

THE FUTURE OF GLASS ART

Many glass artisans wonder what the future will be for glass art. 10 years ago, the market for stained glass and kilnformed glass was about 80% stained glass and 20% kilnformed. Those percentages have now reversed. Over the past few years there has also been a huge surge of interest in torchworking with locally made glass selling steadily. Now, the market for glass art is being increasingly taken up with imports and local artisans are finding it increasingly difficult to compete. What should we expect for the future for glass artisans? Here's my predictions.

STAINED GLASS

There will continue to be a steady market for custom work and repairs, but as a whole the market will continue to decline as more and more customers chose to buy the lower cost imported work.

KILNFORMING

The market for small simple work (vessels, etc) will decline - in the same way, and for the same reasons, the stained glass market diminished. Customers won't pay a local artist \$100.00 when they can buy similar imported work for \$20.00 However, I expect the market for complex work (like multi-dimensional and multi-medium sculpture) will increase.

TORCHWORKING

The market for sculptural work will grow while that for elementary work (balls, beads, and bongs) will die quicker than stained glass did.

GLASS BLOWING

Many large studios with large furnaces will close because their overhead is too high to justify. They'll be replaced by glass blowers using small gas or electric furnaces in small personal studios. You can now buy a furnace capable of an 80 lb melt for \$1000. I expect this increased supply of small blown glass will push prices down but the improved affordability and increased availability will simultaneously create increased interest in blown glass

GLASS CASTING

I believe the demand for large scale work will increase but the greatest market expansion will come from increased availability of smaller cast glass art (from those small furnaces).

MULTI-DISCIPLINE

Much of the new market for glass art will come from work that isn't restricted to a single technique or production method. The most successful glass artisans will be those that incorporate stained glass, kilnforming, torchworking, and casting into innovative designs.

ARCHITECTURAL

Increased interest in architectural applications will provide many opportunities for glass artists. Some of the specifics I expect will become increasingly popular are:

- Custom glass tiles. Upscale homeowners want something special for bathroom and kitchens
- Kilnformed cabinet doors. Many designs that are impossible in stained glass, are simple in fusing.
- Glass walls (interior & exterior). Decorative glass divider walls assembled with large glass tiles.

Personally, I think this is a fabulous time to be involved in glass art with all the opportunities for growth and innovation being offered. The competitive pressures created by low cost imports are the best thing that's happened to the glass industry. It culls the herd of all those that insist on staying in a comfort zone and refuse to experiment with new ideas and new techniques.