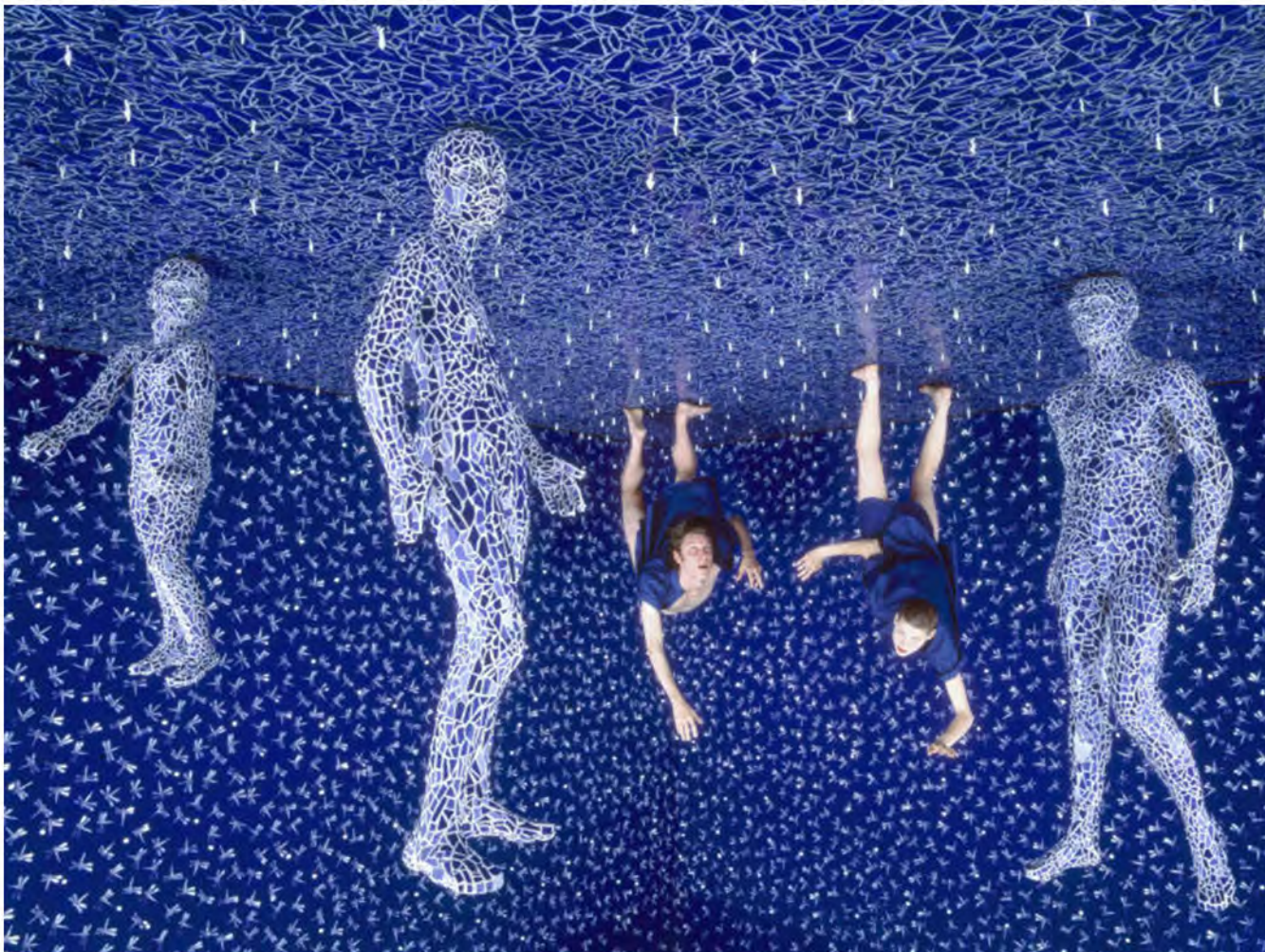


TEACHER RESOURCE PACKET

Playing with Fire: 50 years of Contemporary Glass
November 6, 2012 to April 7, 2013



Sandy Skoglund
Breathing Glass, 2000
Cibachrome photograph 44 3/4 x 57 5/8 in. (113.7 x 146.4 cm)
Gift of the artist, 2004



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WELCOME

Dear Educator,

We are delighted that you have scheduled a visit to *Playing With Fire, 50 Years of Contemporary Glass*.

