

This was the first exhibit I'd seen in person since the pandemic began, and I wondered how our current plague might alter a typical gallery visit. Aside from having to schedule a private showing, not much has changed, even for an enthused looker like myself. If anything, there were fewer distractions; the place was so quiet I could hear my sneakers squeak.

That quiet helped in absorbing these patient artworks, like *Zig Zag Halo* (2020). On a bright Sunday afternoon, its reflective body picked up fragments of the world outside. Movements across the halo's surface cheered me on to try different angles. I squatted down and looked through the tangerine-colored vortex.

From this vantage point, I saw a smushed reflection of the trees outside and, above that, a hole opening onto real sky. When I rose to my feet, the sky crumbled away, leaving a perfect sphere and returning to our own.

ALEXANDER CASTRO is a writer based in the Providence/Boston area and a regular contributor to *Glass*. Since 2014, he's covered the arts and artists of New England for publications like the *Newport Daily News* and *Providence Journal*.

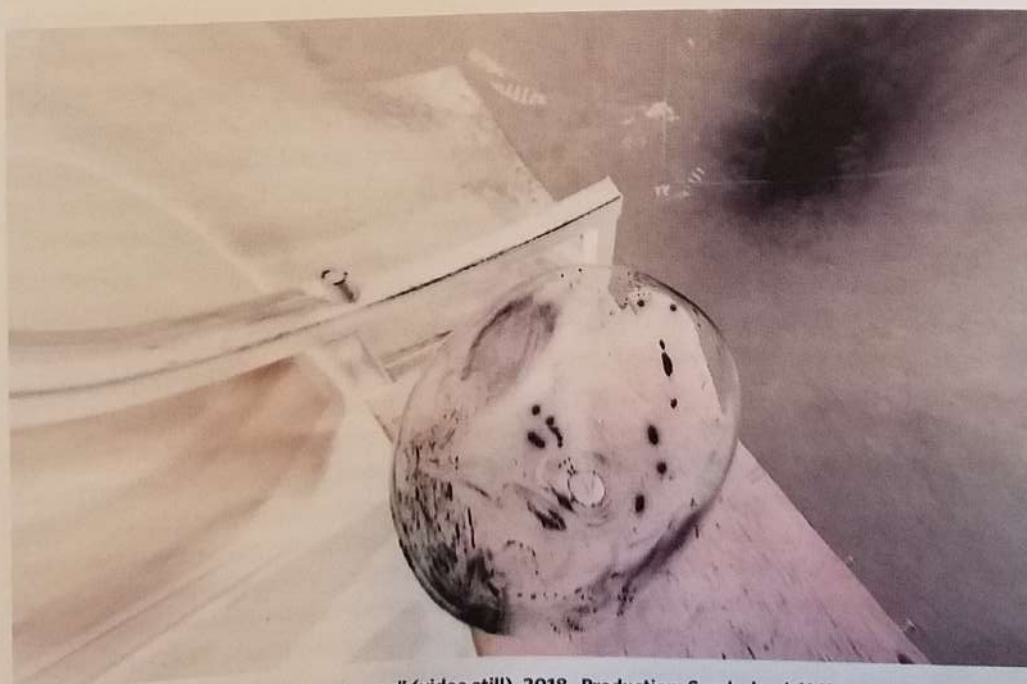
## "Glass, Meet the Future" Film Festival

NORTH LANDS CREATIVE  
LYBSTER, SCOTLAND  
JULY 3-17, 2020

In many ways, glass and film are natural partners. Both are mediums that deal with optic qualities, light, and ephemerality and, historically, film requires glass in the form of plates and lenses. As a result, the marriage of creative practices seems surprisingly natural.

The "Glass, Meet the Future" Film Festival is part of UK in Japan, a yearlong cross-cultural campaign that started in September 2019 with the Rugby World Cup and was meant to conclude in September 2020 (now 2021 due to Covid-19) with the Olympic and Paralympic Games, all hosted by Japan. Because of the global coronavirus pandemic, the physical events related to "Glass, Meet the Future" (GMTF) will take place in 2021; the film festival, however, has been moved online.

