

FROZEN BREATH OF THE POLAR NIGHT: AN INTRODUCTION TO ART NOUVEAU GLASS

[The lecture title is taken from a comment by the Paris art critic, Guillaume Janneau, about Lalique's glass].

Glass is a marvellous material. Everything about it makes it an incomparable plastic medium in the hands of an ingenious artist, offering his imagination and talent almost limitless scope for discovery. [René Lalique]

The artist is essentially a passionate individual, a spontaneous creator. He will never submit to a discipline which forces upon him norms and canons.

[Henry van de Velde]

The 19th century saw the beginnings of the shift of glass-working from craft to art, and Art Nouveau glass remains some of the most spectacular ever produced. Glass increasingly came to seem to artists the perfect material through which to express the zeitgeist of their complicated and often traumatic world, and in the years either side of the turn of the century Émile Gallé and Louis Comfort Tiffany created unique masterpieces, challenging expectations of what glass could be both in physical and metaphysical terms. They and their contemporaries also raised standards of commercial production to make good glass pieces available on a far wider scale; soon most major glasshouses included "art glass" among their manufactures. It was the beginning of a new attitude towards glass and glass-working which in the years to come would see practitioners pushing established techniques to their limits while also being quick to exploit technical and technological advances to further their vision of glass as a medium for aesthetic and personal expression as much or more than utility.

FURTHER READING:

Victor Arwas **The Art of Glass: Art Nouveau to Art Deco** 1997

[Papadakis Publisher]

Karen S. Chambers & Tina Oldknow **Clearly Inspired: Contemporary Glass and Its Origins** 1999 [Pomegranate]

Vivienne Couldrey **The Art of Louis Comfort Tiffany** 1989 [Grange Books]
 Mark Cousins **20th Century Glass** 1989 [The Apple Press]
 Dan Klein & Ward Lloyd **The History of Glass** 1984 [Orbis Publishing]
 Rosa Barovier Mentasti (ed) **Glass Throughout Time: History and Technique of Glassmaking from the Ancient World to the Present** 2003 [Skira Editore]
 Peter Layton **Glass Art** 1996 [University of Washington Press]
 Judith Miller & Mark Hill **20th Century Glass (Collectors' Guides)** 2004
 [Dorling Kindersley]
 Paul E. Doros & Alice Frelinghuysen **The Art Glass of Louis Comfort Tiffany**
 2013 [Thames & Hudson]
 Kelley Jo Elliot et al **René Lalique: Enchanted by Glass** 2014
 [Yale University Press]
 William Warmus **Emile Gallé: Dreams into Glass** 1984
 [Corning Museum of Glass]

WEBSITES:

www.20thcenturyglass.com/glass; www.glassismore.com; www.contempglass.org;
www.cmog.org (website of the Corning Museum of Glass);
www.nationalglasscentre.com; www.britishglassfoundation.org.uk;
stourbridgeglassmuseum.org.uk

GLASS MUSEUMS:

The V&A has an outstanding collection of glass from all periods; other places to visit in the UK include the University of Sunderland's National Glass Centre and the Haworth Art Gallery in Accrington, which has the largest collection of Tiffany glass in Europe. The Stourbridge Glass Museum opened in April this year, with an extensive collection of British glass from the 17th to 20th centuries, as well as interactive displays, and the nearby Red House Glass Cone at Worsley also has glass-blowing demonstrations and other events. For stained glass, there is the splendid collection in the upper levels of Ely Cathedral, which spans about 800 years of British stained glass, mostly rescued from various locations.

Internationally probably the best-known and most comprehensive glass museum is in America: the Corning Museum of Glass in New York, founded in 1951 has more than 45,000 pieces of glass from all periods of history. Dedicated to all aspects of glass history, science and art, it is also a teaching facility, supports

ongoing glass research and since 1986 has awarded the Rakow Commission every year to an emerging glass artist. Also in New York, the Queens Museum contains The Neustadt, a collection of some 250,000 examples of some of Tiffany's best works which also organises regular touring exhibitions worldwide.