When you and your students visit the Museum of Arts and Design, you will be given an informative tour of the exhibition with a museum educator, followed by an inspiring hands-on project that students can take home with them. To make your museum experience more enriching and meaningful, we strongly encourage you to use this packet as a resource, and work with your students in the classroom before and after your museum visit.

This packet includes topics for discussion and activities intended to introduce the key themes and concepts of the exhibition. We have suggested writing, storytelling, and art projects so that you can explore ideas from the exhibition in ways that relate directly to your students' lives and experiences.

Please feel free to adapt and build on these materials and to use this packet in any way that you wish.

We look forward to welcoming you and your students to the Museum of Arts and Design.

Sincerely,

Cathleen Lewis
Manager of School, Youth and Family Programs
cathleen.lewis@madmuseum.org

Lessons written by Swati Khurana and Natalia Nakazawa, Museum Educators, in collaboration with the Museum of Arts and Design Education Department.



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THE MUSEUM OF ARTS AND DESIGN has been functioning as an international resource center for craft, arts, and design since 1956. Through its collections, exhibitions, programs, and publications, the Museum serves as a forum for critical debate concerning the nature of craftsmanship and the engagement with the process that links materials, techniques, forms, patterns, and concepts in all creative work.

HOW DOES A MUSEUM WORK?



ADMINISTRATION: This team, led by the Director of the Museum determines the programs, plans, and philosophy of the Museum. It also raises funds to realize the Museum's goals and works directly with the Board of Governors, which guides the Museum's functions.

CURATORIAL: This is the team, led by the Chief Curator, that works together to decide which exhibits will be shown, how they will look, what artwork is to be included, and how they are to be interpreted.

REGISTRATION: Led by the Registrar, this team arranges the safe handling of art to be placed in an exhibition and maintains the museum's permanent collections.

EDUCATION: This team provides the interactive interpretation of the objects on view through the educational programs designed for children, adults, and families who visit the Museum.

FACILITY MAINTENANCE: This is the team that allows the day-to-day operations of a museum to continue, from turning on the lights to ensuring the safety of all who enter the building.

SECURITY GUARDS: This is the team most often seen in a museum, because its main task is to protect the artwork from harm so that in the future people will be able to see the same objects we admire today. They also are helpful to visitors who have questions.

Museums are places where we can learn about the past, present, and future of the world around us. The diversity of knowledge is endless when the habit of museum exploration is formed at an early age. We look forward to welcoming your group into our galleries.



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HELPFUL HINTS FOR YOUR MUSEUM VISIT:

"I try, when I go to museums, to do two things. One, to appreciate what I'm looking at, just to see it, but then to isolate a few pieces that I really look at in detail. I study and I draw not with any purpose in mind. I mean, I don't go looking for specific things. I just try to be open-minded and keep my eyes open. It's interesting that every time I go back to the same place, I see something different." Arline M. Fisch (1931-) Brooklyn, New York

While visiting the exhibition try to use all your senses. Notice the way the pieces are displayed. *Are there any specific groupings of pieces you can distinguish? If you enjoy looking at one piece more than others, can you explain why?*

Here are some questions and suggestions to think about as you move around the exhibition:

I. *What can be objectively observed?*

- a. *What is the physical description of the object you are looking at? Measurement, weight, materials used, articulation of materials...*
- b. *What iconography, if any, is used? Designs, words, diagrams...*
- c. *What are the object's formal design characteristics? Lines, shapes, forms, color, texture...*

