what humans do to nature, though there is beauty in the image. Enjoying the work is challenging because of the reality behind the image.

The series that I focus on in my research is called the 'Urban Mines'. Burtynsky describes these series in his website as; "We've never stopped taking things from nature. Even the act of taking from the earth is natural since we are not outside of nature. What is different today is the scale. Current society is searching for a way to come to terms with that taking from the earth. Recycling is one way we can put a stop to a certain amount of



damage to the earth. This material comes from and collects around urban centers in large recycling yards. These yards are like secondary mines.”<sup>7</sup>



Edward Burtynsky, 1997, Ferrous Bushling #18 Hamilton, 48x60, Ontario

This photograph, Ferrous Bushling #18, is a good example of the visual aesthetic that influences me. The scale of this junk yard is a visual proof of the mass production. Knowing that it will be recycled still does not change the fact that it is a waste. The beauty that he captured is coming from colors and the composition. The beautiful fade

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<sup>7</sup> Burtynsky, Edward. "Urban Mines." *Edward Burtynsky*. N.p., n.d. Web.

between the rusty and shiny brings a natural and simple aesthetic. There are many individual elements on this work but mainly it is a composition of a mass. The composition is only focused on the product, there is not a view of the environment around it. This makes the product and the mass look even stronger.

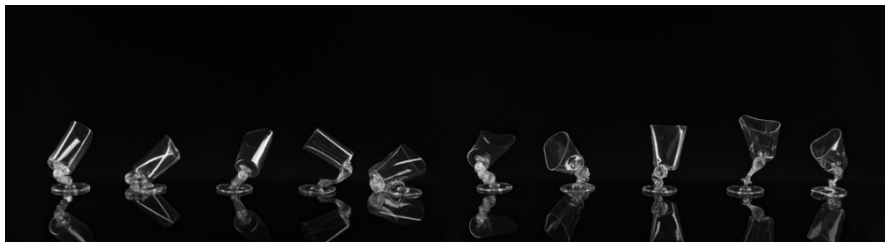
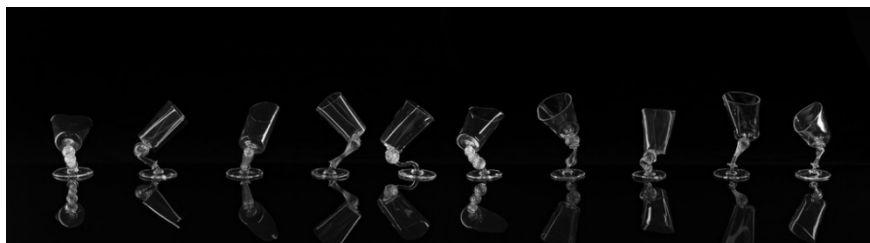
## David Schnuckel

David Schnuckel is an American glass artist, who is based in Rochester, New York. Schnuckel spent many years mastering the Venetian style of goblet making. After making many goblets, his approach to goblets changed from utilitarian to artistic. His work focuses on experimenting with the form and the use of the goblet. Schnuckel finds the abilities of the material by pushing its limits. He goes back in the process of production and finds different aesthetics. Manipulating the object with the heat to capture its movement is a technique that Schnuckel uses in his work.

My purpose in using Schnuckel's work as an example comes from his approach of finding the new forms by using the traditional utilitarian objects. The work that I want to use for my research is from 'Meaningful Gibberish' series and called, 'Decadel Col-Lapse Study'. He explains this work as: "Knowing now that shape and design components are significant variables in the nature with which a cup becomes (un)done, I decided to commit to a comparison of cups within a shared family of design. Ten cups were blown, all composed at the top of a clear, straight-sided, flat bottomed tumbler shape and clear foot with folded lip. However, in the middle was a deliberate variety of stem systems to all undergo the same firing sequence in order to observe each stem design's unique vulnerabilities. The collapsing was conducted in a series of firings that held these cups within a kiln at 1150 F for 15 minutes. A photograph was taken of the test subjects after all had undergone a firing, put back into the kiln following the photo shoot, and fired again. Firings persisted until the cups were fully collapsed".<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> "Col-Lapse: Decadel." *David Schnuckel*. N.p., n.d. Web. 27 Mar. 2017



David Schnuckle, 2016, Decadel Col-Lapse Study, Blown glass, Time, Temperature, Dimensions Vary

## **Donald Judd**

Donald Judd is a famous American minimalist artist. He is known for his installations with groupings of cubes and other geometric forms. Donald Judd inspired me with his minimal approach of display. Traditionally sculptures are displayed on pedestals. Judd's approach to this is totally different. Using pedestal for display means adding a new visual element and change the form of the sculpture. Judd's work stands by its own. No pedestals or any other elements are used for display on Judd's work.

A question of this research is how to separate the waste work and finished work on display. I realized that putting something on a pedestal gives the object a specific meaning. This meaning I am comfortable to attach to the finished work, but not to the collection of waste objects. Inspired by Donald Judd's aesthetic, I decided create distinction between the work by the use of pedestals.

Another approach that influences me is the trust in the form. Simple forms can carry a bold visual aesthetic proven by Judd's work, in which a cube definitely has bold visual properties. Trusting these properties and keeping it minimal is something that Judd is extremely proficient. There is always a concern from an artist point of view that a cube is not enough. Lots of artists use the cube, rephrase this Judd challenges this by using a cube in a grouped format, while keeping the individual properties of the object. The group of my glass objects in my exhibition is inspired by Judd's style. I create a new composition by grouping the waste glass work but at the same time I leave enough space for each object to be viewed individually.

“It isn't necessary for a work to have a lot of things to look at, to compare, to analyze one by one, to contemplate. The thing as a whole, its quality whole, is what is interesting. The main things are alone and are more intense, clear and powerful.” - Donald Judd.<sup>9</sup>



Donald Judd, 1971, Untitled, Anodized Aluminium, Each of 6 Boxes 48x48x48 inches

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<sup>9</sup> "Donald Judd." *Donald Judd - Wikiquote*. N.p., n.d. Web. 29 Mar. 2017

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSION**

The conclusion of this research resolves the concerns addressed in a visually intellectual manner. The main aim of this research is to study and use the aesthetic of the waste of an artist in comparison to the attainment of technique and body of work development. The connection of the finished work and the practice work should be understood by seeing the exhibition.

I believe the research to be successful in that I have developed new ways of utilizing traditional glass making methods in a contemporary, sculptural manner. The body of work in the exhibition relies heavily on traditional methods, but demonstrates the ability to operate within these contexts as a whole. I have addressed and proven the contradictions between traditional glass making and the contemporary art practice through the detailed discussion of form with attention to the qualities of the material. The artifacts of the research presented in the final exhibition prove the current trends in glass and the broader art world and a move from media in the art world to how glass identifies within it.



## Exhibition Images







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