

Teacher  
Resource  
Guide

# GLASS



museum of arts and design

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# welcome

Glass is all around us. From the first window we look out of in the morning to the last lightbulb we switch off at night; from no-frills measuring cups and casserole dishes to fine crystal and highly decorative chandeliers; from the screens of cell phones to the **stained glass** of cathedrals, glass is both ancient and high tech, mundane and spiritual, humble and highly luxurious. During the 2020/2021 season, MAD invites visitors to explore this craft material through an exciting array of lenses throughout the building, in selections from MAD's collection, which highlight mid-century **studio glass**, and two special exhibitions that explore contemporary innovation in the medium.

Since its founding in 1956, MAD has been committed to celebrating artists who work in the traditional craft media of ceramics, glass, fiber, metal, and wood tracing a lineage from the mid-century studio craft movement to contemporary makers pushing the boundaries of craft in order to reflect on identity and personal history, advocate for social justice and environmental awareness, and build community. This Teacher Resource Guide is the first in a series of medium-specific resources providing background information about materials and processes and suggestions for engaging students in conversation and inquiry about creative practices which often blur the limits between art, craft, and design.

For educators planning to sign up for a virtual or in-person MADlab, this resource guide can be used for pre- and post-visit experiences at your discretion. For those who are unable to engage in a group tour, it is a helpful research tool for independent study focusing on key artists working in glass today. At MAD, we believe that educators excel in determining the content and activities best suited to their students. We encourage you to decide which materials are developmentally appropriate for the young people you work with. We invite you to exercise your creativity and skill in adapting these materials to best serve the unique needs of your group.

Above all, we hope this resource will encourage students to think and talk about glass in ways that expand their knowledge and perception of this most ubiquitous and rarefied material.

We look forward to inspiring conversation, dialogue, and discovery!

Sincerely,

The MAD Education Department

## key questions

- How is glass made and manipulated?
- Where can we find glass in everyday life?
- What functions do objects made of glass have, both ceremonial, and spiritual?
- What cultural meanings and connotations do different objects made of glass have – think of **stained glass** windows, fine crystal, and chandeliers?
- How do artists play out the relationship of glass to color and light?
- Discuss the notion of glass as an “interface.” How does its transparency change the way we engage with this material?
- How do Beth Lipman, Brian Clarke, and others use glass as a medium for storytelling?
- In what ways does their work reflect on:
  - Nature
  - Seeing and Perception
  - Spirituality
  - Personal history
  - Human history
  - Consumerism
  - Environmental destruction
  - Time

## exhibitions and installations covered in this teachers' guide

*Highlights from the Goblet Collection* (ongoing): During the 1950s, leading up to the **American studio glass movement**, artists began working with glass as a sculptural medium through warm techniques like **casting** or slumping. Glassblowing skills were used in factory settings in the United States; however, artists who wanted to use such techniques in their studios had to start from scratch and many ventured to Venice for residencies in its glass factories, where the goblet—an important form in Venice—was an important teaching tool. As a result, the goblet-making tradition was brought to the United States and used in education as a form through which a myriad of complex techniques could be perfected. A portion of the Museum of Arts and Design's goblet collection is on view in the third-floor stairwell, illustrating how the form has been used by studio glass artists to showcase not only skill, but also storytelling and humor.

Judith Schaechter's site-specific installation *Seeing is Believing* (ongoing) was commissioned by MAD in 2008 and is on permanent view in the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor staircase. Drawing inspiration from the Pattern and Decoration movement, which championed the use of ornamentation and female-driven subject matter in order to fight the legacy of male-dominated Modernist austerity, *Seeing is Believing* features two hundred unique, geometric images that evoke infinitely variable snowflakes, and brings to the fore what would usually be reserved for background design. Its kaleidoscopic arrangement of color and pattern is a contemporary reimagining of the medieval **rose window** and taps into the long-standing connection between **stained glass** and light that manifests itself in a sense of spirituality or holiness.

*Brian Clarke: The Art of Light* (September 17 – February 21, 2020) is an immersive exhibition of more than 100 works of **stained glass**, compositions in lead, and related drawings. One of the most important contemporary artists working in stained glass, Brian Clarke is at once a leader in new technology and a brilliant aesthetic innovator who has collaborated with some of the world's most prominent architects to create stained-glass designs and **installations** for hundreds of projects in his native Britain and worldwide. The centerpiece of the exhibition will be 30 free-standing, glass screens. Animated by changing light and stained with exuberant, saturated colors, the monumental works will transport audiences to the very frontier of what is possible in stained glass today.

For twenty years, Beth Lipman has created cross disciplinary works that use history as a lens through which to examine Western society's predilection for capitalist pursuits, including excess consumption, consolidation of wealth and power, and human dominance over the natural environment. *Beth Lipman: Collective Elegy* (September 24, 2020 – April 4, 2021) celebrates the American artist's twenty-year practice, which is rooted in time's passage and its effects on our individual person, the planet, and the development of society, and brings together a decade of cross-disciplinary works in glass, metal, clay, video, and photography, which Lipman transforms into powerful statements addressing mortality, temporality, identity, and excess. In these turbulent times, the exhibition, which is the first major scholarly assessment of the artist's career, reminds us of where we came from, the subjectivity of history, and the need for harmony with the larger world.

# what is glass?

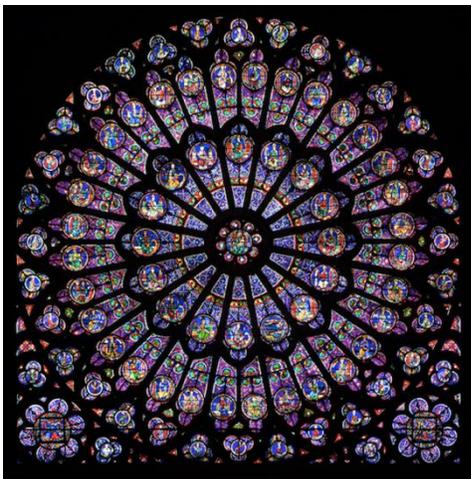


The main ingredient in glass is silica, in the form of sand. When sand is heated to its melting point (around 1700 degrees Celsius), it turns into a liquid, and as it cools, it can be stretched and shaped. Soda ash is added to lower the melting temperature of glass, and limestone is added as a stabilizer. Chemicals and metal compounds can also be added to glass to change properties such as color, opacity, or durability.

