

Collection Exhibition  
Vessels of Light: Exploring Forms of Expression through Glass  
Organizer: Toyama Glass Art Museum 2024.12.7 Sat. – 2025.6.1 Sun.

## Commentary on works

### 1 Containing Light



MATSUSHIMA Iwao, *Luminous pool*, 1999, Toyama Glass Art Museum

Photo: SUEMASA Mareo

1-1

MATSUSHIMA Iwao

*Luminous pool*

1999

glass, core-formed technique

Born in Okayama in 1946 and currently resides there.

MATSUSHIMA began his self-taught study of the ancient core-formed glass technique<sup>1</sup> after an encounter with a glass jar from ancient Egypt at the Ohara Museum of Art in 1975. This technique first developed around the 16th century BCE, but disappeared around the first century BCE. Matsushima unraveled the secrets of this technique in 1980, and his lectures on the topic drew attention. This work, *Luminous Pool*, blends this ancient technique with contemporary creativity, for a mystical beauty that transcends time and space.

<sup>1</sup>A technique in which melted glass is wrapped around a fireclay core attached to the end of a metal rod, to form glass into the shape of the core.

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YAMASHINA Shoko, *Flows of the Sun*, 2004, Toyama Glass Art Museum

1-2

YAMASHINA Shoko

*Flows of the Sun*

2004

glass, cast, fused, sandblasted

Born in Kyoto in 1952 and currently resides there.

YAMASHINA's work focused at first on stained glass, but over time she took a greater interest in three-dimensional expression through glass; by 1989, her work had transformed completely to this style. This piece, *Flows of the Sun*, combines transparent glass and matte-finished cast glass, to create the appearance of a freshly blossomed flower when it catches the light. The glitter and softness created by the light reflecting in the glass give the work a distinct feel.

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NODA Yumiko, *Moon Light*, 1999, Toyama Glass Art Museum

Photo: MUROSAWA Toshiharu

1-3

NODA Yumiko

*Moon Light*

1999

glass, blown, cut, fused

Born in Tokyo in 1956 and currently lives on the island of Niijima.

After graduating from Tama Art University, NODA studied in the US; in 1988, she established Noda Glass Studio. She contributes to the development of up-and-coming Japanese artists as associate director of the Niijima Glass Art Center. Her work makes use of various distinct colors, giving it a painterly feel, based on her experiences surrounded by the rich natural environment of Niijima. *Moon Light* incorporates blown glass and sandblasting<sup>2</sup> for an ornate depiction of moonlight and the sea.

<sup>2</sup>A technique in which pressurized gas is used to spray fine sand onto glass, to produce a matte finish or designs such as reliefs.

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OHGITA Katsuya, *Rain Falling on the Sea*, 2011, Toyama Glass Art Museum

Photo: SUEMASA Mareo

1-4

OHGITA Katsuya

*Rain Falling on the Sea*

2011

glass, colored glass powder, cold-cast

Born in Osaka in 1957 and is currently active in both Ishikawa and Osaka.

Following his graduation from the Kanazawa College of Art, OHGITA studied glassmaking at the Tokyo Glass Art Institute. Around 1989, he transitioned to using the cold-casting technique, in which molds are filled with pieces of glass, then heated, and cooled until they set. Through this technique, he produces pieces that take advantage of soft textures and light, earning him high praise domestically and internationally.

In *Rain Falling on the Sea*, the form of the cast glass and the way that the light lingers creates a poetic world, capturing a moment of rain quietly falling onto the sea's surface.

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KOJIMA Yukako, *Layers of Light –MOON –#5*, 2008, Toyama Glass Art Museum

1-5

KOJIMA Yukako

*Layers of Light –MOON –#5*

2008

glass, laminated, polished

Born in Ishikawa in 1979 and currently resides in Toyama.

After graduating from Tama Art University in 2001, KOJIMA studied glass technique at the Toyama Institute of Glass Art. She is currently based in Toyama.

Her works draw inspiration from natural sources of light, such as the moon or the setting sun, and incorporate geometric designs. By stacking layers of plate glass and cutting them away, she creates distinctive designs on the surface that also serve to hold light inside. This piece's simple form is accompanied by a gentle feel — a continuation of Kojima's ongoing efforts to capture and give shape to light.

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Vladimír KLEIN, *MESSENGER OF LIGHT I*, 1996, Toyama Glass Art Museum

Photo: SUEMASA Mareo

1-6

Vladimír KLEIN

*MESSENGER OF LIGHT I*

1996

glass, cut, polished, glued

Born in Komárno, former Czechoslovakia in 1950 and resides in Nový Bor, Czech Republic.

