

STYLE



DING DONG!
THE WITCH
IS BACK

MEET THE THERESAS
THE MOST POWERFUL
WOMEN IN FASHION

STICKING POINT
THE NEXT BIG
NAIL TREND HITS

DARK ARTS

ISABELLA BLOW: INSIDE THE
WARDROBE OF A TRUE MAVERICK

27 OCTOBER 2013

BLOWN AWAY

A NEW SHOW FEATURING ARTWORKS BY THE LIKES OF TRACEY EMIN AND RON ARAD IS SET TO MAKE GLASS THE MATERIAL OF THE MOMENT, SAYS HELEN KIRWAN-TAYLOR

Once dismissed as too pretty and decorative to be considered art, glass is rapidly finding its feet among a new generation of collectors, gallerists and curators. “We have Dale Chihuly to thank,” says Angel Monzon of the London gallery Vessel, who represents both established and emerging glass artists. Chihuly, famous for his supersized organic sculptures and chandeliers, one of which hangs in the main entrance of the Victoria and Albert Museum, has made the art world reconsider its opinion of the medium. “Traditionally, glass was associated with craft pieces such as vases and figurines. What he did was challenge the scale, and now other artists are also making larger pieces,” says Monzon.

While Chihuly’s vast pieces brought glass to the fore, the man credited with turning it into a collectable art form is Adriano Berengo, a Venetian entrepreneur, who has almost single-handedly elevated the medium from a modest, often kitsch, craft into something to rival any of the fine arts. He founded Berengo Studio in 1989 and began collaborating with famous artists, most of whom had no experience with the medium.

This summer Berengo opened his third glass exhibition, Glasstress 2013, in Venice as part of the Biennale. He also joined forces with the London College of Fashion and the Wallace Collection for the first time, expanding the perimeters of glass even further. More than 50 international artists were selected to come up with works in glass, including Ron Arad, Tracey Emin, Tim Noble and Sue Webster, Thomas Schütte, Helen Storey — who made a glass and fire dress — and Hussein Chalayan.

The travelling exhibition, which comes to London next month, tests the boundaries of what glass can do. The dramatic installation by the Chinese artist Cai Guo-Qiang shows mannequins in glass suicide-bomber vests. Chalayan’s Frozen Monologue (a clear glass structure that supports the top portion of the body) represents the tedium of conversation. “We spend half our lives listening to other people and can become prisoners of others’ endless need to talk about themselves,” he says. “As a result there is a culture of unfulfilled relationships emerging as dialogues are replaced by monologues.” The work will be presented

on a table facing an empty chair, with a soundtrack of layered, recorded conversations. Arad challenges the brief with his installation Last Train, based on the tradition of etching drawings into a window using a diamond ring. Arad invited several other artists, including Antony Gormley and Cornelia Parker, to create sketches using a specially created iPad programme that then directs a mechanised robotic hand wearing a protruding diamond ring to etch a glass pane.

Glass is increasingly finding favour with collectors and now it’s coming to an art gallery near you. Other artists being talked about include the London-based Paola Petrobelli, who creates abstract vessels and, more recently, modular glass lighting based on a Meccano set. Petrobelli’s work is hand-blown in Venice, but she is adamant that glass must maintain its place in the design world. “My work is bought by art collectors, but it is functional. The lights work and the vessels can be used as bowls. I am a bit suspicious of people making sculptures out of glass and calling it art,” she says. Melli Ink, a Central St Martins graduate from Austria, creates large installations such as Apocalyptic Riders, which evokes the work of Dürer. “One of the reasons glass is so hot is the scarcity of people who can do it,” says Ink’s dealer, Damian Grieder. “There are roughly 50 people in the German-speaking world who still have the skill.” All the more reason to start collecting now.

Glass is now represented at art fairs alongside the other fine arts. “This gives people an idea of how to mix objects in their homes,” says Gordon Watson of the eponymous London gallery. And, despite artists’ initial reluctance to dabble in what used to be called “decoration”, much of the glass you see, even at Glasstress, is still beautiful. “It was the Serpent vase by Lalique that first made us think of glass as an object in its own right,” says Watson. “Then came Venini, who collaborated with artists such as Carlo Scarpa. Now artists are clamouring to work with glass, because it’s so immediate. It’s tactile. It’s luminous. It’s about chemistry. It’s also highly adaptable, and as technology changes, so too does the prospects of what can be done with glass.” ♦

Glasstress, the Fashion Space Gallery, London W1, and the Wallace Collection, London W1, from November 27; glasstress.org



24 lighting by Paola Petrobelli, Gallery Libby Sellers

ONE OF THE REASONS WHY GLASS IS SO HOT IS THE SCARCITY OF PEOPLE WHO CAN DO IT

GLASS ACTS: THE ARTISTS TO WATCH

Louis Thompson

An experienced but rising star and winner of the 2012 Jerwood Makers prize, Thompson uses coloured glass to explore scale and composition. Prices from £1,000. Joanna Bird Gallery; joannabird.com



Andrea Walsh

A young artist who mixes glass with porcelain to make exquisite boxes. She is beginning to have a following, and already has pieces showing at the V&A. Prices from £5,000. Adrian Sassoon; adriansassoon.com



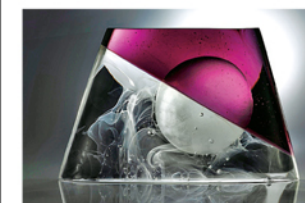
Hanne Enemark

Although trained at the Royal College of Art in London, Enemark’s Danish roots show through in her work. Her vessels are at once hard and soft, sharp and smooth — and unabashedly beautiful. Prices from £1,290. Vessel; vesselgallery.com

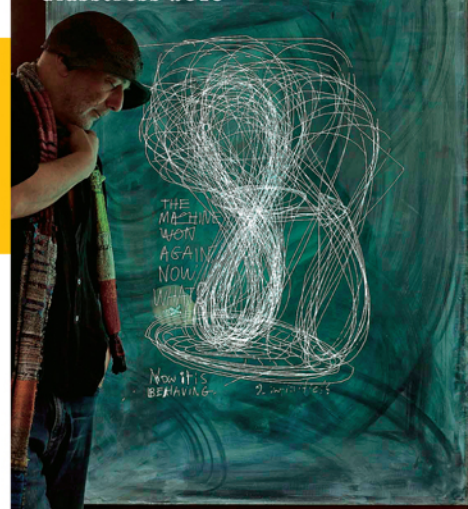


Fiaz Elson

Elson was a studio assistant to the well-known British glass artist Colin Reid and is now catching the attention of collectors — her work was shown at Masterpiece London. Elson’s work is sensual, poetic and technically adept. Prices from £3,000. Adrian Sassoon; adriansassoon.com



Last Train by Ron Arad, Glasstress 2013



Docket by Tracey Emin, Glasstress 2013



Dress of Glass & Flame by Helen Storey, Glasstress 2013



Savage Garden, left, and Apocalyptic Riders (Hunger), by Melli Ink, Damian Grieder Gallery