Shaping glass requires precision and skill, since the temperature of the materials must be carefully maintained at every point in the heating process. One of the oldest methods for shaping glass entails heating and **casting** melted glass in molds. After the glass cools, cutting or grinding techniques can be used to create patterns or designs on the surface of the glass. For videos and additional information, check out some of the resources listed in the back of this guide.

# how is glass used in art, craft and design?

Glass is one of the oldest man-made materials in the world. The invention of glassblowing, or inflating molten glass into a bubble at the end of a hollow tube, in the first century BCE led to one of the most innovative periods of glassmaking in ancient Rome. This new technology enabled artisans to mold glass into nearly any form and inspired new decorative techniques for older styles such as **mosaic glass**. Across Asia, glass was also prized and traded along the Silk Road. Throughout the seventh century, Mediterranean regions made technological advances in glassmaking, including the invention of **stained glass**.



Architectural advancements during the **Gothic** period in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries allowed stained glass to take center stage. Window designs became much more elaborate, as seen with the **rose window**; often, Gothic stained-glass windows depicted complex stories for churchgoers.

The luxury glass industry enjoyed a golden age during the fifteenth-century Venetian **Renaissance**, when glassmaker Angelo Barovier invented **cristallo** glass, a colorless, transparent blown glass that takes on the appearance of a rock crystal.

Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century in Europe and the United States, the Industrial Revolution greatly reduced the cost of producing glass and paved the way for the mass production of many products, such as glass bottles, windows, light bulbs, and containers. The invention of **float glass** and the **cylinder method**





allowed larger planes of glass to be created, supporting the use of glass as a building material in architecture.

As techniques in glassmaking improved, the focus shifted away from functionality. Artists such as Louis Comfort Tiffany created a brand around glass designs featuring complex floral and natural patterns, and Modern painters such as Marc Chagall, Fernand Léger, and Henri Matisse used stained glass as a medium to experiment with light and color at a monumental scale. The **American studio glass movement**, started by Harvey K. Littleton in 1962, inspired many to shift glassmaking from industrial factories into individual studios and embrace glass as a medium for expression in all forms of art, craft, and design.

# highlights from the goblet collection

*“My own work, that is all based on historical models, more or less. I will pick a style, or a technique, or a decoration, and I’ll reconsider it in my own unique way.”*

— William Gutenrath<sup>1</sup>

In the 1950s, artists, craftspeople, and scientists in the United States became interested in glass as a studio material. At the time, **glassblowing** was mostly used in industrial settings to create functional objects, and artists were looking for new ways to experiment with the medium. In 1962, a teacher named Harvey K. Littleton organized glassblowing workshops at the Toledo Museum of Art and collaborated with glass research scientist Dominick Labino to create a small, inexpensive furnace for melting glass. This marked the beginning of the **American studio glass movement**. In 1963, Littleton started a glass program at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, making it possible for his students to work with hot glass to create innovative forms.

Many studio glass artists traveled to Venice to learn glassblowing techniques and skills. **Venetian glassmaking** is renowned for its long history. The goblet was classically used as a teaching tool, since the goblet form requires a range of complex glass techniques, such as **caneworking**, or the use of long, thin rods of colored glass to create intricate patterns and designs on blown glass.

A portion of the Museum of Arts and Design’s goblet collection is on view in the third-floor stairwell. The collection reveals the diversity of approaches taken by artists and designers to this common vessel, ranging from goblets inspired by historic Venetian masterworks, to mass-produced examples, to nonfunctional works by artists who make reference to the basic form.

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<sup>1</sup> “Instructor Highlight at the Studio: William Gudenrath,” Corning Museum of Glass, March 11, 2013, YouTube video, 04:43, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j\\_eRnRjdEv4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j_eRnRjdEv4).



# look

Take a close look at *Venetian-style Dragon Goblet* (1992) on the preceding page.

- What do you notice?
- Identify the three distinct parts of the goblet form: cup, stem, and foot.
- What is the function of each part?

Take a close look at the stem of *Venetian-style Dragon Goblet*.

- What makes this part distinct?

This dragon or serpent-style goblet was very fashionable in seventeenth-century Italy, designed to show off the complex techniques of **Renaissance** Venetian glassworking. *Venetian-style Dragon Goblet* has an elaborate stem that depicts a serpent with a coiled body, outspread wings, and an open mouth, showing off the skill of the maker.

# explore

Watch a video to learn more about the process of creating this goblet in glass:  
<https://renvenetian.cmog.org/object/dragon-stem-goblet>.

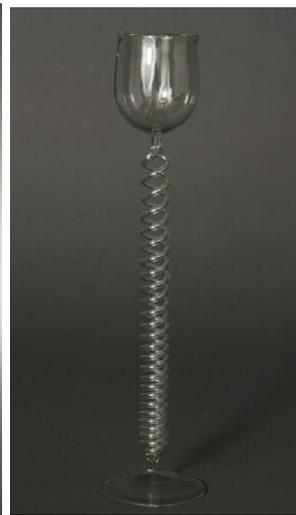
A dragon-stem goblet has four stages: making the cup; making the foot; making the dragon; and joining the parts. Dip molding is used to create the dragon's ridged body, although its form is completely hand-sculpted, and disks of hot glass called glue bits are used to attach each of the parts.

- What do you notice about the process of making a dragon-stem goblet?
- What is the difficulty at each stage?

# discuss

Compare and contrast *Venetian-style Dragon Goblet* to other goblets in the collection pictured below.

- What are the differences in form, color, and pattern?
- Which part of each goblet stands out the most: the cup, stem, or foot?
- Which goblets look functional? Which goblets look nonfunctional? Why?
- Why might an artist create a goblet that cannot be used?
- What might your goblet look like? Make a sketch and share it with your classmates.



