

Glass is an ancient material whose second life is just beginning. “**Bright Future**” introduces the public to innovative designs that reflect traditions in glass while also demonstrating its new possibilities.



## Innovation and Illumination

It is surprisingly easy to ignore glass. From windows and architectural elements to touch screens, incandescent and LED powered lightbulbs, furniture, vases, tableware, and lighting fixtures, when we are indoors, it is all around us. The reasons for glass's popularity are many, but its key distinguishing characteristic is its unmatched clarity. It is striking how many artists and designers who work in the material characterize their medium of choice not as glass, but as light.

This exhibition invites the viewer to look twice at glass as a material for designers of buildings, lighting, and household goods, and for artists who engage with its rich history and special ability to bend and amplify light. Each object in “Bright Future” was selected because it demonstrates a recent development in glass technology or a new twist on an ancient technique such as casting or glassblowing. Recently developed materials such as LiTraCon (“light-transmitting concrete,” meaning concrete that is made transparent with the addition of glass), temperature-sensitive, and “switchable” glass present designers and architects with intriguing solutions to challenges, allowing them to avoid the use of plastics and to experiment with illumination in new ways.

Glass encompasses a range of history and innovation from the ancient to the high tech. First developed in Mesopotamia around 3500 B.C., glass technology has developed over the centuries in concert with advances in chemistry, architecture, optics, and electronics. Contemporary artists and designers who work in ancient materials such as clay, glass, or fiber are working with a medium whose significance has changed with the advent of plastics, synthetics and industry; what was unremarkable centuries ago is now loaded with meaning by dint of its connection to the past. Some artists and designers actively mine their material's history to give their work the signature silhouette or pattern of another age. Others avoid it by hewing to a clean, minimalist aesthetic. For Liana Yaroslavsky, the baroque excess of 18th century Italian glass lighting designs is a source of formal inspiration and provides a cultural context for her work. For Tom Patti, whose *Z Table* is included in this exhibition, glass and its history are not the primary focus; glass is just the best material available to realize his ideas.

The manipulation of light is central to James Carpenter's design for the proposed Moynihan Station, a transit center that would repurpose the Farley Post Office Building on Eighth Avenue in New York City, originally designed by McKim, Mead & White and opened in 1914. Architect Kenneth Frampton has suggested that Carpenter's sculpture training at Rhode Island School of Design and early collaborations with the Corning Museum of Glass gave him a lasting fascination with the interactions between glass, light, and public space.<sup>1</sup> Carpenter's plan for the station, which unites existing and new structures, incorporates what he describes as a “transparent grid shelf roof enclosure. The roof is made from glass components and undulates over a great room and two ‘luminous moats.’” These elements direct light into the station during the day and lighting in the building will cause them to glow at night, creating an experience for both passersby and travelers that is both practical in its enhancement of way-finding strategies and aesthetically compelling.

Los Angeles-based artist Alison Berger echoes Carpenter's emphasis on the relationship between glass and light and

applies it to furnishings, lighting, and site-specific sculpture. “Light is my medium”; she writes, “glass is my material and memory.” Inspired by objects as diverse as an ancient abacus, Roman glass vessels, and scientific instruments, Berger crafts objects that stage light interventions on an intimate, rather than architectural, scale. Her *Hexagon Lens Chandelier* was inspired by the facets of a 1920s emerald-cut glass earring she discovered at a flea market. Fascinated by the ability of the facets to distort light, Berger began experimenting with cast glass lenses in 2009 when she created the *Lens Sconce* and *Lens Chandelier*. The *Hexagon Lens Chandelier* is a new work created for this exhibition and designed to give viewers a special view of its interactions with light by placing it in a dark area of the gallery at a height lower than a chandelier would typically be installed.