KLEIN studied glass sculpture at the Czech Glass-Making School and at the Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design in Prague under Professor Stanislav LIBENSKÝ. In 1977, he became a teacher at the Czech Glass-Making School in Kamenický Šenov, and in 1991 he became the first visiting professor from overseas at the Toyama Institute of Glass Art in Japan, where he provided instruction on technique.

He has produced many pieces that take advantage of how light reflects off and permeates through glass. *Messenger of Light I* is a masterful expression of the optical effects of light, in a form evocative of a bird.

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## 2 Deconstructing and Restructuring Light



Pavel HLAVA, *Butterfly Gold*, 1999, Toyama Glass Art Museum

Photo: SAIKI Taku

2-1

Pavel HLAVA

*Butterfly Gold*

1999

glass, cut, glued, polished

Born in Semily, former Czechoslovakia in 1924 and died in 2003.

HLAVA studied glass cutting, decoration, and engraving<sup>3</sup> techniques at the Czech Glass-Making School, and sculpture and glass art at the Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design in Prague. In 1957, he began working as a glass designer, producing nature-themed works. *Butterfly Gold* is a geometric representation of a butterfly, made by sandwiching layers of gold leaf between pieces of transparent lead glass. The gold leaf inside the glass has a delicate shine, impressively expressing a peaceful moment of a butterfly resting its wings in its natural environment.

<sup>3</sup>A decorative technique for carving realistic images or patterns into the surface of glass.

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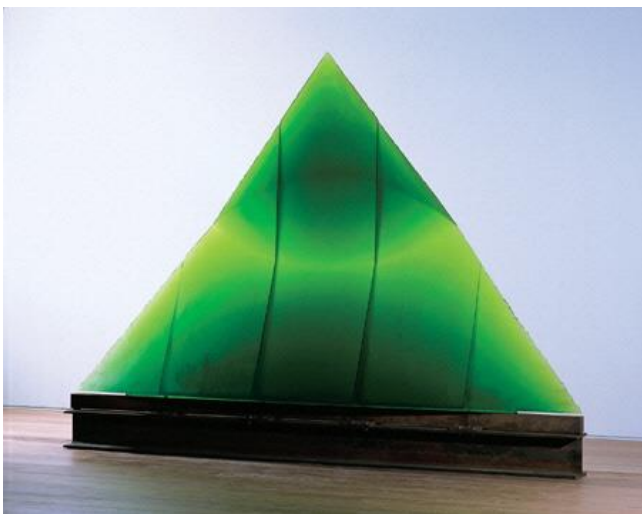
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Stanislav LIBENSKÝ & Jaroslava BRYCHTOVÁ, *Spectrum*, 1996

Toyama Glass Art Museum, Photo: SAIKI Taku



Stanislav LIBENSKÝ & Jaroslava BRYCHTOVÁ, *Green Eye of the Pyramid*, 1993-95

Toyama Glass Art Museum, Photo: SAIKI Taku

2-2

Stanislav LIBENSKÝ & Jaroslava BRYCHTOVÁ

*Spectrum*

1996

glass, cast



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Stanislav LIBENSKÝ

Born in Sezemice, former Czechoslovakia in 1921 and died in 2002.

Jaroslava BRYCHTOVÁ

Born in Železný Brod, former Czechoslovakia in 1924 and died in 2020.

The collaboration between Stanislav LIBENSKÝ and Jaroslava BRYCHTOVÁ began in 1954 and lasted for some 45 years. Libenský would draw designs and Brychtová would mold them in clay, and the designs were cast in glass to create the finished pieces.

Their work explored the possibilities of light and the transparency of glass, and in works such as *The River of Life* at the Osaka Expo '70, or this piece, *Spectrum*, they pursued the creation of another space within glass.

2-3

Stanislav LIBENSKÝ & Jaroslava BRYCHTOVÁ

*Green Eye of the Pyramid*

1993-95

glass, Cast, cut, polished

*Green Eye of the Pyramid* is one entry in LIBENSKÝ and BRYCHTOVÁ's Space Series, from the 1990s. Fusing together conical and cylindrical glass creates a space at the junction, evoking an eye in the way the light passes through it. Indeed, the light passing through causes the internal structure to emerge, creating a sense of mystery alongside the symbolic pyramid shape. In this and many other pieces that engage with the theme of spaces for light, the pair worked tirelessly to create a sense of spaces through light and glass.