# judith schaechter

*Unlike most raw materials, glass is extremely attractive before the artist ever touches it. I found I like to really manipulate it, stretch it, and transform and distort it in unnatural ways.*

— Judith Schaechter<sup>2</sup>

Judith Schaechter was born in 1961 in Gainesville, Florida, and lives and works in Philadelphia. She graduated in 1983 from Rhode Island School of Design. In art school, Schaechter studied painting, but took **stained glass** as an elective and was attracted to the process of creating in the medium. She says, “When I was a painter, I painted fast and furiously and ultimately threw everything out. This didn’t happen with glass because it was so labor intensive. The tedium factor and the variety of processes allowed me to focus and concentrate. By the time I managed to do something to the glass, I had developed feelings of attachment and was hardly going to throw it away.”<sup>3</sup>

Schaechter creates stained glass with narrative iconography and geometric patterns. Many of her works focus on ordinary figures, elevated by explosive arrangements of light and color to an enlightened state of being. Schaechter’s figures reference the saints or martyrs of medieval stained-glass windows and reflect the despair of contemporary life. The abstract patterns backgrounding the compositions could be interpreted as a “psychological state, a hallucination, a dream, or a visual representation of [the figure’s] speech.”<sup>4</sup>

*Seeing is Believing* (2008) was commissioned by the Museum of Arts and Design and is permanently installed in the second-floor stairwell. Natural light constantly activates Schaechter’s kaleidoscopic design, illuminating the two hundred unique, geometric shapes, which can be seen collectively as a reimagining of the medieval **rose window**, or as individual patterns evoking the infinite variability of nature.

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<sup>2</sup> Judith Schaechter, “Artist Statement,” accessed March 16, 2020, [http://www.judithschaechter.com/?page\\_id=477](http://www.judithschaechter.com/?page_id=477).

<sup>3</sup> Schaechter, “Artist Statement.”

<sup>4</sup> Judith Schaechter, quoted in “Judith Schaechter: Seeing is Believing” (exhibition description), Museum of Arts and Design, <https://madmuseum.org/exhibition/judith-schaechter>.



# look

Take a close look at *Seeing is Believing* (2008) on the preceding page.

- What do you notice about the lines, shapes, or colors in the work?

Take a close look at the details of *Seeing is Believing* below.

- What patterns do you see? Are there any lines, shapes, or colors that repeat?



It takes two or three months for Schaechter to create one stained-glass window. She uses traditional methods to cut and refine the colored glass, and assembles the parts using a combination of **lead came** and **copper foil**. Each window is constructed out of multiple layers of flash glass, a paper-thin handmade glass that appears almost translucent and is produced by coating colorless glass with thin layers of colored glass.

To create detail, Schaechter uses **sandblasting** and **engraving**, techniques that remove certain areas of the **flash glass** and reveal colorless spots. She also uses thin washes of glass paint to add color minimally and fires the glass to make the color permanent.

# discuss

This stained-glass work is over 9 feet tall by 8 feet wide. It is permanently installed as a window at the Museum of Arts and Design. The patterned design in the artwork is inspired by naturally occurring phenomena, such as the symmetrical form of a snowflake, the connective tissue of cell structures, and the aftereffect halo of a strong burst of light.

- What do the lines, colors, or shapes make you think of?
- What patterns in the artwork remind you of things in nature or natural phenomena?

Look at additional images of Schaechter's glass works on her website:  
[www.judithschaechter.com](http://www.judithschaechter.com).

- How does *Seeing is Believing* compare to other stained glass by Schaechter?
- What do you notice about the faces or figures that she includes in her work?
- How do the figures relate to the patterned designs?

## explore

Watch a video of Judith Schaechter's process of working in glass:  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=wwU\\_aMbEI\\_4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wwU_aMbEI_4).

Schaechter says about her process, "My goal is to have no expectations for the work I do here, because it's experimental and I want to be surprised. And I find that sometimes when I have high hopes for things, they tend to be disappointing. I want this to go where it wants to go organically, without me trying to control the outcome too much."

- What do you notice about Schaechter's process?
- Where do you see elements of experimentation in Schaechter's work?

## make

- Design a pattern using repeating lines, shapes, and colors. How might your pattern be inspired by things in nature or natural phenomena?
- Experiment with a layered work of art by drawing on vellum or acetate. How might you layer your drawings so that the multiple layers interact?
- Collaborate to create a large-scale **installation** in your classroom. Ask each student to create a pattern tile, and xerox the pattern to create multiple tiles that can be arranged on a wall, window, floor, or ceiling.

# brian clarke

*There is a world that can only be seen through stained glass. It is like no other.*