Many of the works in this exhibition are lighting fixtures, ranging from the elaborate and bespoke such as Marco Dessi's *Basket Chandelier* for the venerable Austrian firm Lobmeyr, to the clusters of glass globes comprising ceiling fixtures by Brooklyn designer Lindsey Adelman and the Canadian firm Bocci. Dessi found inspiration for the *Basket* fixture in an early Baroque glass chandelier from Schloss Hof palace near Vienna. Dessi “weaves” a basket-like structure using hexagonally bent glass tubes together with silk cords. The lighting element is a spiral on a pole that enhances light from halogen bulbs. Adelman's lighting has become easily recognizable as her modular building blocks are now in the hands of her customers. Her website features a service called “You Make It” which allows clients to assemble a lighting fixture from a menu of metal and glass options. Handblown glass globes by Michiko Sakano gives each piece the look of a fruit tree. The globes are spherical but never perfect, nor identical, making Adelman's experiment in online retailing an intriguing model for small and medium-sized firms working with contemporary artisans.

A growing number of designers are using glass in combination with LED elements and other materials. As Alan MacFarlane and Gerry Martin astutely note in their recent history of the material, *Glass: A World History*, we take glass for granted precisely because it is so common, and forget that even obsolete glass objects begat plastic descendants that we rely on daily.<sup>2</sup> Clear plastics were developed in the mid-20th century largely as shatter-proof alternatives to glass and without them, entire generations of objects that are made from plastics today would never have existed: clock and watch faces, tableware, eyeglasses, medical and laboratory equipment. Glass is returning to favor for designers and companies concerned with resource conservation. The SWITCH bulb and Hulger's *Plumen* (touted as the first designer energy-efficient light bulb) attempt to inject a bit of glamour into the sometimes style-challenged effort to conserve energy. SWITCH bulbs use LED elements and *Plumen* bulbs are CFL (compact fluorescent). Both bulbs have elegant, even whimsical glass casings.

London-based Bruce Munro, widely known for his outdoor sculptural installations that incorporate light, also designs indoor fixtures such as the *Whizz-Pop* pendant light. The outer casing is acrylic (to make the piece light enough to mount easily) and inside the sphere casing are 221 glass spheres, each 2.5 inches, that refract light from a 16-watt LED projector. The use of glass in this piece is key to its ability to capture and project light, which changes color according to the programmable projector.

Robert Stadler's *Carole #2* mirror makes use of reflective glass and LEDs to create a mirror that is as functional as it is whimsical, like a high tech version of the magic mirror in *Snow White*. The *Carole #2* is programmed to display a question mark every 40 seconds. The question mark appears for 15 seconds awaiting the user to wave her hand in front of the mirror, which activates a proximity detector. When activated, the mirror displays one of 400 aphorisms at random. The LEDs are invisible when not active, thus the *Carole #2* looks like an ordinary mirror much of the time.

Ingo Maurer's *Lüster Light* is composed of 287 white LEDs arranged to highlight a playful sketch of a traditional chandelier. The LEDs are compressed between two sheets of glass and powered by an external transformer. Maurer's witty design (which has a cousin in the form of an illuminated dining table) recalls Elsa Schiaparelli's *trompe l'oeil* sweaters and evening gowns which functioned as they were intended (as wearable garments) but also evoked imaginary second lives, with their graphic evocations of torn animal skins or large fussy bows where none existed. Maurer's *Lüster Light* has it both ways: a sleek, high tech, and modern fixture that pays homage to its ancestry and elaborate chandeliers with a multitude of tiny lights.

Lighting is so closely identified with glass that some designers of household goods even borrow from its visual repertoire in the creation of other objects. Paris-based designer Liana Yaroslavsky finds special resonance in the glass blowing and lighting traditions of Venice but adds a surrealist twist. She creates chandeliers that look like upsidedown, ceiling-mounted tables (e.g. *Alice Chandelier*) and tables that look like displaced lighting fixtures. Her table, *Maure de Venise* (The Moor of Venice, a reference to Othello) is composed of a plexiglass case partially engulfing a deep purple glass chandelier based on a design by Seguso, who in turn drew inspiration from Baroque and Renaissance fixtures. Like Maurer's two-dimensional chandelier, Yaroslavsky's table repurposes a symbol of ornament and excess by radically snapping it into 21st-century reality—a sharp-cornered context in which to view the chandelier as a signifier. It is beauty in quotation marks rather than the genuine article.

