

# Prints From Glass: The Discovery Of A Process

"A glass plate seemed a precarious item, but in this business one learns not to shy away from the novel idea. The first plate I tried inked up nicer than metal. I adjusted the press to take its thickness and sent it through. There was a definitive CRUNCH... and when the felts were thrown back we gazed upon a 12 x 15 inch area of powdered glass."

Printmaker Warrington Collescott's description of Harvey Littleton's first attempt at printing with a glass matrix in 1975.

Convinced that the attributes of glass would make for an attractive

alternate printmaking process, glass artist Harvey Littleton persisted in his efforts while teaching at the University of Wisconsin. Far from being too fragile, Collescott and Littleton found glass to be flexible and resilient under compression. After adjusting the intaglio press after the initial run, the two lost few plates in ensuing attempts.

After moving to his Spruce Pine, North Carolina studio in 1979, Littleton continued his efforts by involving other area glass artists such as Ken Carder and Billy Bernstein in the project. He also induced visiting glass artists in-

cluding Tom Buechner, former president of the Corning Museum of Glass and Erwin Eisch and Ann Wolff of Germany to explore the idea. Early works were the product of available tools for drawing on or abrading glass, including the diamond point-stylus, etching acids, flexible shaft tools and sand-blasting with a variety of resists including wet clay and glue.

"Prints From Glass: The Discovery of a Process" chronicles the development of this technique by showing the earliest attempts by Littleton and other experimenters, subsequent explorations by glass

artists, and works by the NEA and later visiting artists. Prints from 25 artists in all will be exhibited along with works within their primary medium.

Some visual qualities of the finished prints made from glass plates are unique. Effects that could only be achieved by combining incompatible techniques can often be accomplished on one glass plate. Darby Bannard noted that the "powdery surface" of the printed image "is similar to a cross between a lithograph and a mezzotint." The ink colors have a peculiar luminosity and intensity. Because a dot pattern results from

the blasting, a kind of pointilistic color occurs when one color plate is printed over another.

A disadvantage of the glass plate is that unwanted lines are not as easily burnished out or removed from the plates. With the softer metal plate, mistakes are quickly eliminated.

"An aspect of the medium I suppose I appreciate most is its own special awkwardness and contrariness," reflected Ed Blackburn. "Though this may sound negative it can be of considerable value in making art. Most mediums have something in their nature that you cannot completely control, some-

thing you must collaborate with and allow to have its own way. Such a process can be the avenue for the discovery of something larger and better than your best laid plans."

"That a printing technique was born in the studio of a glass artist is a notable enough occurrence in that it illustrates a typically twentieth century cross-fertilization," added Kessler. "Lines of demarcation and categorization of artists and media constantly being erased."

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