— Brian Clarke<sup>5</sup>

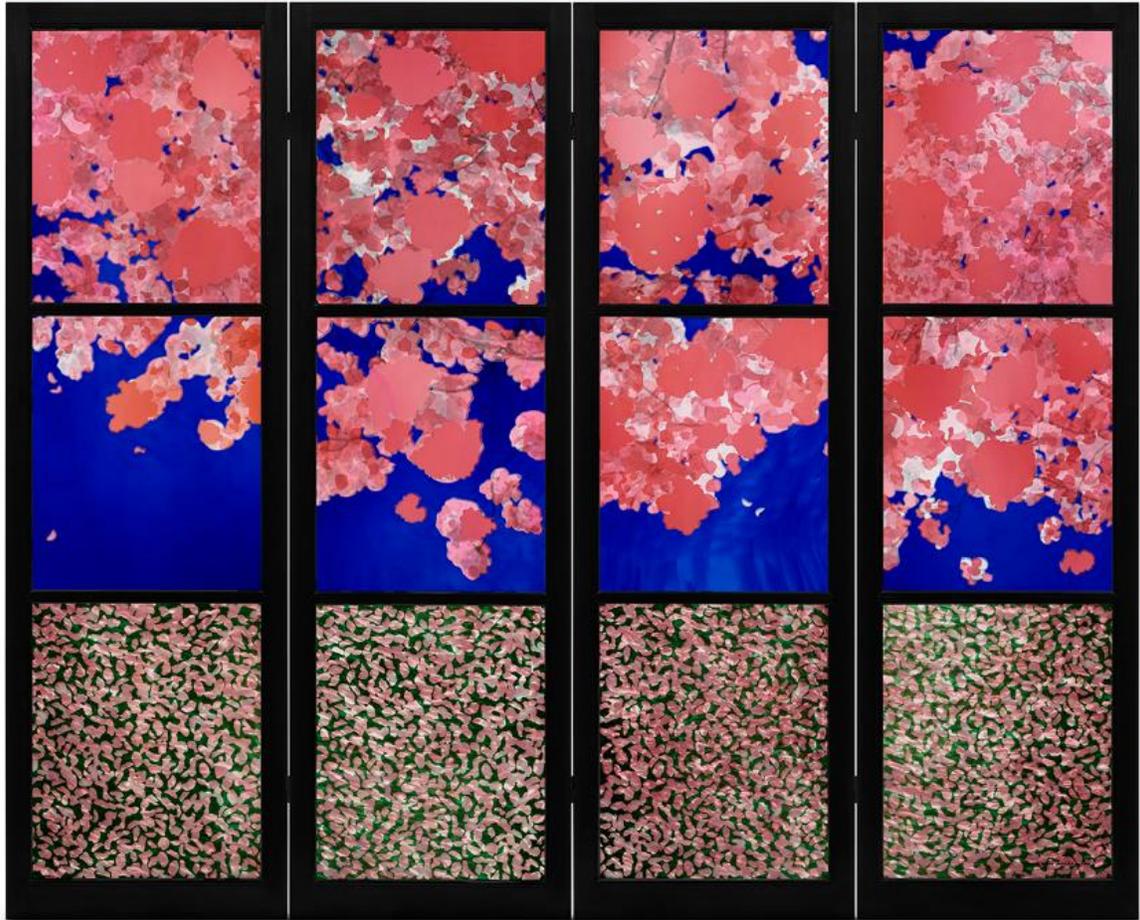
Brian Clarke was born in 1953 in Oldham, England, and lives and works in London. When he was twelve, he took a school trip to York Minster, a renowned **Gothic** cathedral in the north of England made of stone and **stained glass**. The beauty of the light interacting with glass left a deep impression on the young artist. Clarke went on to study at North Devon College, receiving his first commission to design a series of windows by the age of seventeen. In 1974, Clarke traveled to Italy, France, and West Germany on a fellowship to study **medieval** and contemporary stained glass, and in 1975, he was awarded a fellowship to study art and architecture in the United States. Clarke lived and worked between New York and the UK through the 1980s and 1990s, creating work in a wide variety of media, including stained glass, painting, sculpture, ceramics, mosaic, metal, and set design.

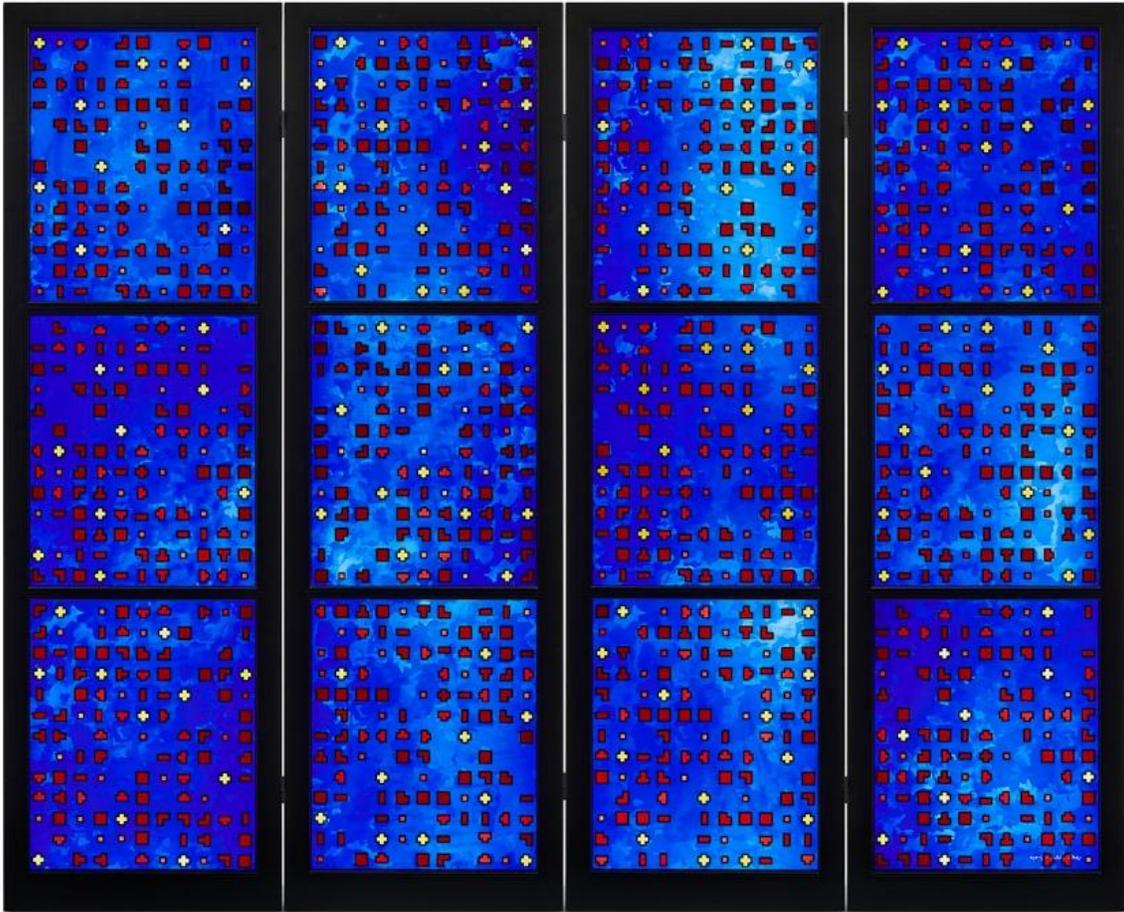
Clarke is well known for his innovative work in the medium of stained glass. He has collaborated with prominent architects around the world, including Norman Foster, Zaha Hadid, Arata Isozaki, Oscar Niemeyer, and I. M. Pei, to create designs and **installations**. In 2015, Clarke began creating monumental freestanding stained-glass screens, using newly developed glass-etching technology to design the compositions without traditional lead framing.

*Brian Clarke: The Art of Light* is an immersive exhibition at the Museum of Arts and Design. It includes more than one hundred works, with a focus on three bodies of work the artist has produced over the last eleven years: stained-glass screens inspired by botanical, cosmological, and biographical imagery; works in lead—a core element in the production of stained glass—which use the absence of light to explore the themes of mourning and memory; and his “Night Orchid” series of paintings and drawings on paper.