The simple form of a hand-blown vase, now nearly 2,000 years old, continues to hold a certain allure for glassblowers. Israeli designer Amiram Biton's *My Drop* series is designed to mimic the movement of water over the edge of a surface; each vase looks as though it is about to dissolve and run down the side of the table, making the viewer acutely aware of glass's double life as a liquid and a solid. Werner Aisslinger's *Mesh Vases* are made by blowing glass into a textured, heat-proof textile bag which leaves behind a distinctive pattern on the surface of the vase. Aisslinger created this technique in collaboration with CIAV Meisenthal, an experimental studio for blown glass in France. The metallic sheen comes from a thin coating of silver inside the vase that is visible from the outside.

Combining post-modern design with traditional techniques, the Moretti family of Venice is one of the few “artisan factories” still in operation today. Founded in 1958 by Carlo and Giovanni Moretti, the firm has produced vessels and lighting fixtures that combine traditional glassblowing techniques with a sophisticated visual vocabulary that at times flirts with Memphis style as much as it embodies centuries of Venetian tradition. Wide staring eyes, squiggles, and spirals festoon the vases in this exhibition.

The interaction of glass and light is central to the work of Tom Patti and Helen Lee whose work harnesses the unique ability of glass to direct and amplify light, inviting viewers to experience a real-time optical effect that cannot be replicated in a photograph. Lee's installation *Placeholder Shelf* is a series of hand-blown vessels each of which resembles a letter of the alphabet. Arranged together, the vessels form a new “font” which is only visible when lit properly and can easily disappear when viewed from an angle.

Pratt alumnus Tom Patti (B.I.D. '67, M.I.D. '69), who has a background in industrial design, emphasizes his work “wasn't built around the glass furnace.” Patti developed many of his techniques and processes independently, in search of a particular end result rather than the focus on process that seems to fascinate much of the studio glass world. Patti's glass and steel *Z Table* is part of a series of small works designed to echo his larger scale architectural installations. Patti notes that his site-specific works are designed to “animate” the experience of people moving through the space so that the visual field is never static. The smaller works, in turn, can be reconfigured. The glass components of the *Z Table* can be arranged in 38 unique shapes. Similarly, Patti's wall piece *Blind Tri-Ellipse* relies on the viewer's movement as light catches the subtle surface detail more easily when seen from the side.

Patti's work is emblematic of the wide spectrum of possibilities that glass affords. Despite eschewing certain glass techniques and traditions, his work retains the essential qualities that have made glass such an integral part of art, architecture and design for thousands of years. Like no other material, glass can make solid and permanent an interaction between a person, the environment, and the light that surrounds them.

**Sarah Archer, guest curator, February 2012**

<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Frampton, “Is Glass Still Glass?,” in *Engineered Transparency: The Technical, Visual, and Spatial Effects of Glass*, Michael Bell and Jeannie Kim, eds., New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2009, p. 88.

<sup>2</sup> Alan MacFarlane and Gerry Martin, *Glass: A World History*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Tom Patti, “Tom Patti — Voices of Contemporary Glass,” Corning Museum of Art YouTube Channel, accessed December, 2011 (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c0nmieUWeds>).