In Europe, Venice has had a glass museum on Murano since 1861 while in Nancy the Musée de Beaux-Arts displays Daum glass in its basement galleries, and the Musée de l'École de Nancy celebrates Émile Gallé.

For all the fire worker's admirable vigilance and all the foresight learned from experience ... he can never abolish Chance. Risk remains the dominating and, as it were, the sanctifying element of his great art. [Paul Valéry, poet]

Color is to the eye as music to the ear. [Louis Comfort Tiffany]

SLIDES:

Slide 1:

'Gathering' glass at the furnace

Slide 2:

Glass ~ a few preliminaries

Glass ingredients and molten glass being poured

Cuneiform tablet (from the library of Assurbanipal) giving details of glass-making in ancient Mesopotamia 668-627 BCE [British Museum]

Slide 3:

To the Age its Art ...

Harry Powell (for Whitefriars Glass) **Table centrepiece** 1903
[Corning Museum of Glass, New York (CMOG)]

Ernest Baptiste Lévêillé **Vase with Horse Chestnut leaves** 1893 [Musée d'Orsay]

Slide 4:

... To Art its Freedom

Émile Gallé **Bottle 'Grapes'** c.1900 [Private Collection]

Louis Comfort Tiffany (with Tiffany Furnaces) **Favrile 'Peacock' plate** 1902 [V&A]

Slide 5:

Stone of the kind that flows

Eugène Rousseau: **Vase 'Carp'** 1878 [Walters Art Museum, Baltimore]

Gallé **Carp Vase** 1878 [Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris]

Ernest-Baptiste Lévêillé **Vase** 1890-2 [V&A]

Slide 6:

Immortal, incorruptible beauty

Gallé **Vase 'Croix de Lorraine'** c.1879 [V&A]

'Clair de Lune' glass vase 'Wildflowers and Grasses' 1879
[Private Collection]

Lamp 'Les Coprins' (Mushrooms) 1904 [Musée de l'École de Nancy]

Slide 7:

My roots are in the depths of the woods

Gallé **Vase 'Oak Leaves'** 1895 [V&A]

Vase 'Marguerites' 1896 [Petit Palais, Paris]

Vase 'Tadpole' 1900 [Musée de l'École de Nancy]

Slide 8:

A family affair

Daum Frères **The Violet Mourning of the Colchicum** 1893 [Musée d'Orsay]

Convolvulus c.1905 [V&A]

Gourd Vase 1909 [Musée de l'École de Nancy]

Collection of Daum Frères glass, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nancy

Slide 9:

Daum Nancy

Henri Bergé **Vase** c.1900 [V&A]

Henri Bergé & Amalric Walker (for Daum Frères) **Bowl 'Chameleon'** c.1905
[Private Collection]

Penholder 'Stag Beetle' 1905-10 [Private Collection]

Tray 'Angelfish' c.1907 [Private Collection]

Slide 10:

Holds illusion, but also realities

Jacques Grüber **Window ~ Chemistry** 1905

[Chambre de Commerce et de l'Industrie, Nancy]

Window ~ Gulls and Roses 1903-4 [Maison Bergeret, Nancy]

Slide 11:

The judicious use of light

Victor Horta **Hôtel Tassel ~ Upper Landing Window** 1893-4

[6 Paul-Emile Jansonstraat, Brussels]

Hôtel Solvay ~ Lightwell and Main Staircase 1898-1904

[224 Avenue Louise, Brussels]

Slide 12:

Taking advantage of colour

Tiffany Studios **Parakeets and Goldfish Bowl** 1893 [Boston Museum of Fine Arts]

Magnolia and Irises 1908 [Metropolitan Museum]

Slide 13:

After the money [in the art] but the art is there too

Tiffany Studios **Library Lamp 'Cobweb' with mosaic 'Narcissi' base** c.1900

[Morse Museum, Florida]

