

The Contemporary Glass Society to the Rescue!



*Carrie Fertig, Manga Lamb: All the Rage.
Photo by Shannon Tofts.*

by Susan Purser Hope, Chair

The Contemporary Glass Society (CGS) has jumped into action to support its members during this awful pandemic. Normal life stopped for us all when the pandemic hit. It has put a great strain on our members. Galleries in lockdown, the closure of their studios, and the resulting inability to run workshops to supplement their income means that many are suffering great hardship. Isolation and personal loss has added to their fears for the future and has put a massive strain on their well-being.

The Team at CGS sprang into action in March 2020 and put their thinking caps on to develop a plan to support makers. This has resulted in a dazzling array of new initiatives to help including:

- Twice weekly emails packed with useful links and information about funding and opportunities for artists.
- Emails where members can share information and support and contact each other.
- Weekly Live talks with artists, collectors, and gallery owners every Wednesday evening where members also have time to chat with each other and make ongoing links. These recorded video interviews are then permanently available for members to watch.
- Monthly online exhibitions with opportunities for members to include work for sale and share contact details for potential buyers to get in touch.
- Quarterly International days where we span time zones to bring speakers from Australasia, the Americas, and Europe together.
- Relevant reports on current topics such as making studios COVID-19 compliant to enable members to open their studios and offer workshops again.
- Fortnightly fun challenges to encourage creative thinking and keep spirits up.
- Daily tweets about glassmakers.
- Regular Facebook profiles of members' work.
- Continual Instagram additions with fantastic images of members' work.

Continuing Support for Members and Graduates

Throughout the lockdown period, the CGS board has maintained a sense of camaraderie with members. It has also supported new glass graduates, whose final year was so adversely affected by the pandemic, with their own online exhibition *Glass Graduates of 2020 (The Lockdown Exhibition)*, featured on the new website. This is our first Graduate Show, and we were excited to share graduates' work with the public and glassmaking community. Despite the restrictions placed upon them, graduates produced a dazzling and wide-ranging demonstration of their ability and creative approach to contemporary glass.

The feedback from our members has been fantastic. They appreciate our help and support as can be seen here from one of the graduates.

"Just a quick email to thank you so much for arranging the current CGS talks. Although I haven't been able to see all the live Wednesday evening talks, I've watched all of them over the past few weeks. I particularly enjoyed Katharine Coleman's and Cathryn Schilling's talks.

I realize it must be a lot of extra work for you, but I'm sure we all appreciate the effort. I certainly do. Not having access to a studio at the moment and not knowing whether I'll be able to continue studying in the way I'd like to at the Royal College of Art (RCA), having the CGS community network is a life saver. I know we all say thank you every week, but I just wanted to say an extra thanks. Kind regards, Caroline"



*Cathryn Schilling, Cloaked - Gods & Heroes, free blown glass with kiln formed glass cane fabric applied hot, 2018.
Photo by Ester Segarra Photography.*

Angela Jarman, Saphire Geode, 46 cm x 21 cm x 21 cm, and Amber Geode, 34 cm x 20 cm x 20 cm. Both from lost wax cast lead crystal with 22 karat gilt, 2018. Photo by Sylvain Deleu.



James Maskrey, Shakelton's Scrimshaw, free blown bottles with sculpted stoppers, free blown scrimshaw with printed details, group measurement 60 cm (tallest) x 90 cm x 14 cm (deepest), 2014. Photo by Colin Davison.



Christopher Day, Transcending Bondage, handblown and sculpted glass with terra-cotta thrown form, microbore copper pipe, and copper wire, 36 cm x 25 cm x 25 cm, 2019. Photo by Simon Bruntnell.



Improving Internet Resources

In addition, lockdown has enabled us to work with our Web designers to create and launch a new and highly interactive website, www.cgs.org.uk, with many new features that look fabulous. It is easy to navigate and promotes our members. As well as a modern design, with lots of wonderful images of glass, the new website works seamlessly on all devices to showcase contemporary glass from the United Kingdom and around the world.