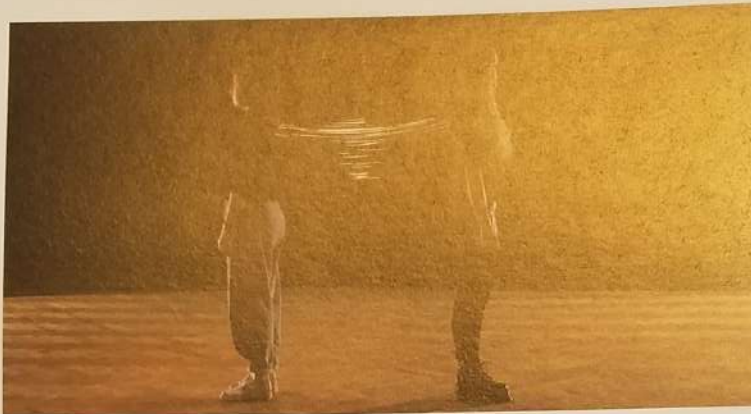
The film festival is presented in two parts: Part 1 includes 34 films directed by 26 female artists, and Part 2 is a collaborative short film, titled "The Soul of a Statue," by



Riikka Haapasaari, "Me & You, In Between" (video still), 2018. Production: Sunderland, U.K.  
COURTESY: THE ARTIST



## reviews



Anna Mlasowsky, "4 Feet Apart" (video still), 2020. Twenty-minute performance by Lilia Ossiek and Alba Maria Thomas Alvarez. Camera: Sebastian Knorr and Bernhard Kübel. Recorded at Villa Wigman e.V. Dresden. COURTESY: THE ARTIST

glass artist Martin Janecký and filmmaker Tom Hogben, whose residencies at North Lands Creative culminated in the project. Part 1 is further divided into categories: performance (10 films), documentary (7 films), short narrative (3 films), experimental (9 films), and narrative (3 films). The films themselves, which are all under 15 minutes long, range widely in content, method, and quality, and sometimes defy the categories in which they are included. The artist-directors hail from 15 or more countries, primarily from Europe, including China, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Norway, Poland, Sweden, the U.K. (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales are all represented), and the U.S., giving the festival, which was organized from an artist call, international reach.

Of the films, standouts include: Riikka Haapasaari's "Me & You, In Between" and "Light Keeper," Anna Mlasowsky's "4 Feet Apart," Simone Fezer's "Roses are Red (Sensual Flow)," Alison Lowry and Jayne Cherry's "Thirty five I cant's," Kirsteen Aubrey's "Hands On Collaborative Practice," Chris Bird-Jones's "Silver Lining," Juli Bolaños-Durman's "Out Common Humanity," and Jerre Davidson's "Shape of Dance." These films span the various categories, although this categorization is

an unnecessary framework for their understanding by the viewer, and many could be experienced from multiple perspectives.

One of the best, Haapasaari's "Me & You, In Between," is a stunningly poignant exploration of a fictional relationship between glass and a glassblower in which the narrator struggles to understand the embodied experience of glass and the emotive consequences of actions imposed on the material. Despite the specificity of the artist's intent, the narrative transcends this focus and speaks to a more universal inability to understand one another. I found myself thinking about the impact of humans on the natural world and the necessity to decenter human authority. I experienced Mlasowsky's "4 Feet Apart" in a similar way. In the film, two women are connected by a multitude of glass threads, holding them back to back at four feet apart. They carefully strain against the delicate threads, yet the women must break these binding threads to experience the closeness of an embrace. Again, I found myself extrapolating a more universal reading regarding the ways we are connected to one another across communities, nations, and the globe. Simone Fezer's "Roses are Red (Sensual Flow)" takes some notable cues from film history, incorporating the dreamlike states and disorienting

effects used in experimental and avant-garde film of the mid-20th century. She uses molten glass, separate from any formal qualities, as an agent of ruination against roses from her garden in a representation of the heat and sometimes destructive nature of passion.