II. *What would it be like to interact with this piece of art? How would you handle, lift, display it?*

- a. *How would the piece of art feel, move, and sound?*
- b. *What does the piece do? Does the piece have a function? How would the figures move if they were alive?*
- c. *What is our emotional response to the artwork? Fear, joy, indifference, curiosity, revulsion, excitement...*

III. *What is in the mind of the artist? What are the viewers thinking and feeling? Use creative imagining and free association.*

- a. *Review all of the above information and consider what was going on in the world when the work was produced to develop possible interpretations of the piece. (Theories and hypotheses)*
- b. *Does the piece tell a story and/or have underlying political or social meaning? (Understanding and visual thinking)*
- c. *Develop a program to investigate the questions posed by the material evidence. (Program of research)*

IV. *Brainstorm about an event or situation currently happening in your life that you could animate into one scene through your very own figurative drawing or poem. (Design themes)*



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INTRODUCTION:

Celebrating the 50th anniversary of the birth of the American Studio Glass movement, *Playing with Fire: 50 Years of Contemporary Glass*, features more than 100 selections from the collection, as well as gifts, and additional contemporary works on loan. The exhibition explores the extraordinary qualities of glass as an artistic material, highlighting an array of techniques, both traditional and innovative. Beginning with the seminal 1962 workshop led by legendary glassblower Harvey Littleton, artists and designers have continually pushed the material in new and unexpected directions to create an astonishing diversity of works.

Harvey Littleton was raised in Corning, NY and grew up talking about the properties of glass at the dinner table with his parents, Bessie and J.T. Littleton, who were instrumental in developing **Pyrex** cookware through experimentation in their home kitchen. Even in 1947, designer Sidney Waugh in *The Making of Fine Glass* said, “It must be emphasized that **glassblowing** is not within the scope of the amateur, or even the most talented artist or craftsman, working alone.”¹ Harvey Littleton changed that perception by working with others to develop a studio glass practice using a small furnace, low temperature melting-point glass, and introduced glass as a material to artists for the making of contemporary art. Through these workshops, he encouraged his students to seek academic employment, start more glass programs, and disseminate studio **glassblowing** techniques as a contemporary arts practice.

The selections of works in *Playing with Fire* reveal the trajectory and impact of the Toledo workshops on the Studio Glass Movement. One of Littleton’s students was world-renowned glass artist, Dale Chihuly, whose early *Untitled Basket* (1978) was acquired by MAD while Chihuly was still an emerging artist. Chihuly’s work was inspired by Northwest Coast Indian baskets he saw in Tacoma, about which he said: “I was struck by the grace of their slumped, sagging forms. I wanted to capture this in glass. The breakthrough for me was recognizing that heat and gravity were the tools

¹ “Harvey K. Littleton and the American Studio Glass Movement” Corning Museum of Glass
<<http://www.cmog.org/article/harvey-k-littleton-and-american-studio-glass-movement#.UNEizLamD34>>



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to be used to make these forms."² In addition, William Morris, one of Chihuly's former master glassblowers, has a work in the exhibition entitled *Canopic Jar*— from a series of the more elaborate form of funeral jars originating in Ancient Egypt, updating the typical Egyptian pinnacle subjects with stags, deer, and other animals.

Playing with Fire reveals that within the last fifty years, many glass artists have worked with, learned from, and inspired one another. Artworks in the exhibition range from Toots Zink's work, which is made of hundreds of colored glass threads, to Clifford Rainey's *War Boy—Job Number 1*, in which spent ammunition is encased within the fragile shell of a young boy's torso. *Playing with Fire* exemplifies how artists use **luminosity** and **transparency** to achieve brilliant and saturated hues.

² Dale Chihuly "Basket Statement" <http://www.chihuly.com/basket-statement.aspx>



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THEMES FOR DISCUSSION:

LIGHT AND LIGHTNESS: Consider the materiality of glass in these works. What is the interplay of light? Is the glass **transparent**, **translucent**, or **opaque**? Does the effect of light play a role in the deeper meaning of the work? Consider the lightness or weight of these works. Imagine holding them. Would they feel heavy or fragile? Does the appearance of lightness or weight shape the meaning of the work?