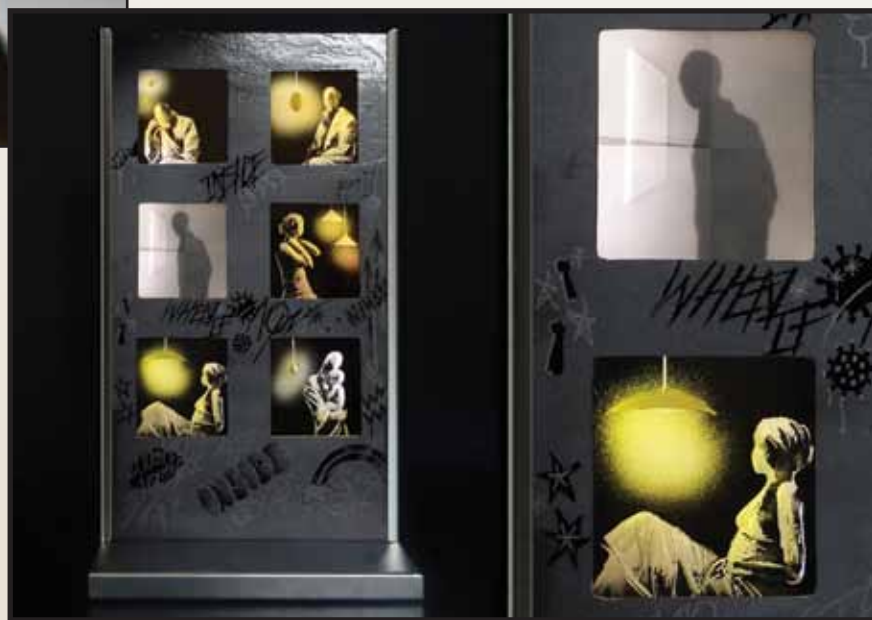
New features include a magazine section, *Glass Network digital*, which complements the established and respected print magazine, *Glass Network*, produced for CGS members. *Glass Network digital* publishes regular in-depth articles about outstanding glass artists, both upcoming and established, alongside business advice for creatives and relevant news and opportunities for the glass community.

Isolation has made us appreciate the potential of using social media and digital platforms for enabling us as a very small management team to be able to offer more alternative ways for community involvement. It has made us aware of minority groups within our glass community that we should reach out to and made us appreciate the potential to collaborate with other organizations and heritage craft groups. We can also become more involved in outreach work within schools and colleges. Some of this is for the future, but we are looking at how we can continue and expand these services during 2021 and at the same time make CGS more resilient for the future.



Bruno Romanelli, (*obvs*), Pallene, lost-wax cast glass, 46 cm x 26 cm x 5 cm, 2018. Private collection.
Photo by Andy Smart, AC Cooper Photography.

Alison Kinnaird, *Lockdown 2020*, full image and detail, optical glass sheet and black Bullseye glass, LED lighting, steel mount, wheel-engraved and sandblasted, 48 cm x 28 cm x 13 cm, 2020.
Photo by Robin Morton.



Looking Ahead

So what about 2021? Well, we are continuing all of our weekly events featuring exciting new talent such as Chris Day, one of the few black glassblowers in the UK. Famous international artists such as Bob Leatherbarrow are joining our next International Day, and every online exhibition for our members will be selling shows. The CGS theme for 2021 is all about collaboration in a range of innovative and different ways between artists, different crafts, museums, and galleries.

We also wanted to celebrate one of the positives that has resulted from this worldwide pandemic—the unity, good humor, and support that there has been amongst all the members of the contemporary glass community. Consequently, we have organized an exhibition specifically to celebrate this unity as we head toward a future spring, where a vaccine will hopefully see life relaunched.

The CGS members, who form a close community of glass artists, have extended their hands across the world to glass artists who are not members of CGS—not only from the UK but also internationally—to take part in a selected online show. *Hands Across the World* runs from January 11 through February 26, 2021, so come and visit us on our new website. Happy Thanksgiving from all at the Contemporary Glass Society. **GA**



Visit www.cgs.org.uk for a look at all of the offerings available from the Contemporary Glass Society and information on how to become member of CGS.

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