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<sup>5</sup> Brian Clarke, quoted in “Museum of Arts and Design to Present Major Exhibition of Works by World’s Leading Stained-Glass Artist” (press release), Museum of Arts and Design, January 2020, <https://madmuseum.org/press/releases/museum-arts-and-design-present-major-exhibition-works-worlds-leading-stained-glass>.





# look

Take a close look at *Cherry Blossoms* (2017) and *Blue Computergram* (2017) on the preceding page.

- What shapes or patterns do you see?
- What do the designs make you think of?

The design in *Cherry Blossoms* is clearly influenced by natural forms and patterns found in the cherry blossom flower, while the design in *Blue Computergram* is more obscure. The artist, Brian Clarke, cites the light-metering symbols on Olympus OM System cameras as a reference for the shapes in the computergram design.

- Look closely at the shapes and symbols in *Blue Computergram*. Have you seen these shapes and symbols before, in digital or virtual space, tools, or equipment?
- Compare the design choices in *Cherry Blossoms* and *Blue Computergram*. What are the similarities or differences between the two?

# explore

Traditionally, stained glass is made by coloring glass, then assembling pieces of the colored glass to create a pattern, held together by a framework of lead that emphasizes the lines and shapes in the design. Brian Clarke makes leadless stained-glass screens, using advanced laser and acid-etching technology to create the design. Clarke works with the Lamberts glass factory in Germany to produce mouth-blown glass molded into flat panels. Since each panel is individually produced, every section of the screen has its own unique variations in surface texture and color.

Watch this video to learn more about the LambertsGlas® process:  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=nUQDeHogcnw&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nUQDeHogcnw&feature=youtu.be).

- What do you notice about the process?
- How many people are involved in forming the glass?
- Look back at *Cherry Blossoms* and *Blue Computergram*. Each screen is made up of twelve panels set in a wooden frame. Now that you know that each panel is individually hand-produced, what do you notice about the variations in surface texture and color?

# discuss

Watch this video of Brian Clarke talking about his process of working in glass:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AfZsmeKvARQ>.

Clarke says about his practice, "I can't just attack the canvas like I'm an Abstract Expressionist. I have to first give myself a matrix, a grid of some sort, that I can then

undermine. Order and chaos have always played a big part in not just the way I paint, but in the way I live. You can't have the organic urgency of invention without disturbing some sort of ordered matrix."<sup>6</sup>

In *Cherry Blossoms* and *Blue Computergram*, the grid is formed by the structure of the folding screen. Folding screens originated in Asia as freestanding partitions for functional and decorative use. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the form was imported to Europe and adapted by many Western artists and architects. Clarke's screens extend this history into the contemporary and appropriate the design form as a way to activate two-dimensional designs in three-dimensional space. The screen structure allows the glass panels to come alive and interact with the gallery setting, as the natural light changes throughout the day.

- Look at *Cherry Blossoms*. How does the design utilize the structure of the grid, or screen? How does each individual panel relate to the whole?
- Compare your observations of the design in *Cherry Blossoms* to the design in *Blue Computergram*. How is this design influenced by the structure of the grid, or screen?

Stained glass was popularized during the Middle Ages in Europe with the construction of Gothic cathedrals. The **medieval** church funded large and beautiful stained-glass windows that included symbolic icons and depicted biblical stories. While the format presented content for those who could not read, the stained glass provided a "lux nova," or new light, for worshippers in the space. Clarke remarks of the medium, "Stained glass has been regarded as a metaphor for the divine for over a millennium, because light has been regarded as a metaphor for the divine."<sup>7</sup> Clarke takes stained glass out of its traditional context, imbuing the **craft** medium with new meaning and making it personal and portable. He explains, "Originally, the church was where stained glass was born and nourished, and to have it have another life, you had to drag it kicking and screaming out of an ecclesiastical environment and into an urban, secular life."<sup>8</sup>

- Based on these quotes, why do you think Clarke chooses to work with stained glass?
- Look at examples of medieval stained-glass windows. How do Clarke's stained-glass windows compare?
- How has Clarke modernized the medium of stained glass and the process of making it?

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<sup>6</sup> "Brian Clarke: The Art of Light at the Sainsbury Centre," The Sainsbury Centre, July 9, 2018, YouTube video, 02:31, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AfZsmeKvARQ>.

<sup>7</sup> "Brian Clarke: The Art of Light at the Sainsbury Centre."

<sup>8</sup> Elaine Louie, "Stained Glass, from Churches to Malls," *New York Times*, January 16, 2013, <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/17/garden/ga-with-brian-clarke-stained-glass-artist.html?login=email&auth=login-email>.



# look

Take a close look at *Don't Forget the Lamb* (2008) on the preceding page.

- What do you see?
- What does the imagery in this artwork make you think of?
- How might the images, patterns, and symbols in this artwork be related or connected?

The title of this work, *Don't Forget the Lamb*, refers to a line in a shopping list written by the artist's mother near the end of her life. Clarke replicates her handwriting in a note in the upper left-hand corner of the work. The "lamb" in the handwritten note could also be interpreted as a reminder from mother to son to abide by moral and spiritual values, since the lamb is often used in religious art as a symbol of devout followers of Christ.

- How do you think the title relates to the imagery in this artwork?
- How might this work connect to the theme of mourning or memory?

# discuss

Traditionally, **stained glass** is made by coloring glass, then assembling pieces of the colored glass to create a pattern, held together by a framework of lead that emphasizes the lines and shapes in the design. *Don't Forget the Lamb*, which is composed of seven opaque lead panels, inverts the role of lead: it uses lead as the core element, rather than as a framing element in conjunction with glass.

The artist shares, "What I did first was remove lead from the equation of stained glass. ... Then it occurred to me, I suppose, that I should remove the glass from the equation, and make stained glass entirely of lead. ... So, I eliminated lead, and then I eliminated glass."<sup>9</sup>

- What is the visual impact of using lead, a heavy and dense metal, as a background for the stained glass?
- Look closely at the areas of stained glass in *Don't Forget the Lamb*. What do you notice about size, color, pattern, or design in these areas? How do the glass treatments compare?

