

UrbanGlass

OPENING: Wexler Gallery group show seeks to frame a new approach to glass art, and to make a market

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From top-left to bottom-right: Cutrone, Potter, Valdez, Mc Neal

As the 50th anniversary celebration of Studio Glass wound down in 2012, a sense of restlessness came over the glass art world struggling to define itself going forward. Several prominent university professor positions have been filled by a new generation of glass artists who approach the material with more of a conceptual strategy. A group of art school grads curated their own shows under the banner of Hyperopia Projects, with future plans for a possible publication and exhibitions defining a new terrain of glass art. In March 2015, [The Corning Museum of Glass](#) will unveil its new wing that joins contemporary artists fabricating work in glass with recent works by artists steeped in glass. And a Facebook group attempts to

distinguish those glass artists "seceding" from what its organizers consider outdated forms of glass art. While these nonprofit and institutional developments have helped to identify new directions in glass, this area has so far failed to find much of a market. But an upcoming Wexler Gallery exhibition with the ambitious title of "**Flux: Four Artists Redefining Glass**" may signal a new embrace of this work by a commercial gallery.

On Friday, the Philadelphia gallery will host an exhibition named the title is an homage to the **Fluxus** movement of the 1960s. "The Fluxus movement was all about the blending of disciplines to open up the question of what art is and what it can be," said gallery owner Lewis Wexler in an email exchange with the *GLASS Quarterly Hot Sheet*. "It was an exciting and experimental time that influenced a variety of artists in America and abroad; it was the beginning of conceptual art." In similar vein, the four selected artists break from traditional glass sculpting techniques and subject matter in an effort to carve out new terrain for work in glass.

Dan Cutrone prides himself in utilizing traditional glass making techniques in conjunction with digital design programs and machinery. His work explores the aspects of the digital world as well as the natural to create pieces that ground them together in harmony. Through the use of repetition in his work, Cutrone encourages viewers to become active participants in experiencing the differences each piece has to offer. Cutrone is based out of Philadelphia as an assistant professor of glass at the Tyler School of Art. "I'm a very hands on kind of guy," he said over the phone. "I like hammers and yet the computer is another hammer for me. For me it's about having a conversation between these two technologies. These new technologies bring a new vocabulary to the table. The digital components push the conversation and my vocabulary into some new areas not to the exclusion or abandonment of traditional glassmaking."

Amalgamating a slew of materials (metal, clay, steel, wood, and glass), **Amie McNeel** creates works that speak on the symbiotic bond that exists between uniformity and chaos in the natural world. The pieces showcased in this exhibition are said to be reminiscent of natural organisms. McNeel is based out of Seattle, teaching the newly created 3D Forum Studio Program at the University of Washington.

Fascinated from a young age with the fragility of life, [Wes Valdez](#)' pieces entrench concepts of death, decay, loss, and redemption. Within his work he seeks to wax philosophically the existential meaning of memento mori. Valdez is a recent MFA graduate of the Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia.

In an email, Valdez went into great detail about his work for the exhibit, "I think the work that has been selected for the show is a representation of my progress and thoughts over the last 3 years. I like to think of each piece as an experience made physical. For example, the piece "Assisted Living" (2011), is as an homage to my grandfather and my mother's loving hands as she cared for him through his final weeks of life. "Fleeing From What Is" (2014) depicts my unfulfilled expectation of my relationship with my father. There seems to always be a struggle between love and despair in my work which I think are found in all facets of life. "

[Charlotte Potter](#) is a traditional glassblower who utilizes the art form as a means of performing pieces that delve into the philosophy of the human experience. She does this by incorporating her own physicality in each piece ([a notion she spoke on in a previous interview with the GLASS Quarterly Hot Sheet](#)). Potter's work has reached widespread audiences in such galleries as S 12 in Bergen Norway, The Oklahoma City Museum of Art, the Corning Museum of Glass, and the Toledo Museum of Art.

These four individual themes explored by the artists come together under the umbrella built by the Flux exhibition. And while the name does in fact harken to a cultural movement from long ago, perhaps it can also be applied in another sense. The title might also refer to the juxtaposition of reality, each artist showcasing the facets of existence that tug at our being in the everyday life. "The work of [the artists] could not be more different but they share a common interest in wanting to open up the definition of what contemporary glass can be," said Wexler. "Placing their individual work in a common space is a response to an inspirational moment in glass."

"So many artists are engaged with this "fluxus feeling" it is my personal interest to introduce collectors to new reaches in contemporary glass," continued Wexler. "I'm hopeful that a new audience of glass collectors as well as those who have been collecting for many years will appreciate the artistic fervor represented here."