ICONS AND STORYTELLING: Traditional processes of glass arts processes, such as **mosaics** and stained glass, lend themselves to having **narrative** possibilities. How do the artists in this exhibition use glass as a medium of storytelling? What materials are used? What images do you see? What stories are told?

FIGURE AND SHAPES: Throughout this exhibition, you will see many figures. Some will be recognized as human (or fragments of humans), some reference animals, and others symbolize flora. How realistic or how abstract are these figures? What role do the figures play in the works' overall meaning? What role does realism or abstraction play? In addition, you will also see many shapes. Consider how the artists created these shapes. What techniques did they use? Are these shapes symmetrical? What about balance and movement: how are they achieved in these works?

FORM AND FUNCTION: Glass has been a material, prized for its durability, and used for industrial purposes for centuries. Recently, with the help of many of the artists in this exhibition, and through the Studio movement, glass has been seen as a medium for individual artists. The interplay between form and function is present, and sometimes is a source of tension, in contemporary glass works. Which works speak to more traditional views of the function of glass? Within those works, what does the artist insert as an individual, creative interpretation? Which works directly confront and contest the expectations of functionality in the medium?



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RECURRING QUESTIONS:

- What kinds of processes or skills do you think are necessary for the making of this work?
- Is the glass blown, cut, molded, printed, **sandblasted** or are there other combinations at work?
- How do artists approach the medium of glass playfully?
- How is the artist or designer utilizing the properties of glass in meaningful ways?
- Is the art historical context or functional purpose of glass an important part to understanding the piece?
- What other types of materials or objects can you identify?
- Can some variation of this object be found in your home or school?
- How does the physical installation of the artwork impact the way we engage with the piece?
- How are the objects in this exhibition similar or different from those you encounter in the everyday?
- In what way does the content of the work emphasize issues in contemporary culture?



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Clifford Rainey

War Boy - Job No. 1

Glass, inert ammunition, iron wire, oxides, pins, maple plinth

43 x 15 x 15 in. (109.2 x 38.1 x 38.1 cm)

Promised gift of Simona and Jerry Chazen, 2010



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LOOK:

Take a moment to look closely at the image above, and then begin describing what you see:

- What are the different elements of the sculpture and how are they integrated into one whole?
- What shapes and objects can you identify?
- The young torso, torn open at the seam, is a very strong image. What do you think are the emotions that the artist wanted to convey?
- How does the artist use materials to create this emotional response from the viewer?

THINK ABOUT:

- What is the relationship between the title of this piece, *War Boy – Job No. 1*, and what you see?
- What message or story do you think the artist is trying to communicate in this sculpture?
- If you could imagine a series of these works, what would they look like and how would they relate to one another?

War Boy--Job No. 1 is part of Clifford Rainey's Boyhood series, a group of torsos that are based on a single life cast taken from the artist's ten-year-old godson. Each figure represents an aspect of boyhood, ranging from the innocence of *Shy Boy* to the mysterious quality of *Philosophical Boy*, which features a green ceramic apple embedded in the abdomen. *War Boy*, whose ruptured torso is held together with wire stitches, can barely contain the bullets that emerge from within. These sculptures, according to the artist, "do not presume to answer questions, but [are intended] to stir debate and seek for understanding in these turbulent times. These works are autobiographical. These works are politically charged. I hope they are capable of



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mobilizing and stimulating thought and to spark the senses to take pleasure in sculptural form."³

- How does Rainey bring controversial issues to light?
- How does the artist explore issues of boyhood in this work?
- What are some questions he is raising?

DISCUSS:

Artists are constantly pushing the boundaries of their craft and using materials in shocking and interesting ways.

- Discuss how this piece uses the materials to create a story. Do you think that this work could be made with a completely different set of materials? If so, what would they be?
- As a group, or in pairs, imagine that you were going to re-make this artwork using materials you could find in your classroom. This could include chairs and tables, pencils and paper, or a variety of other materials. How would you recreate this artwork? Do you think the meaning would change?
- If you were to create your own series of artworks on boyhood or girlhood, what issues do you think would be the most important to reflect on?
- How do you think the experience of being a young boy or girl has changed throughout history? Do you think you would have a lot in common with young people from the past? How about young people from the future?