Notice that a version of the design for *Blue Computergram* is included in this artwork as a painting. Clarke cites painting as integral to his work in stained glass, noting that each medium constantly informs one another. This work was created in 2008, nine years before *Blue Computergram* was made.

- How do the two usages of the design compare? What is similar and what is different?

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<sup>9</sup> Brian Clarke: *The Art of Light* exhibition label

- How might its usage in this context give the design new meaning?

## make

- Many Modern artists have been inspired by the structure of the grid, or matrix. Research examples of twentieth-century artists, designers, and craftspeople who have used the grid as inspiration. Create your own response to the grid, or matrix, structure.
- Experiment with creating an artwork on a transparent surface. Use glass markers or paint to create a design on a window, considering how natural light influences the play of color and pattern in your design.

Create an artwork in response to a memory of a friend, family member, or loved one. Include in the artwork text, an image, or an object that has personal meaning to you.

# beth lipman

*As with painting, glass makes perishable objects everlasting, and the compositions are simultaneously in the process of formation and decay.*

— Beth Lipman<sup>10</sup>

Beth Lipman was born in 1971 in Philadelphia and lives and works in Sheboygan Falls, Wisconsin. Growing up, Lipman was surrounded by **craft** and creativity. Her grandmother was an embroidery technician, and her mother was a painter; both women's creative practices were influential to her own development as an artist. As a teenager, Lipman attended a craft school with a summer program that taught **glassblowing**. She graduated with a BFA in Glass and Fibers from Temple University in 1994.

Lipman is best known for her monumental **installations**, composed of hundreds of glass elements. In 2000, she was invited to create a work in response to a painting in the Brooklyn Museum's permanent collection, *Still Life with Fruit* (1860) by Severin Roesen. The resulting three-dimensional glass work by Lipman, *Still Life with Fruit* (2000), titled after its inspiration, was a catalyst to her practice. Over the past twenty years, Lipman has continued to reference the genres of vanitas and **memento mori**, using the medium of glass to explore the ephemeral nature of life. In 2010, she started a series of photography in which she photographed installations in glass and subsequently destroyed the actual objects to further underscore the temporality of art, and to question the concepts of function, value, and legacy.

In more recent years, Lipman has expanded her practice to include a deeper investigation of the relationship between humans and the earth, juxtaposing cultural objects with prehistoric flora, and in some instances photographing her glass objects directly in the natural landscape. In addition, the artist has turned her attention to the subjectivity of history, interrogating the power inherent to written history and the subjectivity of official narratives. Through these lenses, Lipman creates works that are "portraits of individuals and our society,"<sup>11</sup> resulting in compositions that illuminate who we are and what we value in contemporary times.

*Beth Lipman: Collective Elegy* is an in-depth exhibition of Lipman's work at the Museum of Arts and Design. The exhibition includes complex large-scale installations, sculpture, video, and photography. It also features *Laid (Time-) Table with Cycads* (2015), a monumental glass installation acquired by the Museum of Arts and Design in 2018.

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<sup>10</sup> "'Grand' Collection," Corning Museum of Glass, accessed March 16, 2020, <https://www.cmog.org/artwork/grand-collection>.

<sup>11</sup> Beth Lipman, "About," accessed March 16, 2020, <https://www.bethlipman.com/about>.



# look

Take a close look at the detail of *Whatnot 1* below.

- Do you recognize any of the objects in this artwork?
- What do you notice about how the objects are grouped together?



## discuss

Lipman created *Whatnot 1* in 2010 as part of a pair of sculptures. The main body of *Whatnot 1* and its counterpart, *Whatnot 2*, is crafted in wood and references a piece of furniture with open shelves known as the whatnot in America, or the *étagère* in France. The whatnot was a popular item during the Victorian era, or late-nineteenth-century Europe, designed with multiple tiers of shelves to display personal objects and mementos.

- Research traditional designs of the whatnot, or *étagère*, in nineteenth-century Europe, and compare what you find to modern designs in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries around the world. How has the design changed over time?
- Look back at *Whatnot 1*. How would you describe the design that Lipman chooses?

*Whatnot 1* includes glass replicas of personal items found by the artist, gifted to the artist, or received in trade with other artists. Re-created in hand-sculpted opaque black glass and arranged carefully to create a composition, these objects tell a story about the artist and the people and events surrounding her at a specific moment in time.

- Does Lipman include any forms or objects that are unfamiliar or unexpected in this display?
- Why might she have chosen to include these forms or objects?

Notice that the body of the artwork is painted black, and the objects are sculpted in opaque black glass. Although *Whatnot 1* is a complex **installation** composed of numerous objects, the **monochromatic** palette unifies the work and references the **silhouette**—a form of portraiture popular during the Victorian era. Lipman considers *Whatnot 1* a figurative representation of the human body, with the four tiers of shelves representing the head, heart, body, and feet.<sup>12</sup> The work is deeply personal and was made while Lipman was pregnant with twin daughters.

- What associations do you have with the color black? Why do you think the artist might have chosen this color when creating a figurative representation of herself and her family?
- Compare and contrast the four tiers of shelves in *Whatnot 1*. What similarities or differences do you notice between the head, heart, body, and feet of the sculpture?

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<sup>12</sup> "MMFA Docent Volunteers," Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, accessed March 16, 2020, <https://www.mmfadocents.com/beth-lipman-label-copy.html>.



# look

Take a close look at *Laid (Time-) Table with Cycads* (2015) on the preceding page. Keep in mind that this large-scale glass **installation** is over 16 feet long!

- Create a list of descriptive words that come to mind when you look at this glass installation.
- What is surprising about this artwork? Why?

# explore

Watch this time-lapse video to learn more about the process of installing *Laid (Time-) Table with Cycads*: <https://vimeo.com/126685191>.

To create this installation, the artist and her team hand-sculpted numerous transparent glass objects and painstakingly arranged them atop a painted wooden table.

- What do you notice about the process?
- Look back at the artwork. What do you notice about the arrangement or composition?
- How do the glass objects interact with the table—and with each other?

# discuss

Lipman intentionally uses the table to create a separation between the symbolic items placed above and below. Beneath the table is a “paleo-landscape” filled with extinct flora such as ferns, mosses, and ginkgos.<sup>13</sup> Atop the table is an array of man-made objects, such as books, plates, bowls, chalices, urns, and musical instruments. At three points in the composition, a cycad (an ancient seed plant with a crown of evergreen leaves and a stout trunk) pierces through the table, blurring the boundaries between the natural and human worlds.

