

reviews

program and curatorial stance on a movement that has not yet been fully understood and contextualized. At the very least, as long as we have the Museum of Glass, we will have a place to look at glass, to admire beautiful objects and the mastery of skills they evince. The objects themselves can stimulate us to think about their context, their historical place, and the characteristics that bring objects together, and set them apart.

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¹ Interview with Katie Buckingham at Tacoma Museum of Glass, January 10, 2020.

Joanne Greenbaum

"I'M DOING MY FACE IN MAGIC MARKER"
RACHEL UFFNER GALLERY
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Whether it's going to work for a Muranese glasshouse at the age of 6, spending a decade in pursuit of the perfect free-blown cup, or taking up permanent residence in a university to earn one of the new doctorates in fine art, there seems to be no limit to how much expertise a career in glass art seems to require. While artists in other media name-check, glass artists skills-check, proving their knowledge in subtle but knowing ways. And so what to make of pure expression, pursued with no fear of revealing material naiveté? Accomplished painter Joanne Greenbaum approached her residency at Bullseye Glass Co. in suburban Mamaroneck, New York, by plunging into the making, applying her skills for composition and color to simple kilnforming. Low-tech and technically facile, the works Greenbaum created seem unconcerned with proving her glass chops. Instead, she finds unbridled and intuitive expression in casting aside any pretense of expertise. Great fields of brilliant color and

neo-optic compositions are the hallmarks of her efforts, which went on display at a hip Lower East Side gallery in New York City. Greenbaum's work holds a lesson for the glass field: In the end, it's not the how but the "pow!"

With the eye of a seasoned painter and clear compositional skills, Greenbaum went for it—pile and go. Every glass facility in the U.S. fuses glass at a small scale. Six by six inches is about right, perfect for a weekend workshop for children or hobbyists at a walk-in activity. Which is exactly why no "glass artist" I've encountered has taken this approach. Confidently explored at a much grander scale, Greenbaum's work poses the question: Is it the fear of "craft" that hinders? This painter knows not of our glassy-world worry of being called out for coming up short on the technical.

The associations Greenbaum's work evokes—fused platters, ashtrays, the dreaded obvious—aren't engaged by the artist, who is instead focused on incorporating full sheets of kaleidoscopically hued glass, which she has rendered on an expanded scale. Sure, there is Lino and his deep layers of stacked glass—but lost in that sandwiching in search of the painterly, forfeited in that fight for technical legitimacy and manly girth, is the childlike nature of making: an intuitive abstract assembly, not exactly disorderly but certainly turbulent; a near-frightening fragility embraced; a reminder of vulnerability, surpassing wonder and simple desire.

And although Greenbaum's work might be lazily categorized as some version of neo-Abstract Expressionism, this is anything but the dark and moody work of a 1950s Pollock, Rothko, or De Kooning. Greenbaum's abstraction is bright and celebratory, life-embracing. It is proactive in its pursuit of materialism, and not simply reactive. Here there is only joy and immersion in a light-fueled chroma of unmatched intensities. There are hot pinks, canary yellows, and royal blues. Propped up and leaning on a long shallow shelf rather than attached to the gallery wall, the works blow past any fear of presenting hobbyist-level aesthetics, which the artist detonates in great

explosions of color. Juxtaposition, a frequent organizing principle in Greenberg's painted canvases, is employed repeatedly in her glass works, now in an amped-up palette of colors suitable for the Brazilian jungle.

Without titles, the works are presented free of any framework for interpretation or terrestrial association. What is, is. We are left with only Greenbaum's passion for the stuff of art (line, form, color, and composition). Glass is only the vehicle employed to get her there, where such chromatic intensities exist unmatched.

Greenbaum reminds us that experimentation and discovery were once the way of glass. She revives (even if unconsciously) our roots. Too often, when we know exactly how to accomplish something, we lose the fruits of spontaneity. When the end results are all but guaranteed, the penalty is sterility; the footnote, "also ran." From a previous unknown in Studio Glass, Greenbaum is running to lead the pack, giving us back the raw power of chance.

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Untitled, 2019. Kilnformed glass.