DO:

What are some issues that are important to you? Brainstorm a list of topics and then select the one that is the most provocative or interesting to you. Think about an image or form that embodies that topic and create a simple line drawing. Duplicate this one form using a photocopier or a scanner and change each image incrementally in a way that might tell a story or provoke a discussion from your

³ Artist's statement in *Clifford Rainey: Boyhood-A Series of Mono Casts and Preparatory Drawings*, Habatat Galleries, Boca Raton, Florida, 2006, n. p.



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classmates. Title your series and write a short paragraph exploring the relationship between the images you created.



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Joyce Scott,

Water Mammy 1, 2012

Glass beads (all bead work (Peyote Stitch) created by artist), blown glass, thread, wire
35 1/16 x 6 1/2 x 10 1/16 in. (89 x 16.5 x 25.5 cm)

Gift of Mike DePaola



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LOOK:

Take a moment to look closely at this image above, and then begin describing what you see:

- Why do you think the artist chose to use both beading and glass in her work?
- How do the materials help to enforce the **narrative**?
- Can you identify figures in this work? Describe them.
- Do you notice anything strange about the position or poses of the figures?
- How does this artist use color in her work?

THINK ABOUT:

- Mami Wata is said to embody African beauty. Do you think this work conveys ideals of beauty? Why or why not?
- Describe your emotional response to this piece. What elements of the sculpture are the most provocative to you?
- In what way does the artist explore Mami Wata's duality in the work?
- How does the artist play with the materials to express meaning?

Inspired by the materials and forms of African art, Joyce Scott has incorporated beading into much of her work since the 1990s. This hybrid of beadwork and glass alludes to the water spirit Mami Wata, revered by many throughout Africa and the Diaspora for her powerful beauty. Her extreme vanity and West African origins are often evoked through the reflective qualities of mirrors and water, referenced here in the beaded figure's dual image in clear glass.

DISCUSS:

When asked about what influences her work, Scott explains, "I have been consistently informed by pop culture, contemporary culture, around me. Our pop culture today is so saturated with things that we may or may not have considered to be polite or proper for public consumption, and it's always on the cutting edge of the political and social issues... It crosses all those lines about class, caste, ethnicity,



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feminism, all of that stuff... And that's what I write about and perform about and do sculpture about...⁴"

- Discuss ways that Scott incites the viewer to consider contemporary social issues. What do you think the message of this work is?
- How do you think pop culture influenced the making of this work?
- Describe how Scott brings the myth of Mami Wata to life in a contemporary context?

DO:

In groups, select a popular folktale song, poem or short story that you all are familiar with (such as, the Three Little Pigs, the Greek myth of Icarus, Rapunzel, the Sword in the Stone, etc.). Imagine that your team has been hired to create an illustrated comic strip for a magazine that your peers will be reading. How would you update the characters to capture the interest of your classmates? Would you change the story line? How would you include contemporary issues in your illustrated folktale? Would you use humor or horror in your story? Develop a storyboard and share your ideas with your classmates.

Extension: Compare the African Mami Wata myth with the story of Narcissus. What differences and similarities can you find between the stories? How does gender change the meaning or message of the myth? Research other pieces of art that were created using characters from mythology. How have artists been inspired by these timeless tales?

⁴ http://www.afro.com/sections/arts_entertainment/story.htm?storyid=74061



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Nils Grossien

Biggie Smalls and Rudy Giuliani, 1995

Glass, wood 26 x 24 x 1 in.

Collection of Geoff Isles



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LOOK:

Take a few moments to gather “visual evidence” by looking closely at the image.

- What are these works made of? Please describe the shape and texture of what you see in the works.
- Describe the color scheme. Discuss what effect it has on the work.
- In looking at the work, what do you think is the process behind the making of the work?
- What effect does the process have on the meaning of the works?
- How are the two pieces arranged? Why would they be arranged in this way?
- Do you recognize the people in these works?
- When do you think these works were made?
- Is the style of this work reminiscent of something you may have seen before? Please explain.

