

Migrate
30th Anniversary Exhibition
Scottish Glass Society
Glashaus Magazine

Although it is not clear why, in particular, the theme of migration has been chosen as a curatorial device for this year's SGS Annual Exhibition, it is nevertheless fitting, as it seems somehow to chime with the *zeitgeist* at a time when human and animal populations seem to be constantly uprooted and diverted.

This year's exhibition has been dedicated to the memory of the glass expert, Dan Klein, who died unexpectedly in June. As an addendum to their catalogue, the SGS have written:

International author, lecturer, auctioneer, and curator in the field of contemporary glass, Klein leaves a huge void, as no other person has done more to promote British Contemporary Glass. As one of the founders and directors of North Lands Creative Glass in Lybster, Scotland, he has helped Scotland achieve a centre for glass excellence unique in the UK. Several of the artists on exhibit in our thirtieth anniversary show have had their practice and lives enriched by artist residencies at North Lands, and many more have seen their work develop and grow through master classes run by internationally acclaimed artists there. Klein wrote widely on glass and is a world-respected authority. Formerly an opera singer, the singular pro-active voice of Dan Klein shall be missed throughout the world of glass, but we rejoice in celebration of a life that leaves a grand glass legacy.

Given this sad news, it seems strangely apposite therefore that the work of several of the thirty contributors deals with the theme of passing and the fragility of life, both human and animal. Alec Galloway's 'Thousands Are Sailing' conflates avian migration and movement with family separation and death. The motif of the crow has taken a central and abiding place in Galloway's work. Although striking, sculptural and architectural, the lighting here does not do full justice to Galloway's vision, obscuring the smaller details within the work. Notions of family and uprootedness are also explored by Liz Rowley in 'Routes of Passage' where, using the device of a translucent suitcase, she portrays family history and distant memory albeit in a way which seems to have lost its freshness given the plethora of thematic antecedents by other artists in other media to which this work can be linked. In Angela's Steel 'Copse' there is also a resonance of mortality where a prone figure lies in a darkened wood. The similarity between the words 'copse' and 'corpse' seems to augment this morbid theme.

The theme of this show, carefully chosen, one suspects, because of its potential multiple interpretations has therefore created opportunities for deeply searching and often painful work. The notion of separation is one such issue and is explored by Karen Akester and Jeff Zimmer, amongst others. Akaster uses the lost wax process to create glass casts which are first modelled in clay. The work is therefore by definition highly sculptural. In 'Kinder Transport' she alludes to the Nazi policy of forced movement and family separation, wounds which remain open and unhealed in contemporary Germany. Here two heads – plaintive and innocent – are placed on a wooden trolley, ready to be moved at will. The work shares much with the work of the German artist Karen Christiansen who showed at the Collins Gallery in Glasgow in 2008, although Christiansen's work is on a larger scale - and in wood.

Originally from the United States, Zimmer is now resident in Scotland and his practice explores the emotional and physical separation from his own country. He uses the *motif* of a boat embedded within layers of glass where multiple firings combined with nuanced, delicate image-making allow delicate perspectival shifts. Here his two box-like structures depict, respectively, a Celtic *currach* and a Chesapeake Bay *Deadrise* – fitting nautical symbols for distance and difference.

A number of artists have chosen to interpret the idea of migration as it relates to avian movement; so Judith Ann McCrorie, Alison Kinnaird, Jessamy Kelly, Dominic Fondé and Carrie Fertig all embrace this notion in varying degrees of abstraction and literalism. Kelly's 'Wing's' – subtly etched and sanded-blasted forms – merely hint at the theme allowing sensual and associative interpretations of her subject matter. McCrorie, by contrast, takes a more literal and overtly didactic approach in 'Global Warming Evolution or Extinction' using *pâté de verre*, casting and fusing - which she incorporates with finely worked drawing. The respective approaches of both artists seem to exemplify the broad and inclusive stance of SGS, demonstrating the wide variety of media, technique, approach and vision now found in contemporary Scottish glassmaking.

GILES SUTHERLAND

Inverness Museum & Art Gallery, Inverness: 4th July – 1st August 2009

St Fergus Gallery, Wick: 8th August – 12th September 2009

Iona Gallery, Kingussie: 19th September – 17th October 2009

Broadfield House Glass Museum, West Midlands 14th November – 21st March 2010

www.scottishglassociety.com