Cross-disciplinary collaboration resulted in fruitful films, as in the case of "Thirty five I can't's," by glass artist Lowery and performance artist Cherry, which gives voice to the experience of domestic violence by using the symbolism of Cinderella's glass slippers in tandem with the statistic that a woman will be assaulted 35 times before engaging the police. The resulting film follows the performer as she takes 35 burdensome steps in heavy glass shoes; her vision is obscured by a headpiece representing the fog of depression and grief, and as she propels herself forward, a bundle of glass canes, which she uses as a walking stick, creaks in anticipation of collapse. The film is incredibly powerful. Davidson's "Shape of Dance" documents the process of creating sculptures that take their form from a dancer's movement through the utilization of animation software, 3D printing, and traditional sculpture techniques. The resulting sculptures capture a lightness and dynamism of movement only possible from a cross-disciplinary conversation. In "Hands On Collaborative Practice," Aubrey explores the importance of the hand and touch to human development and to both glass and photography. She handcrafts lenses, using blowing and cutting techniques, with which she takes beautiful and ethereal landscape photographs.

A number of works function as contemplations of nature, including Bird-Jones's highly meditative "Silver Lining," in which the passage of time and cycles of nature are reflected within glass objects of her making. Similarly, Gemma Truman's "Shelligoe" and Simone Fezer's "Frame by Frame" situate the viewer within the natural environment, imploring us to consider our relationship to the greater world.

Space constraints prevent me from mentioning many other films, some of great promise by emerging artists such as



Teisha Holloway, **Chenyue Yang**, and Jamie Marie Rose. However, **Bolaños-Durman's** "Our Common Humanity" deserves mention, specifically the second half of the film, which offers a playful animation of her glass objects, constructed into anthropomorphic stacks that move as if in a ballet and highlight the fresh, graphic nature of her cutting skills. The animation section of the film has the strength to stand alone and does not need the narrative first half for context. A series of three other films by the same artist, "Wild Flowers Collection 1, 2, and 3," feel too commercial for inclusion, more like product placement, and muddied the strength of "Our Common Humanity."

Some of the other films also fall too deeply into promotion or demonstration for what has been billed as a film festival, which implies artistry and a focus on content. The artists whose films I've included above as standouts also submitted works that felt too demonstrative, such as Fezer's "A Girl's Heart" and Bibi Smit's "Moving Glass," which is not to say that the works and practices they represent aren't worth knowing. Even Davidson's "Shape of Dance" and Aubrey's "Hands On Collaborative Practice," both of which I praised for multidisciplinary collaboration, toe a line that feels less like film and more like documentation.

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention Part 2, "The Soul of a Statue" by glass artist Martin Janecký and filmmaker Tom Hogben. This



Martin Janecký and Thomas Hogben, *The Soul of a Statue* (video still), 2020.

film is also quite demonstrative, but it benefits from a dramatic soundtrack and high-quality footage of an equally dramatic landscape, the coastline of Caithness, near North Lands Creative. The film also benefits from Janecký's clear mastery of his medium. The realism he captures in his glass busts is revelatory, leading me to read the film from the perspective of Frankenstein's monster, in the sense that the viewer is a witness as the artist calls the glass to life.

Overall, the GMTF film festival was an exciting opportunity to see so much experimentation in the realm of glass and film. An interview with North Lands Creative's director, Karen Phillips, calls this year's film festival "inaugural," implying the program will continue annually. I hope this is the case. It's easy to imagine how subsequent years will help foster this burgeoning realm of work in glass by artists who see the field broadly and with fresh eyes.

*Contributing editor SAMANTHA DE TILLIO is curator of collections at the Museum of Arts and Design. Her upcoming exhibition, "Beth Lipman: Collective Elegy," is a midcareer survey of the artist's work.*

## Nancy Callan

"DIALOGUES"  
HELLER GALLERY  
NEW YORK CITY  
JUNE 19, 2020-ONGOING

Originally a graphic designer, Nancy Callan was drawn to artists employing repetition and its variations—artists like Sol LeWitt and Agnes Martin. She looks also to Op Art legends like Bridget Riley for inspiration for her surface treatments on glass. And if one plans to speak to the concerns and practice of painting through the material glass, one had better understand both the history of the medium and what constitutes success. Perhaps the perfect material, by nature of the beast—or at least certainly worthy of such cross-media exploration—

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