DISCUSS:

German artist Nils Grossein made these **mosaics** in 1995. They are part of a larger series called “American Faces”, in which he made **mosaics** of famous Americans’ profiles, most of which were pop culture or political figures contemporary to the time. Grossein is inspired by the tradition of mosaics, a form often associated with **Byzantine icons** depicting religious figures and scenes.

- In your opinion, why would the artist use the form of the mosaic to depict the figures of Rudy Giuliani and Biggie Smalls?
- Consider the scale of the figure in these works. How does the compositional layout affect the work’s larger meaning?

THINK ABOUT:

Nils Grossein is particularly interested in the celebrity **icon** as a signifier for contemporary society. “Rudy Giuliani” and “Biggie Smalls” refer to a specific historical moment in 1995, when hip-hop music and style was becoming very mainstream all over America, and Rudy Giuliani emerged as a symbol of a more conservative “law and order” icon, one who often was at the forefront of the “Culture



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Wars” of the 1990s. Regarding the individual figures created out of **mosaic** glass tiles raises another issue: what does it mean that these figures, who were larger than life, can be broken down and fragmented into smaller pieces? While photographs provided the original source imagery for these works, the final faces are reduced to a grid of small, square glass tiles, to reveal the fragmentary nature of celebrity and iconography.

- Both figures loved the press and were able to amass great followings. What other figures do you think the artist could have chosen to make these **mosaic** portraits?
- What does the viewer feel when looking at this work?
- In your opinion, does the form of **mosaics** treat the subject reverently, irreverently, or neutrally? Please explain your answer.

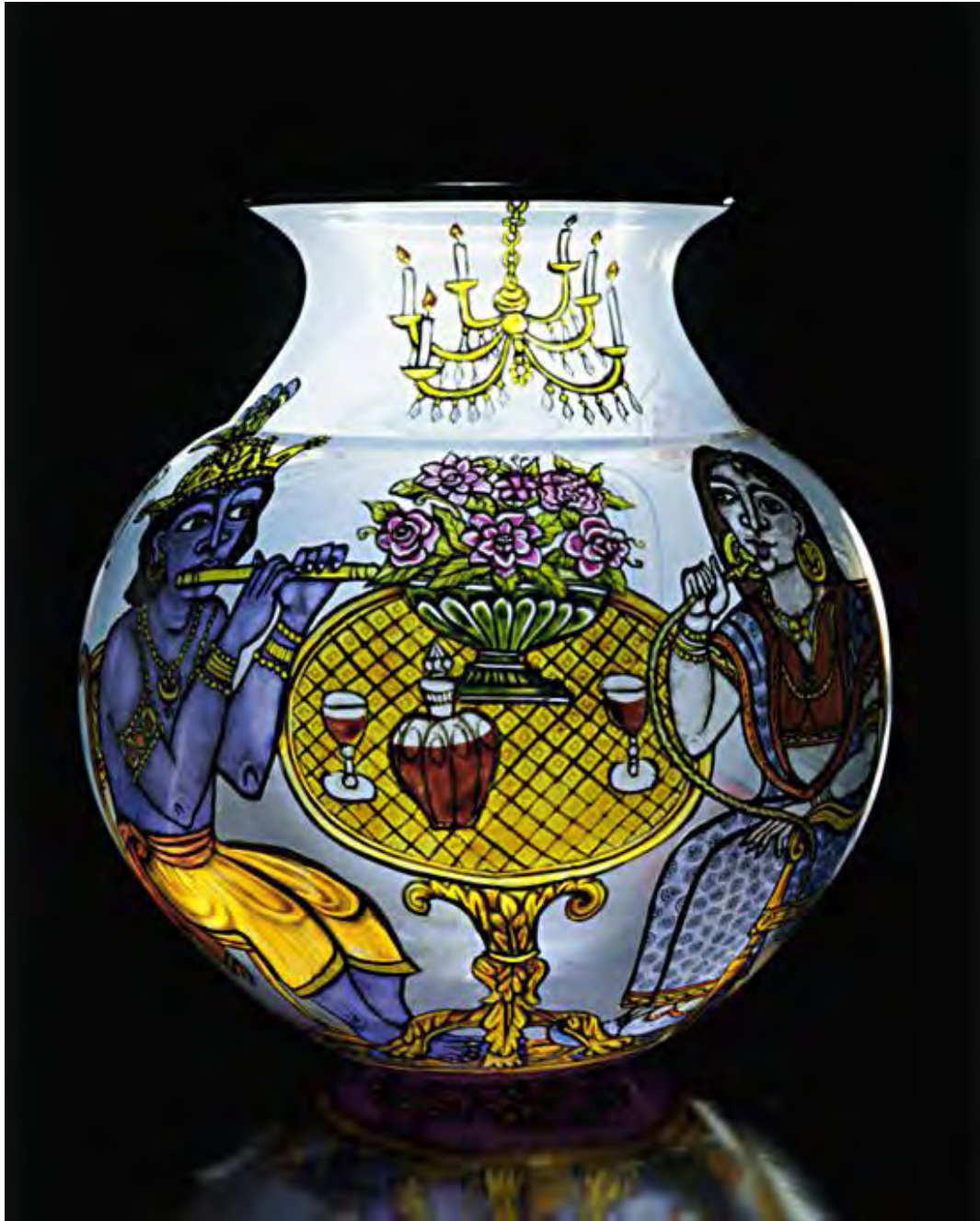
DO:

Hand out three single photographic images of icons: For example, Michael Bloomberg, Barack Obama and Mitt Romney. Then hand out the versions printed on colored paper. Have students take a look at the icons and pick one. Then, they pick at least three colored prints they would like to work with. Have students make a **mosaic** of an icon. Students may choose to cut square tiles, stripes, or work in a less geometric way. Students use glue sticks to glue the pieces onto a single sheet of vellum. Students will then describe the **mosaic** they made, specifically why they chose the icon, the colors, shapes, and composition. Finally, they will share if they were to do this project again, what icon would they pick, and why.

Materials: Printouts of different celebrity/political icons in different colors, sheets of vellum, scissors, glue sticks.



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Cappy Thompson

My Life with Lord Krishna, 1993

Blown glass; painted 15 x 14 x 14 in. (38.1 x 35.6 x 35.6 cm)

Gift of Andrea and Charles Bronfman, 2002



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LOOK:

Take a careful look at this image and describe what you see.

- How would you describe the shape of the object?
- Is the object clear or **opaque**?
- Describe the way the figures are depicted.
- Imagine touching the object. What do you think it would feel like?
- How does the artist use lines? What effect do these lines have on the work?
- How does the artist use color?
- What is the scene in this work? What is the mood?
- What are the figures in this work doing? Can you identify who they are?
- Summarizing your observations, what story does the work tell you?

THINK ABOUT:

In this vessel, Cappy Thompson rendered a symbolic representation of her life as a newly single working artist, seated at a table with the Hindu god Krishna. Thompson describes her process as making "picture poems" which marry mythology, folk styles and self-expression.

- In what ways can the viewer see playfulness in the painting, from the scene and the style of painting?
- What is the relationship between the shape of the vessel and the flatness of the drawing?
- What meaning can be attributed to the fact that the artist painted on a transparent vessel? What could that surface reveal about the artist's intention?