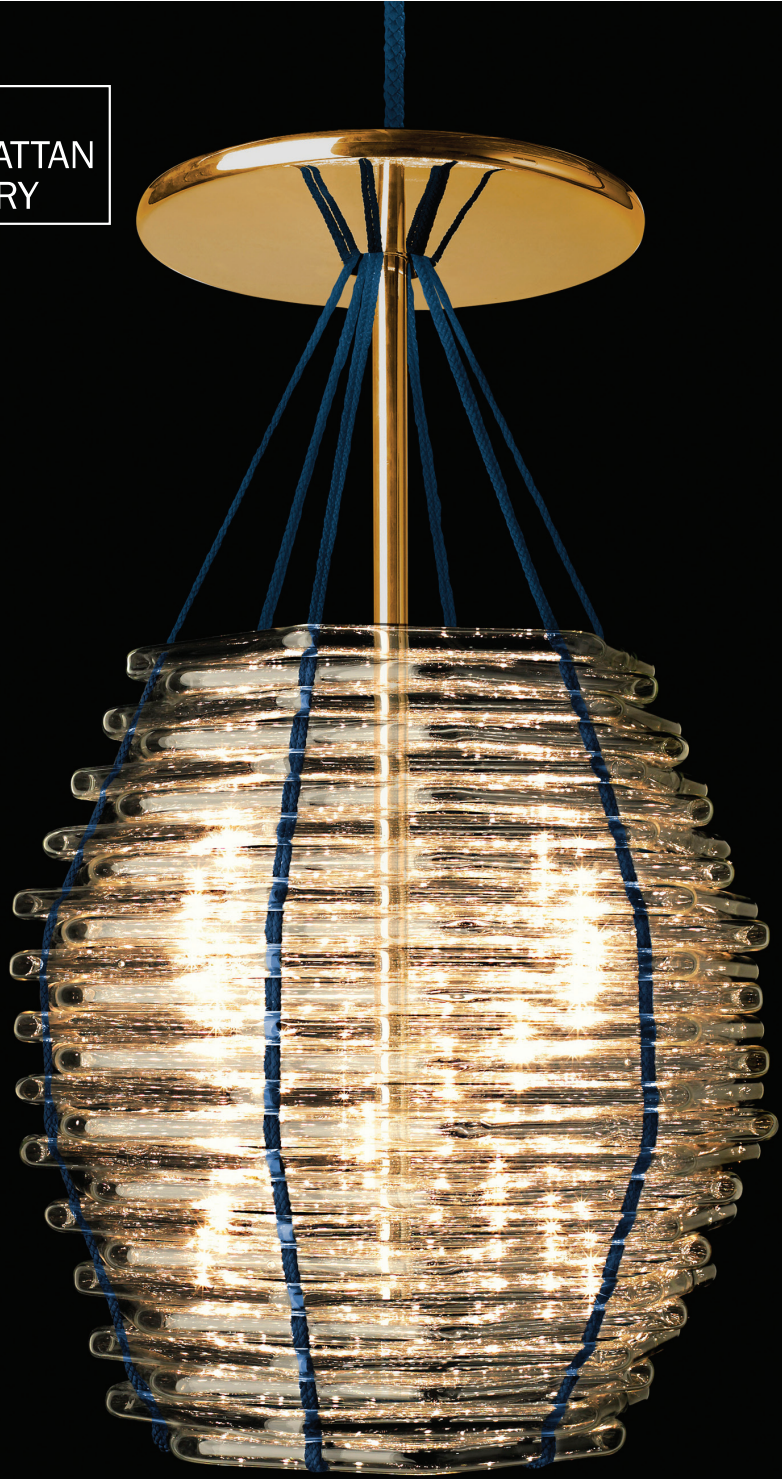
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**Bright Future**

*New Designs in Glass*  
February 10–May 5, 2012



**Exhibition  
Checklist:**

**Lindsey Adelman Studio**

**U.S.A.**

*Branching Bubble Light*, 2011  
Brass and glass, 51 x 33 x 37 inches



Courtesy of Lindsey Adelman Studio

**Werner Aisslinger & CIAV Meisenthal**

**France**

*Mesh Vases*, 2008

Hand-blown glass with textile mesh print and silver-coated interior, 14 and 17 inches in height