- Look at images of cycad plants. Can you find the three glass versions of cycads in the artwork? What do you notice about where and how the cycads are placed?
- How are the natural elements below the table and the man-made objects on top different from each other?
- What might be the significance of connecting natural elements with man-made objects?
- In what way is this artwork a critical commentary on contemporary life? What do you think Lipman wants viewers to take away from their experience of this work?

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<sup>13</sup> Beth Lipman, “Laid (Time-) Table with Cycads,” accessed January 9, 2020, <https://www.bethlipman.com/work#/laid-time-table-with-cycads>.

In Lipman's practice, she often uses the **still-life** tableau to reference the tradition of **vanitas** and **memento mori** in seventeenth-century Dutch painting. Traditionally, the genre of still-life painting includes symbols that remind the viewer of their mortality and the dangers of excess wealth and consumption. In *Laid (Time-) Table with Cycads*, Lipman highlights a single object in opaque glass: a gazing ball, an object used for divination, a popular practice during the Victorian era. In this still life, the gazing ball can be seen as a symbol of an unknown future, inviting the viewer to reflect on the history of the earth and the impact of humans on nature.

- Can you find the gazing ball in the composition? What do you notice about where and how it is placed?
- Research images of traditional still lifes or **vanitas** paintings. How does Lipman borrow from this genre? How does she make it her own?

## make

- Draw a self-portrait using personal objects. What will you include? How will you choose to arrange these objects in order of head, heart, body, feet?
- Arrange a still life using natural objects, and another still life using man-made objects. Have a discussion about the similarities, differences, and relationship between the two still-life arrangements.
- Research the impact human activity has had on nature and the earth. Create a classroom list: What are ways that humans can be more responsible in our interactions with nature and the earth?

# glossary

## **AMERICAN STUDIO GLASS MOVEMENT**

In the 1950s artists, craftspeople, and scientists in the United States became interested in glass as a studio material. The American studio glass movement emerged in 1962, when [Harvey K. Littleton](#) organized **glassblowing** workshops at the Toledo Museum of Art and collaborated with glass research scientist [Dominick Labino](#) to create a small, inexpensive furnace for melting glass. In 1963, Littleton started a glass program at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, inspiring a generation of future glassmakers to work with hot glass to create innovative forms.

## **CASTING**

Glass casting is a method for shaping glass items. The glass is heated and transferred into a mold when it is soft, malleable, and liquid.

## **CANEWORKING**

A glassblowing technique that uses long, thin rods of colored glass to create intricate patterns and designs on blown glass.

## **COPPER FOIL**

A stained-glass construction method for joining cut glass, popular in the United States. The copper-foil method, also called the Tiffany method after prominent stained-glass artist [Louis Comfort Tiffany](#), involves wrapping copper-foil tape around glass shapes, and then joining them by running a bead of solder along the seam.

## **CRAFT**

The act of making things by hand through processes that often require specialized skills. Wood, textile, metal, glass, and ceramics are considered the traditional craft media.

## **CRISTALLO**

A colorless, transparent blown glass invented by Venetian glassblower [Angelo Barovier](#).

## **CYLINDER METHOD**

A manufacturing method for creating large sheets of hand-blown window glass. The glass is blown into a cylinder shape with a blowpipe, cooled, and then reheated and flattened.

## **ENGRAVING**

A technique used to cut images or inscriptions into a glass surface using abrasion.

## **FLASH GLASS**

A type of glass created by coating colorless glass with thin layers of colored glass. Flash glass can be sandblasted or engraved to reveal colorless spots.

## **FLOAT GLASS**

A type of glass created by “floating,” or pouring, molten glass on top of a vat of molten tin metal. This method creates a sheet of glass with uniform thickness and is commonly used to make windows.

## **GLASSBLOWING**

A method for shaping hot glass invented in the first century BCE. Molten glass is inflated by blowing air into the end of a hollow tube.

## **GOTHIC**

A style that flourished in European art and architecture during the High and Late Middle Ages, or the twelfth to the sixteenth century. Notable elements of gothic architecture include buttresses, pointed arches, trefoils and quatrefoils, and taller, thinner, and more numerous windows.

## **INSTALLATION**

A large three-dimensional artwork, often involving a range of media and materials, that viewers can sometimes enter, which typically alters the way a space is experienced in an exhibition or gallery setting.

## **LEAD CAME**

A medieval stained-glass construction method for joining cut glass. Lead came are strips of metal, which are bent around individual glass shapes and soldered before the panel is cemented and polished.

## **MEDIEVAL**

A period of time in Europe lasting from the fifth to the fifteenth century, also known as the Middle Ages.

## **MEMENTO MORI**

Memento mori is a Latin phrase that translates to “Remember you must die.” A memento mori also refers to artworks or objects that remind the viewer of their mortality, often by including symbols of death and of life’s fleeting nature, such as skeletons, hour glasses, guttering candles, rotting food, and weeping willows.

## **MONOCHROMATIC**

A descriptive term for a design object or artwork with only one color or hue. A monochrome work focuses attention on other physical elements, such as form or texture.

## **MOSAIC GLASS**

A decorative technique formed by fusing multiple canes of glass (see **caneworking**) until they melt into a multicolored swirl.

## **RENAISSANCE**

A revival of arts, literature, and learning in Europe during the fourteenth to the seventeenth century.

## **ROSE WINDOW**

A decorative term for a window design that radiates from the center, resembling flower petals or wheel spokes. The rose window is often found in churches from the **Gothic** period.

## **SANDBLASTING**

A technique used to remove layers of glass through abrasion. A stencil is applied to a glass surface, and then abrasive material is sprayed through a sandblasting gun to produce images or inscriptions.

## **SILHOUETTE**

An image of a person or object represented as a general shape. Before photography was invented, handmade cutout silhouettes were the main way that people could have a portrait created; they generally depicted a person's face in profile.

## **STAINED GLASS**

A design that entails the creation of glass colored by metallic oxides, held together by a framework of lead, stone, or copper foil that emphasizes the lines and shapes.