Here is how Thompson described the use of the vessel in her work:

"The imagery is paramount, and developing the **narrative** is my primary focus. The perfect ground for this narrative work, however, is the transparent glass vessel. The vessel is a container, a bounded surface with interior access. This allows the vessel to become a world or microcosm, a body or self, and a room or space. These



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metaphors support and reinforce the narrative. The transparency of the vessel allows you to see the surface narrative, into it, and through it. The circumferential form of the vessel allows you to circumambulate the story, to move through distance and time. Adding this third dimension to the painting exponentially increases its potentiality. It allows the painting to become sculptural.”⁵

DISCUSS:

Thompson describes her work as a combination of “two ancient lineages”-- “the Medieval artists who painted on stained glass and that of the Greek artisans who painted clay pots. Like them I paint pictorial **narratives**.”⁶

- Other than the historicity of stained glass and painted clay pots in her practice, does Thompson use any other historical markers in her imagery? How does Thompson play with time, space, and perspective in this scene?
- Stained glass, as an architectural material, allows an artist to communicate broadly to a collective, while the vessel exists on an intimate, individual scale, which tends to reveal ideas that can be more personal. How does Thompson reconcile the tension between the public and the private in her work?
- Thompson paints herself as a character in her “picture poems”. What does this work reveal about how the artist perceives herself? Why effect does the flat perspective have, given that the work can be seen as a self-portrait?
- In many of Thompson’s works, she casts herself into scenes from various world spiritual traditions. What effect does it have that the scene in the work contains a spiritual figure? What effect does it have that a spiritual figure is linked to a self-portrait? Does that juxtaposition of self-portrait and figure of a deity seem like an ancient or contemporary art practice?
- Thompson says; “In my work I’m aspiring to create this experience for the viewer, to be emotionally transported by a story, and to resonate with its

⁵ http://cappythompson.com/info_pages/mythopoesis.html

⁶ http://cappythompson.com/info_pages/statement.html



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meaning.”⁷ Is she successful? Does the viewer feel emotionally transported? What about the imagery or material of the work makes one feel transported?

DO:

Talk about the term “picture poem” that Capp Thompson uses to describe her autobiographic works. Discuss what would make a good “picture poem” and brainstorm a list of significant scenes or moments in the students’ lives. Next, have them create a drawing on the pre-cut paper that incorporates the scene they described. In the style of Thompson, encourage students to draw simply, with a flat perspective, and to use symbols. Then tape the drawing on the inside of the plastic cup, and have students trace the drawings with a black permanent marker. If they have time, they can color in their drawings, leaving some negative space. Then remove the paper drawing, and display all the cups so that students can walk around the cups. Finally, ask them to show the cup they created and explain how they represented their picture poems.

Materials: Clear Plastic Cups, Paper: pre-cut to fit inside the cup, Pencils, Erasers, Permanent Markers, Tape.

⁷ http://cappythompson.com/info_pages/mythopoesis.html



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GLOSSARY

Byzantine icon: a conventional religious image typically painted on a small wooden panel and used in the devotions of Eastern Christians

Glassblowing: the art of shaping a mass of glass that has been softened by heat by blowing air into it through a tube

Icon: pictorial representation or symbol

Luminosity: the quality of emitting or reflecting light

Mosaic: a surface decoration made by inlaying small pieces of variously colored material to form pictures or patterns

Narrative: the telling of a story

Opaque: blocking the passage of light

Pyrex: a borosilicate* glass with a low coefficient of expansion; used for heat-resistant glassware in cooking and chemistry

(*borosilicate: a salt of boric and silicic acids)

Sandblasted: when glass is etched by blasting air or steam carrying sand at high velocity

Saturation: concentration; Vividness of hue; intensity

Translucency: the quality of a material to diffusing light partially

Transparency: the quality of a material to transmit light clearly



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WEBOGRAPHY

Harvey Littleton:

<http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-harvey-k-littleton-11795>

<http://www.cmog.org/article/harvey-k-littleton-and-american-studio-glass-movement#.UNEWabamD34>

Dale Chihuly:

<http://www.chihuly.com/home.aspx>

Clifford Rainey:

<http://www.bullseyegallery.com/Artist-Info.cfm?ArtistsID=366&Object=>

Joyce Scott:

<http://mobilia-gallery.com/artists/jscott/>

http://www.afro.com/sections/arts_entertainment/story.htm?storyid=74061

Sandy Skoglund:

<http://www.sandyskoglund.com/>

Cappy Thompson:

<http://cappythompson.com/>



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