



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Scholarship Program for Qualified Israeli Artists Interested in Working in Glass Reaches Ten Year Mark

PALM BEACH, FL - July 20, 2017 - The Association of Israeli Decorative Arts (AIDA) is celebrating the tenth anniversary of its program of awarding deserving Israelis scholarships to advance their knowledge of glassmaking techniques and connect with the international contemporary glass community. Since its founding in 2003 by prominent American collectors Dale & Doug Anderson and Charles & the late Andrea (“Andy”) Bronfman, this scholarship program is the longest running of all the initiatives designed by AIDA to foster and promote Israeli contemporary glass. Involving partnerships with two prestigious American institutions: Pilchuck Glass School in Stanwood, Washington, and The Studio at The Corning Museum of Glass, Corning, New York, this program is gradually changing glass in Israel which, until recent years, consisted of a single modestly equipped glassblowing facility located in Jerusalem’s Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design—still today Israel’s only art school with a glass department—and one gallery devoted since 2008 to contemporary international glass, Litvak Gallery in Tel Aviv, which has changed its focus to emphasize other art forms.

Early on, AIDA’s director, Aviva Ben Sira, who resides in Israel, and Board members Marianne & Doron Livnat convinced the organization that its resources should be used to build Israel’s glass community. Spearheading with great proficiency all subsequent efforts, Ben Sira is realistic in evaluating their impact:

AIDA has made a substantial difference in Israel’s contemporary glass scene. While there is considerable work still to be done in order to call the program a success, there are now more studios than ever before throughout the country for artists interested in pursuing a career in glass. In addition, over the past few years AIDA has restructured the scholarship program so that it primarily supports administrators, teachers, and serious artists with an established track record of working in glass, hence cementing the future of glass in Israel.

AIDA’s push to educate administrators and teachers—in particular, those at Bezalel—is part of its larger initiative to “teach the teachers” in all craft media. Its programs, in general, now target international decorative arts and design curators as well as educators. Recipients of



the glass scholarships to The Studio and Pilchuck now are expected to return to Israel to share with their students the technical expertise and networking that customarily result from such residencies. The experiences at each institution differ. Pilchuck largely provides hands-on opportunities that are conducive to networking. Scholarship recipients at The Studio can take advantage of the classes, the Rakow Library, and the museum with its excellent exhibitions and collections.

Ben Sira recently noted that the technical level of some Israeli glass artists has improved to such a degree that they are now able to serve as “hired guns”—capable of executing the designs in glass of artists working in diverse media who want to use the material to express their ideas. Perhaps, however, the most accurate measure of AIDA’s success is that in the fourteen years since AIDA’s founding, twelve Israeli glass artists—some several times—have been selected for inclusion in the highly respected juried *New Glass Review* which, published by The Corning Museum of Glass, annually evaluates developments within the field.

AIDA’s scholarship program was first instituted with Corning’s Studio in 2007. Its impetus came from seeing the benefits that classes and residencies at Pilchuck Glass School (2001), Wheaton Village’s Creative Glass Center of America (2003) in Millville, New Jersey, and The Studio (2005) exerted on the career of native Israeli artist Dafna Kaffeman, who has been on the faculty of Bezalel’s glass department since 2003. Director of The Studio Amy Schwartz recognized relatively early on how AIDA’s scholarships benefited the Israelis. Even today she continues to marvel about the impact of the program. “The seeds of AIDA lead to other opportunities for the artists.” Over the past few years, The Studio’s program through AIDA has been underwritten by Andy Bronfman’s children, Jeremy & Marci Cohen, Pippa Cohen, and Tony & Moira Cohen, in her memory. Pilchuck began its partnership with AIDA around 2008 and New York’s Urban Glass instituted a fledgling one-time artist residency program with AIDA in 2014. Overall, Corning usually offers four or five scholarships per year while Pilchuck averages three.