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Pavel TRNKA, *from cycle "Spectrum"*, 2006, Toyama Glass Art Museum  
Photo: SUEMASA Mareo



Pavel TRNKA, *from cycle "Spectrum"*, 2006, Toyama Glass Art Museum  
Photo: SUEMASA Mareo

2-4, 2-5

Pavel TRNKA

*from cycle "Spectrum"*

2006

glass, kiln worked, cut, polished

Born in Poděbrady, former Czechoslovakia in 1948 and resides in Prague, Czech Republic. TRNKA studied at the Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design in Prague under Professor Stanislav LIBENSKÝ, before becoming a glass sculptor. He is the foremost authority on "prismatic sculpture," which combines geometric shapes with the use of prisms to split light. In *from cycle "Spectrum"* (2-4), the glass splits light into a rainbow: hues like blue and pale red mix and mingle, creating coloration evocative of outer space. Trnka's perspective is represented symbolically through shapes based on geometric principles and colors created through optics.

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Marian KAREL, *Cube with Pyramid*, 1992, Toyama Glass Art Museum

Photo: SAIKI Taku

2-6

Marian KAREL

*Cube with Pyramid*

1992

glass, cast, cut

Born in Pardubice, former Czechoslovakia in 1944 and resides in Prague, Czech Republic.

KAREL studied under Professor Stanislav LIBENSKÝ at the Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design in Prague, and has contributed to the development of prism glass sculpture. He cuts lead glass into cubes, pyramids, and other geometric forms, and the reflection and polarization of light within glass serves as a crucial element of his work. In *Cube with Pyramid*, Karel combines a yellow pyramid with a blue solid, creating the illusion of a pyramid inside.

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### 3 Capturing Light



OHGITA Katsuya, *HOUSE*, 2013, Toyama Glass Art Museum

Photo: SUEMASA Mareo

3-1

OHGITA Katsuya

*HOUSE*

2013

fluorescent tube recycled glass, copper, cold-cast

Born in Osaka in 1957 and is currently active in both Ishikawa and Osaka.

Following his graduation from the Kanazawa College of Art, OHGITA studied glassmaking at the Tokyo Glass Art Institute. Around 1989, he transitioned to using the cold-casting technique, in which molds are filled with pieces of glass, then heated, and cooled until they set. Through this technique, he produces pieces that take advantage of soft textures and light, earning him high praise domestically and internationally.

This work was produced in the process of the artist's searching for what could be expressed with glass, and is a series that has continued to be made to the present day while changing forms and techniques. The light lingering in the abstracted form evokes the serene flow of time.

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SHIBUYA Ryoji, *Shrine of the Sea '95-I*, 1995, Toyama Glass Art Museum

Photo: MUROSAWA Toshiharu

3-2

SHIBUYA Ryoji

*Shrine of the Sea '95-I*

1995

glass, polished, kiln-cast

Born in Saitama in 1956 and currently resides in Toyama.

Following his graduation from the Tama Art University Sculpture program, SHIBUYA's work explored the potential of glass, including his time studying in the Netherlands.

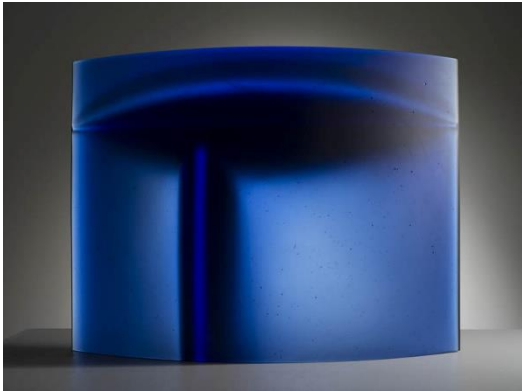
In 1990, he became a chief professor at the Toyama Institute of Glass Art, and served as the first director of the Toyama Glass Art Museum. *Shrine of the Sea '95-I* aims to integrate exterior and interior into a single space, through the transparent nature of glass. Bubbles and light create the illusion of a portal to another dimension—a world of mystery.

This masterpiece is a manifestation of the artist's philosophy that glass is a form of art that incorporates both light and space.

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JANG Kyung Nam, *Wall: Pillar of the Sea*, 2003, Toyama Glass Art Museum

Photo: SUEMASA Mareo

3-3

JANG Kyung Nam

*Wall: Pillar of the Sea*

2003

glass, cast

Born in Chungcheongnam, Korea in 1964 and currently resides in Okayama.

JANG initially studied Metal Art and Design at Hongik University in South Korea, and developed an interest in glass that led him to study at the Toyama Institute of Glass Art and to do a postgraduate program at Kurashiki University of Science and the Arts. In addition to teaching as a professor, today he works primarily in glass casting.

This work, *Wall: Pillar of the Sea*, uses blue glass that evokes the depths of the sea, symbolically representing both psychological and physical boundaries. The way the shadows shift as light passes through gives this work a distinct feel, inviting viewers to engage in a moment of introspection.