'Lily Pad' Table Lamp (10 shades) c.1900 [Private Collection]

Clara Driscoll (for Tiffany Studios) **'Wisteria' library lamp** 1901

[Brigham Young University Art Museum, Utah]

Slide 14:

When cool the article is finished

Tiffany Furnaces: **Favrile 'Peacock' Vase** c.1892

[Metropolitan Museum, New York]

'Cypriote' Vase 1897 [Morse Museum, Florida]

Metallic Lustre Vase 1898-9 [V&A]

Slide 15:

The vases speak for themselves

Tiffany Furnaces **'Agate' Vase** 1896-1900

[Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond]

'Favrile' Goblet 1903 [St Louis Art Museum, Missouri]

'Favrile' bottle c.1898 (hand-blown, metallic-lustred glass) [V&A]

'Volcano' Vase 1914-15 [Private Collection]

Slide 16:

Jewels of Bohemia

Leopold Bauer (for Loetz-Witwe) **'Titania' Vase with silver mount** 1905-6

[Private Collection]

Max von Spaun (for Loetz-Witwe) **'Phanomen' vase** 1900 [V&A]

Von Spaun (for Loetz-Witwe) **'Phanomen' Vase with bronze mount** c.1903

[Private Collection]

Slide 17:

To utilise glass in a new way

Loetz-Witwe **'Octopus' Vases** c.1890 [Private Collection]

Lustre Vase with 'oil spot' decoration c.1903 [V&A]

Von Spaun (for Loetz-Witwe): **'Phanomen' Vase** c.1900 [V&A]

Slide 18:

Glass by an open flame

Karl Koepping **Goblet** c.1896 [Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris]

Liqueur Glasses c.1900 [Danish Museum of Art and Design, Copenhagen]

Friedrich Zitzmann **Tulip-form Glass** c.1897 [Bavarian National Museum, Munich]

Slide 19:

The cloudy waters of the Clyde

Christopher Dresser with James Couper & Son **'Clutha Glass' vases** 1880-1900

[Private Collection/V&A]

Alexander Knox with Couper & Son **'Clutha glass' posy holder with 'Tudric'**

mount c.1895 [Private Collection]

'Cymric' table lamp with 'Clutha glass' shade 1905 [Private Collection]

Slide 20:

Glass is a marvellous material

René Lalique **Bracelet with Owls** 1900-01

[Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon]

Vase 'Swans' c.1898 [Private Collection]

'Serpents' sugar bowl 1897-1900 [Calouste Gulbenkian]

Slide 21:

Frozen breath of the polar night

Lalique **Girl garlanded with flowers** 1903 (kiln-cast) [Private Collection]

Naiad (Large Mermaid) c.1920 (mould-blown, opalescent)

[Musée Lalique, Wingen-sur-Moder, France]

Slide 22:

Metaphysical and transcendent

Gallé **Vase 'Crepuscule' (Bat Vase)** 1904 [V&A]

Tiffany **Blue and Gold Jack-in-the-Pulpit Vase** 1915

[Detroit Institute of Arts]

Slide 23:

The execution of personal dreams ... the point of departure in the adventure of glass

Gallé **Hand with Seaweed and Shells** 1904 [Musée d'Orsay]

Let a portion of molten glass be gathered upon the end of a metal pipe and blown into a bubble while the pipe drops vertically from the mouth of the operator, and a flask is formed ... what vessel could be more beautiful? If a material is worked in its most simple and befitting manner, the results obtained are far more beautiful than those which are arrived at by any roundabout method of production. [Christopher Dresser]

My own work consists above all in the execution of personal dreams: to dress crystal in tender and terrible roles, to compose for it the thoughtful faces of pleasure or tragedy, to assemble all the elements ... the very hazards of a

craft in which fire collaborates, violently and brutally, often serve me in the most fortuitous way ... Thus it is that I am not only responsible for the uses that can be made of crystal but also for the point of departure in this adventure ... [Emile Gallé: Ecrits pour l'Art, pub.1908]