The scholarship program is the crown jewel of AIDA’s initiatives to help contemporary glass artists in Israel. Other efforts have included in 2007 and 2008 purchasing blowing time for promising artists at the Tri Vetro Glass Studio (now the G Studio) in Tel Aviv owned by glass sculptors Boris Shpeizman and Maayan Feigin; in the early years of the millennium, bringing the work of glass artists such as Sergey Bunkov, Nirit Dekel, Dafna



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Kaffeman, and Ayala Serfaty to international art fairs such as SOFA Chicago, London's COLLECT, the Philadelphia Museum of Art Craft Show, and CraftBoston; arranging for noted American Studio Glass artists such as John Kiley (2007), William Gudenrath (2008), and Daniel Clayman (2014) to conduct workshops at Tri Vetro and Bezalel, respectively; and funding weeklong trips to Israel for administrators such as Schwartz (2011) and Director of Pilchuck Glass Jim Baker (2013), which enabled them to meet one on one with members of the artistic community. A similar trip is being planned this summer for Dr. Eran Ehrlich, Bezalel's current head of its Ceramic and Glass Department. An earlier trip that Dr. Ehrlich made to Corning through AIDA's sponsorship resulted in a major upgrade to Bezalel's hot shop.

Although AIDA's efforts to promote contemporary glass are still relatively recent, works by Israeli artists already are being recognized by American audiences. Ayala Serfaty's handcrafted lighting sculptures that are part of her "SOMA" series have been acquired by such institutions as New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Arts and Design; The Mint Museum, Charlotte, North Carolina; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; The Corning Museum of Glass, Corning, New York, and the Indianapolis Museum of Art. When the Mint acquired its sculpture, AIDA sponsored the production of an accompanying educational video. Ongoing bestseller at the six-year-old contemporary, pop up jewelry exhibition/fundraiser *Bijoux* organized by Florida's Norton Museum of Art, the lampworked necklaces of longtime AIDA artist Nirit Dekel just received the imprimatur of the 2016 *New Glass Review*. Similarly, from 2014 to 2016, Kaffeman's assemblages of glass and fiber that provide strong political commentary on life in Israel were featured in a two-person traveling exhibition entitled *Without Camouflage*. *Dafna Kaffeman. Silvia Levenson.* organized by Indiana's Ball State University David Owsley Museum in conjunction with its Marilyn K. Glick Center for Glass. Supported in part by AIDA, the show traveled to San Francisco's Museum of Craft and Design. Another scholarship recipient, Mira Maylor, has had her haunting narrative sculptures regularly exhibited at such galleries as Chicago's Echt Gallery and Habatat Galleries, Michigan.

AIDA's impact on Israel's glass aesthetic is readily apparent to those involved in the field. Henrietta Eliezer Bruner, curator of glass at Tel Aviv's Eretz Israel Museum, for example, recently commented upon the increasing sophistication of the works she has chosen for the museum's contemporary glass quadrennial surveys organized since 2007:



The main factor for this glass resurgence/renaissance has been the institutionalization of academic studies specializing in glass and the exposure of glass students to international courses, workshops, exhibitions, and fairs—mainly and largely enabled by AIDA. All of this has been augmented by the opening up of the glass “niche that is being visited by artists from other domains (ceramic artists, graphic designers, textile designers, etc.) challenged to create in or incorporate glass in their work.

Doug Anderson reminds us, however, that there is another, more personal, way to evaluate AIDA’s interventions: “Each of the recipients is a good ambassador. Working together over their common language, glass, Americans and Israelis gain a mutual respect for one another.”

AIDA’s mission is to foster the development of contemporary decorative artists from Israel by connecting them to an international audience of galleries, institutions and collectors. Since the organization’s founding in 2003, AIDA has helped careers of a generation of artists from Israel. Underlying all of AIDA’s activities is the goal of promoting a positive face of contemporary Israel not often seen.

For further information, contact: Doug Anderson, doug@d2anderson.com, or visit the website of the Association of Israel’s Decorative Arts www.aidaarts.org.

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