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Alena MATĚJKA, *Windmills*, 2012, Toyama Glass Art Museum

Photo: SUEMASA Mareo



Alena MATĚJKA, *Windmills*, 2006, Toyama Glass Art Museum

Photo: SUEMASA Mareo

3-4

Alena MATĚJKA

*Windmills*

2012

glass, cast, polished

3-5

Alena MATĚJKA

*Windmills*

2006

alabaster, carving

Born in Jindřichův Hradec, former Czechoslovakia in 1966 and resides in Betlém, Czech Republic.

After MATĚJKA graduated from the Czech Glass-Making School, she went on to study free

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artistic expression under Professor Vladimír KOPECKÝ at the Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design in Prague. Much of her work draws upon ancient mythology and literature, and she has developed a unique style that combines glass with stone.

*Windmills* features a repeating pattern made of alabaster and glass, creating a mystical space through the translucency of the glass.



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YOSHIMOTO Yumiko, *memory – the laputa*, 1997, Toyama Glass Art Museum

Photo: SUEMASA Mareo

3-6

YOSHIMOTO Yumiko

*memory – the laputa*

1997

borosilicate glass, optical glass cullet, lampwork

Born in Miyagi in 1944 and currently resides in Tokyo.

YOSHIMOTO worked as an industrial designer's assistant following her graduation from Joshibi University of Art and Design, eventually developing an interest in glass and going on to study lampworking<sup>4</sup> techniques. In 1978, her lampwork won the Shiseido Award at the Japan Crafts Competition, Kyoto, drawing widespread recognition to this craft. Lampworking consists of using a gas burner to melt and mold glass rods, and Yoshimoto uses this technique to build large works out of small interconnected units.

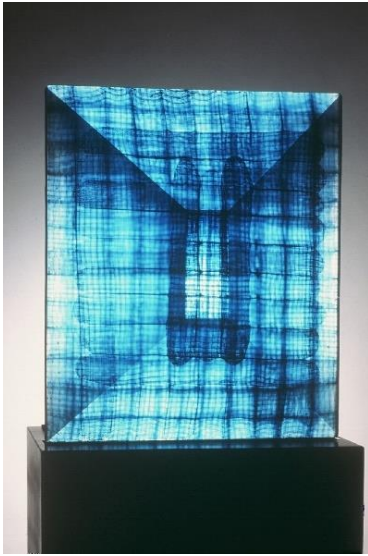
This work, *memory – the laputa*, features countless glass rods attached to one another to build a structure, creating the sensation of dreams and reality mingling with one another.

<sup>4</sup>Lampworking is a technique in which a tabletop gas burner is used to melt glass rods or tubes, to modify or shape them. It is also known as flameworking.

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TSUKADA Midori, *Route*, 2002, Toyama Glass Art Museum

3-7

TSUKADA Midori

*Route*

2002

glass, kiln worked, metal leaves

Born in Gifu in 1972 and currently resides in Toyama.

TSUKADA studied metal crafts at Takaoka National College (now the University of Toyama School of Art and Design), followed by the Toyama Institute of Glass Art, after which she began working in production of glass pieces. Her work features a unique style, wherein she integrates both metal and glass to create a complex sense of color and depth. *Route* consists of a transparent blue glass pyramid, the inside of which contains a grid made of copper leaf, symbolizing the depth and internal aspects of all things.

This piece marked Tsukada's debut, and won an honorable mention at the first Contemporary Glass Triennial in Toyama 2002.

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[Reference Materials (3-6)]

This feature introduces pieces by YOSHIMOTO Yumiko, one of the artists whose work is on display at this exhibition, and whose lampwork has been a guiding influence in Japanese glass art.

Yoshimoto first rose to prominence at the Japan Craft Competition Kyoto, an event held in collaboration with the Eighth World Craft Competition (September 11–15, 1978, at the Kyoto International Conference Center and other venues). The Japan Craft Competition Kyoto drew over 1,000 submissions across a broad variety of crafts, and Yoshimoto gained attention after winning the Shiseido Award. The exhibition served as a catalyst, encouraging Yoshimoto to focus in earnest on her lampworking, and she has gone on to produce many delicate, elegant works of art.

Yoshimoto's process begins with finding the words to express the image she has in mind, then moving on to sketches and settling on a specific design; finally, she draws up plans. Based on these plans, she uses a gas burner capable of producing an incredibly fine flame to melt the tips of glass rods and connect them, gradually building them into a finished work. More often than not, her pieces evoke well-known buildings from history, mythology, or other stories. She considers her entire process as an artist to be one of unraveling buildings' history (memories) and their structures, and re-integrating these ideas once more as works of glass art.