## **STILL LIFE**

An arrangement of man-made or natural objects. The still life emerged as a distinct genre of painting in the Netherlands and neighboring Low Countries, where it developed across the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It is a commonly used genre in Western art.

## **VANITAS**

A type of still life that reminds the viewer of their mortality, often by contrasting symbols of wealth with symbols of ephemerality and death. The vanitas is closely related to memento mori.

## **VENETIAN GLASS**

Glass made and produced in the style established by glassmakers in Venice, on the island of Murano, in the thirteenth century. Murano became known as an elite glassmaking center after the invention of **crystallo** in the fifteenth century.

# resources

## Glass

<https://www.cmog.org/>

<https://www.museumofglass.org/>

<https://www.khanacademy.org/partner-content/getty-museum/antiquities/ancient-glassmaking/a/glassmaking-history-and-techniques>

<https://www.ktb.gov.tr/EN-120372/glass-techniques.html>

## Goblets

<https://www.cmog.org/article/harvey-k-littleton-and-american-studio-glass-movement>

<https://renvenetian.cmog.org/>

## Judith Schaechter

<http://www.judithschaechter.com/>

<http://judithschaechterglass.blogspot.com/>

<http://www.claireoliver.com/>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wwU\\_aMbEl\\_4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wwU_aMbEl_4)

## Brian Clarke

<http://www.brianclarke.co.uk/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AfZsmeKvARQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PcCJYh-E1Xw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2JB2NCY3rw0>

## Beth Lipman

<https://www.bethlipman.com/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EmLklIfny6E>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9QPti2tX7Sk>

<https://podbay.fm/p/arttables-artist-perspectives/e/1571150959>

# image credits

## page 6

Glass blowing process

<https://pixabay.com/photos/glass-glass-artist-glass-blowing-1751210/> accessed September 1, 2020.

## page 7

Mosaic glass fragment

Roman, late 1st century B.C.–early 1st century A.D.

1 3/8 x 7/8 in. (3.5 x 2.2 cm)

Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?search=mosaic+glass&title=Special%3ASearch&go=Go&ns0=1&ns6=1&ns12=1&ns14=1&ns100=1&ns106=1> accessed September 1, 2020.

North Rose Window, Notre Dame de Paris

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rose\\_window#/media/File:North\\_rose\\_window\\_of\\_Notre-Dame\\_de\\_Paris\\_Aug\\_2010.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rose_window#/media/File:North_rose_window_of_Notre-Dame_de_Paris_Aug_2010.jpg) accessed September 1, 2020.

The Crystal Palace at the Great Exposition of 1851, London

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?search=crystal+palace&title=Special%3ASearch&go=Go&ns0=1&ns6=1&ns12=1&ns14=1&ns100=1&ns106=1#/media/File:Crystal\\_palace\\_1851.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?search=crystal+palace&title=Special%3ASearch&go=Go&ns0=1&ns6=1&ns12=1&ns14=1&ns100=1&ns106=1#/media/File:Crystal_palace_1851.jpg) accessed September 1, 2020.

## page 8

Louis Comfort Tiffany, Table Lamp with Lilies, c. 1900-1910

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Louis\\_comfort\\_tiffany\\_lampada\\_da\\_tavolo\\_pomb\\_lily\\_1900-10\\_ca..JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Louis_comfort_tiffany_lampada_da_tavolo_pomb_lily_1900-10_ca..JPG) accessed September 1, 2020.

## page 10

William Gudenrath

*Venetian-style Dragon Goblet*, 1992

Glass, 10 3/4 × 3 7/8 × 3 7/8 in. (27.3 × 9.8 × 9.8 cm) each.

Museum of Arts and Design; gift of the artist, 1992.

Photo by Ed Watkins; courtesy the Museum of Arts and Design

## page 12

Top row (left to right): Fritz Dreisbach, *Pink Flamingo, Reverse Goblet*, 1992. Glass, 13 1/8 × 4 1/2 × 4 1/2 in.; Dan Dailey, *Spike*, 1981. Glass, plate glass, Vitrolite, and screws, 14 3/4 × 5 1/4 × 6 in.; Sally Prasch, *Bouncing Goblet*, 1993. Flameworked glass, 15 × 3 1/2 × 3 1/2 in. Middle row (left to right): Shane Fero, *Floral Cup*, 2007. Glass, 9 1/8 × 2 3/4 × 2 3/4 in.; Dale Chihuly, *Untitled*, 1968. Blown and applied glass, 12 × 5 × 5 in.; Don Niblack, *Red Venetian Party Goblet*, 1994. Glass, 21 1/4 × 6 1/2 × 4 in. Bottom row, left to right: Marvin Lipofsky, *Irv Tepper Memorial Hot Dog Cup* (from "Great American Food"), 1973. Blown glass, 6 × 8 1/4 × 3 1/2 in.; Iwata Glass, *Sake Goblets*, 1987. Blown and applied glass, 1/4 × 3 5/8 × 2 1/2 in.

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Judith Schaechter

*Seeing is Believing*, 2008

Glass, enamel, and copper foil, 104 × 118 in.

Museum of Arts and Design; purchase with funds provided by the Charina Endowment Fund, 200

page 18

Brian Clarke

*Cherry Blossoms*, 2017

Stained glass and wooden frame

80 5/16 × 99 3/16 in.;

Brian Clarke,

*Blue Computergram*, 2017

Stained glass and wooden frame

80 5/16 × 99 3/16 in.

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Brian Clarke

*Don't Forget the Lamb*, 2008

Lead and stained glass on lead

92 1/2 × 165 3/8 in.

page 25

Beth Lipman

*Whatnot 1*, 2010

Glass, wood, paint, and adhesive

84 × 42 × 30 in. (213.4 × 106.7 × 76.2 cm)

Courtesy the artist

page 26

Beth Lipman

*Whatnot 1*, 2010 (detail)

Glass, wood, paint, and adhesive

84 × 42 × 30 in. (213.4 × 106.7 × 76.2 cm)

Courtesy the artist

page 28

Beth Lipman

*Laid (Time-) Table with Cycads*, 2015.

Glass, adhesive, wood, and paint

92 × 57 × 192 in.

Museum of Arts and Design, New York; gift of the Kohler Foundation, Inc., 2018

# credits

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