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Art Alliance for Contemporary Glass

Fall 2008 Newsletter

AIDA

FOSTERING ISRAEL'S CONTEMPORARY GLASS ART COMMUNITY By Erika Vogel

Founded in 2003 by Dale & Doug Anderson and Charles & the late Andrea Bronfman, 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.

The earliest pieces of blown glass are thought to date back to about 50 B.C. and have primarily been discovered in what is today modern Israel. Perhaps equally as striking is that the land that gave birth to glassblowing has had little activity in glass art from those early days until the 1990s.

Not until the mid 1970s did the studio glass movement reach Israel. Marvin Lipofsky traveled to Israel in the middle of the decade and spent time at Israel's preeminent art academy, the Bezalel Academy of Art in Jerusalem. While there, he built a glass furnace for the Ceramics Department. The first courses in glass were not taught until the late 1970s, and a formal department with a full curriculum was established only in 1997. Believe it or not, the furnace built by Lipofsky over 30 years ago is the same furnace still in use today, for better or worse. Until 2006, Bezalel housed the only large glassblowing facility in Israel, making it extremely frustrating for graduating students, as they had nowhere to continue their craft upon graduation without going abroad. To date, Bezalel remains the only university setting where students can study glass making in Israel.



Chris McElvoy demonstrates at Israel's Bezalel Academy of Art.

Two museums, the Israel Museum in Jerusalem and the Eretz Israel Museum outside Tel Aviv, have displayed contemporary glass in their galleries since the 1970s. But until the mid-1990s private dealers and collectors remained largely disinterested in glass as a contemporary art form.

The major attitude shift came in 1997 with Dale Chihuly's exhibit at the Tower of David Museum in Jerusalem. The exhibit was an eye-opening experience for Israel's artists and the country as a whole, as it showed them the potential of glass as an art form. Time and again, AIDA hears from artists working in glass that this exhibit was their defining moment to become engaged in glass. Over the past 10 years there has been a dramatic rise in the number of Israeli artists working in glass as well as increasing interest in the media and among dealers and collectors. That said, there is still much catching up that needs to be done to achieve international standards and overcome Israel's continuing resource limitations.



Seattle artists Jennifer Elek and John Kiley conducted workshops in Israel with AIDA's support.

There is a number of recent notable developments within the Israeli glass movement that have caused AIDA to invest more time, energy and money in this community. In 2007 two local artists working in glass collaboratively opened their own private hot shop in Tel Aviv, the first studio of its kind in Israel, by the name of G Studio (formerly Trio Vetro Studio). In addition, a number of new initiatives have come to fruition, including a museum exhibition and gallery, providing opportunities to Israel's emerging artists working in glass.

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Henrietta Bruner, the glass curator at the Eretz Israel Museum in Tel Aviv, curated "Fragile Reality: Israeli Artists Creating in Glass," which was open winter 2007 to spring 2008, and was the first show of its kind showcasing art by contemporary Israeli artists working in glass. (AIDA provided support for the printing of the exhibit's catalogue.) In addition, Miriam Yaniv opened the Yaniv Glass Gallery (www.yanivgallery.com) in Tel Aviv to promote Israeli glass art. Both the show and gallery have provided significant opportunities for Israeli artists working in glass.

As AIDA's mission is to foster the development of contemporary decorative artists from Israel, the organization has established several programs in support of Israel's studio glass artists.

Fellowships: Since 2003, AIDA has provided Israeli artists working in glass with fellowships to Pilchuck and Corning. In addition, this past summer AIDA sent Maayan Feigen, co-owner of G Studio, to a six-week apprenticeship at the Museum of Glass in Tacoma. These programs provide the artists advanced training, an opportunity to network with their international colleagues and the chance to learn about the local art market. At the conclusion of these fellowships, the artists are invited to present their experience to AIDA supporters during an informal luncheon in New York.

Studio Rental: In 2007, AIDA launched a pilot project with G Studio where the organization rented 600 hours of studio time at G Studio for five promising artists. The program provided support to the studio and provided artists a place to work. At the conclusion of the first six months, each artist was asked to reapply for studio time. AIDA's glass committee reviewed the proposals, and three artists were asked to return to the program. In early 2008 AIDA subsidized additional studio time, technical support and oversight for three artists over four months. We are currently exploring options with the local artists on how to effectively continue this program.

Workshops: In May 2007, AIDA provided support to send Seattle-based glass artists/consultants and members of Lino Tagliapietra's team, John Kiley and Jennifer Elek, to Israel to conduct workshops and demonstrations at Bezalel and G Studio. This provided students and instructors a learning opportunity and AIDA the chance to evaluate the base of knowledge, skills and facilities in Israel. As John mentioned at the conclusion of the workshop, "It is a very exciting time for the glass movement in Israel. The artists we are working with are really the pioneers of a new generation of artists."

As a follow-up to this workshop in February 2008, AIDA provided support to send Bill Gudenrath, Resident Advisor of the Studio at the Corning Museum of Glass, to present a workshop at G Studio. Bill was struck by the artists' potential



Bill Gudenrath presented a workshop at G Studio in Tel Aviv.

and as Noaz Harel, a workshop participant, commented, "This is the first time that I learned the basics of glass-blowing from a person and not from a book. Learning from a master in the field was much more fun and informative."



AIDA is bringing work by Noah Hagiladi to SOFA Chicago 2008.

Following the success of the previous workshops, in June 2008, AIDA supported a two-day flameworking workshop at the Bezalel Academy by Minnesota based glass artist Chris McElroy.

Exhibitions: AIDA continues to seek out artists working in glass to expose to the North American and European markets. Since 2003, AIDA has brought three artists working in glass to SOFA CHICAGO: Dafna Kaffeman, Sergey Bunkov and Tova Carmon. Since her first appearance at SOFA CHICAGO with AIDA in 2003, Dafna, currently the head of the glass department at Bezalel, has had great success. She has work in the permanent collections of the Victoria & Albert Museum, The Corning Museum of Glass and the Racine Art Museum. She is represented by the Heller Gallery in New York and Lorch-Seidel in Berlin, and was most recently in an exhibition in Norway as part of the European Cultural Events of 2008. Following Sergey's participation with AIDA at SOFA Chicago 2003, he continues to be represented by the Riley Gallery in Cleveland and has exhibited in the U.S., Canada, Europe and Israel as well as having a work in the permanent collection of the Cleveland Museum of Art.

At SOFA Chicago 2008 AIDA will present work by emerging artist Noah Hagiladi. Noah has the honor of already being recognized by the Corning Museum of Glass in *New Glass Review 28* and being a part of Corning's permanent collection.

Using minimal funds and maximizing AIDA's network of connections, the organization continues to encourage Israel's artists and provide them the necessary training and exposure they need to meet international standards. It is a very exciting time for the glass world in Israel. As the movement is only just beginning, the possibilities are boundless!

For more information on these and other programs, please visit www.AIDAarts.org. AIDA is a small organization that continues to capitalize on partnerships. As members of AACG, we know you realize how important it is for these artists to be exposed to the international community. Please feel free to contact Erika Vogel with thoughts or suggestions on other avenues that AIDA might wish to explore at erikavogel@AIDAarts.org or (212) 931-0089.

Planning a visit to Israel and interested in visiting the studio, artists, schools and museums mentioned above? Contact AIDA's Program Director based in Tel Aviv, Aviva Ben Sira, at Aviva@BenSira.net.

--Erika Vogel is AIDA's Director based in New York.