

Glass is one of the world's oldest and most versatile man-made materials. Is your glass half empty? Or do you see business through rose-colored glasses? Have we, as an industry, hit a glass ceiling? Whatever your perspective, let's raise a glass to this prodigious material – hard enough to protect us, and yet it shatters with incredible ease. We asked industry execs on all sides of the aisle what excites and challenges in the category.



**JULIA GLASS, BUYER
BROMBERG'S**

It's no surprise that our fine crystal stemware sales have declined. Very few brides register for heavily cut crystal like they did in the past. I hate it because Saint Louis was a master at the craft and their designs are among my personal favorites. But brides want simple clean lines. Thank goodness for Waterford's *Essence* collection which has replaced mother's, or grandmother's, traditional *Lismore*. Baccarat, Moser, Varga, and William Yeoward offer quality stemware without the heavy cutting which appeals to a mature bride. (Mature meaning that the price of a stem doesn't matter when she wants to appoint the table with something different and fine.) And then there's Riedel, who offers stems for the connoisseur or want-to-be connoisseur, which many have tried to copy, but just can't come close to their varietal specific stems. Most brides are going with a casual pattern that can transition from casual to somewhat formal. Juliska's *Carine* is currently our most popular casual stemware, which includes barware and matching serveware. Vietri, Match, Simon Pearce, and Skyros also offer fun casual patterns that transition to a more formal table. We tell our customers it's okay to mix it up: use inherited antique pieces or different patterns to set a more eclectic table. Very seldom do we sell a suite of water, wine, and flutes. There are so many excellent choices from vendors to mix it up or to pair with existing stems. The table canvas is a little different at the present time, but I like it!



**HEATHER NAVON, DIRECTOR OF
PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT BARWARE, LENOX**

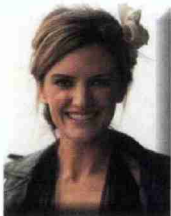
The glass/crystal category is always evolving, especially as it pertains to barware. The trends are constantly changing, which gives a chance for creativity in color, shape, and design. Right now when you walk the marketplace there's a big shift from color to shape and cuts. There's a lot of mix and match across materials to create powerful bar statements. People want to entertain with their friends the same way they're being served in bars and restaurants, which means incorporating cool elements in bar accessories and new glass shapes that can work with their current everyday glassware. Another big shift is in stemware. Our research shows that consumers identify more with wines that are light body to full body, instead of specific varieties. Shape is more important than color because the glass is meant to enhance the wine and people want to see their drink. While the glass/crystal industry is a fun and exciting category, it also has its challenges. The biggest challenge is staying on top of changing consumer behavior and being able to react fast enough with new products. We're doing more research to stay ahead of the curve to develop products that make sense with how people are entertaining.



JORGE PÉREZ

LUXURY LIVING AUTHORITY/DESIGNER/BRAND SPOKESPERSON

As an international tabletop product judge, I'm happy to report that I'm seeing a lot of new and exciting products and design innovations coming out in the world of glass and crystal in all entertaining categories and price points. Creativity is at an all-time high; many from well-known existing heritage brands struggling to be relevant with the current and next consumer group, as well as new and independent cottage brands/artisans that are riding the home-spun local wave which has opened up doors for many of them. The reality is that the industry that has remained virtually unchanged for many decades has completely evolved into a more casually driven culture where consumer experiences are more important than ownership and stuff. This is, sadly, a trend that started 25 years ago while many in the industry were still resting on laurels, and when bridal registry was actually a thing. I attribute this change to the evolution of the now outdated traditional family unit influencers as well as drastic changes in retailing models. It's very challenging for a vendor to be everything the consumer expects of them, and there has never been more competition in the glass selling business. Let's face it: there's nothing we make in this industry that anyone needs. The key is to create the desire, and then the need will come. The best advice I can give is to reach back and rebroadcast your rich brand stories and intricate processes that differentiate you to a mass group of young consumers who are starving for products with stories of craftsmanship, heritage, and legacy. The glass is still half full.



SALLY BURNSIDE, V.P. OF SALES

BACCARAT

Crystal has begun to move out of the dusty dining room hutch, out of the boxes in the attic, and into the kitchen cupboards, bartops, and hands of the younger generation. We've been preaching the notion of #everydaybaccarat for three years now and are finding that message is being heard. From department store sales teams to retail customers, we often hear stories of crystal being integrated into people's everyday lives at home. From orange juice in the morning to cocktails in the evening, people are choosing crystal. Nothing is more fresh than updating a daily routine with a beautiful piece of crystal. North America CEO Jim Shreve now has his mouthwash on his bathroom counter in a *Harmonie* decanter – talk about fresh! This season at Baccarat, we saw a new collaboration with Jean Charles Boisset of Raymond, Buena Vista, and JCB vineyards in Napa, who has designed a universal wine glass. In the world of JCB, gone are the days of white vs. red wine glasses. Additionally, he brings forth a champagne glass designed to enhance the experience and tasting of champagne; think wine tasting swirling but with champagne. And to accompany the two stems comes two new decanters, one for wine and one for – gasp – champagne! Always one to revolutionize our relationship with wine and champagne, Jean Charles is here to teach us that champagne, too, is to be decanted. We never like to focus on the negative at Baccarat when we're surrounded by great people, beautiful product, and healthy business. We, of course, face the challenge of gray market that the entire luxury industry is subject to, but we know and trust that our Baccarat customer values their relationship with the authorized dealer network and will choose authenticity and great customer service any day.



TOM BLUMENTHAL, CEO/PRESIDENT

GEARYS BEVERLY HILLS

Crystal designers are keeping things fresh and exciting by creating pieces in fun, vibrant pops of color. Barware, stemware, decorative pieces, or accents don't just come in clear crystal, classic shapes, and traditional patterns anymore. Of course, that will always be the archetypal look, but the industry is gravitating toward mix and match styles and stark contrasts with complementary colors. In other words, what's fresh and exciting are the standout pieces that inspire conversation in the home or office. Brands from Moser to Saint Louis to Baccarat have all embraced this trend because the demand for color and uniqueness is at an all-time high. Glass and crystal pieces are often pegged as traditional or old fashioned. At GEARYS Beverly Hills, we have no trouble convincing clients who are in their 50s that fine crystal is beautiful and something they want to display proudly in their homes. The true challenge is convincing the clients who are in their 30s. We've found that the best way to overcome this challenge is simply through education, bringing more awareness to the history of the fine crystal houses and the excellent craftsmanship that makes each piece unique. Because younger generations place higher importance on experiences, we help them see the value in crystal pieces by focusing on the elevated experiences they provide. For example, serving drinks to your friends in fabulous crystal tumblers is memorable and special. This same feeling of luxury – the weight of the crystal, the smoothness, the clarity – cannot be duplicated with your average drinkware.