Courtesy of Studio Aisslinger & CIAV Meisenthal

**Omer Arbel for Bocci**

**Canada**

*28.7 Seven-Pendant Chandelier*, 2010

Blown glass and metal, canopy 13 inches in diameter



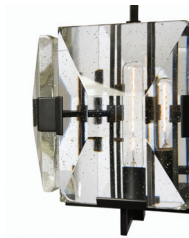
Courtesy of Bocci Designs

**Alison Berger**

**U.S.A.**

*Hexagon Lens Chandelier*, 2012

Cast glass faceted lenses and steel, 11.81 x 17.86 x 17.86 inches



Courtesy of Alison Berger

**Amiram Biton**

**Israel**

*Liquid*, 2010

Hand-blown glass vase, 19.5 x 3 x 8 inches



*Birth*, 2010

Hand-blown glass vase, 15.5 x 2.4 x 6 inches

Courtesy of Amiram Biton

**James Carpenter**

**U.S.A.**

*Renderings for Moynihan station Winning Scheme*, 2005-

Digital print presentation, 48 x 72 inches



*Renderings for Israel Museum Jerusalem Renewal*,

**2005–2010**

Digital print presentation, 48 x 72 inches

Courtesy of James Carpenter Design Associates. Photo: Jock Pottle

**GlasPro**

**U.S.A.**

*Sample of Switchable Privacy Glass*, 2010



Courtesy of Robin Reigl, New York

**Marco Dessi for J. & L. Lobmeyr**

**Austria**

*Basket Chandelier*, 2010

Brass, glass, and silk ropes 25.6 x 14.6 x 14.6 inches



Courtesy of J. & L. Lobmeyr

**Hulger and Samuel Wilkinson**

**U.K.**

*Plumen 001*, 2010

Designer energy-saving bulb, 7.5 x 3.5 x 3.75 inches



Courtesy of Hulger Ltd. Photo: Andrew Penketh

**Helen Lee**

**U.S.A.**

*Placeholder Shelf*, 2010

Glass installation with floor-based lighting, 4 x 6 x 96 inches



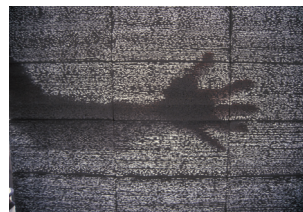
Courtesy of Helen Lee

**Aron Losonczi**

**Hungary**

*Sample of LiTraCon*, 2011

Translucent glass concrete, 24 x 16 x 1 inches



Courtesy of Aron Losonczi

**Ingo Maurer**

**Germany and U.S.A.**

*Lüster Light*, 2003

LEDs encased in sheets of glass, 39.5 x 25.5 x 0.38 inches



Courtesy of Ingo Maurer LLC

**Giovanni Moretti for Carlo Moretti**

**Italy**

*Mirpak, Polari, Girtab, and Centau*, 2011

Four blown-glass vessels, each 10.5 inches in height

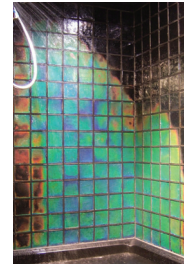


Courtesy of Carlo Moretti, srl.

**Moving Color**

**U.S.A.**

*Samples of Temperature-Sensitive Glass*, 2010–2011



Courtesy of Moving Color

**Bruce Munro**

**U.K.**

*Whizz-Pop Chandelier*, 2011

LED and acrylic, 23.5 inches in diameter



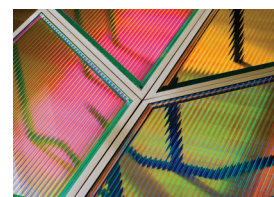
Courtesy of Bruce Munro

**Tom Patti**

**U.S.A.**

*Z Table*, 2005

Glass and steel, 52 x 20 x 16 inches



**Blind Tri-Ellipse**, 2009

Glass, 26 5/8 x 17 inches, each of three

Courtesy of Heller Gallery, New York Photo: Paul Rocheleau

**Robert Stadler**

**France**

*Carole #2*, 2008

One-way mirror with LED display, 24 x 24 inches



Courtesy of Robert Stadler and Galerie des Multiples, Paris

**SWITCH Lighting**

**U.S.A.**

*LED Bulbs*, 2012

Energy-efficient LED light bulbs, 2.73 x 4.41 inches



Courtesy of SWITCH Lighting

**Liana Yaroslavsky**

**France**

*Mare de Venise Table*, 2009

Venetian-style chandelier enclosed in plexiglass, 43 x 43 x 18 inches



Courtesy of Liana Yaroslavsky