

The Corning Museum of Glass installed the collection of Natalie and Ben Heineman in its contemporary art gallery for the "Voices of Contemporary Glass" exhibition, which ran from 2009 to 2011.

In Perpetuity:

Gifts of glass collections to major museums are more than acts of generosity; they institutionalize a unique approach to collecting art and enshrine a particular taste for future generations

BY WILLIAM GANIS



Donors Ben W. Heineman Sr. and Natalie G. Heineman



Ben W. Heineman, Sr. and his wife, Natalie G. Heineman, donated their collection to The Corning Museum of Glass in Corning, New York, in 2005.

ABOVE: An installation view of the “Voices of Contemporary Glass” exhibition, which opened on May 16, 2009 and ran through January 2, 2011.

As they advance in age, Studio Glass collectors have been giving major gifts, more than 2,000 works, to U.S. museums. These “comprehensive” collections, many featured recently in exhibitions commemorating 50 years of Studio Glass, have been used to tell the success story of Studio Glass from its genesis in Toledo, Ohio, to today’s plurality. Many of the collection donors are contemporaries of the artists they acquired, and spent decades building collections by buying from galleries or directly from the artists during studio visits, a popular venue because of the immediacy of the material and the opportunity to take part in an emerging field in art.

More than acts of generosity, these gifts enshrine in museums the works, the collectors’ tastes, and the relationships between the artists and their patrons. Once the works are part of a museum’s permanent collection, they are institutionalized as part of high culture, with implications for how work in glass is understood. Such donations also hybridize the roles of donor and curator; museum curators are charged with interpreting and displaying the collections according to the benefactor’s preferences.

To understand the phenomenon of comprehensive donations, one must consider the donors themselves, who share some generational similarities. Doug and Katya Heller, of Heller Gallery in New York, have worked with many of the collectors in question. They describe this generation as “strivers—people who grew up with the deprivations of the Great Depression and World War II and who wanted better lives for themselves and their children.” Most began collecting glass art out of a sense of curiosity, adventure, or as a couple’s pursuit. The accessible price points of glass, relative to contemporary art, certainly helped as an entry to collecting. The Hellers point out that this was a “pioneering



Donors Myrna and Sheldon Palley



generation” of collectors; there weren’t any models in this new and evolving area of visual culture, and none of them started out with the idea of creating a collection. But they noted that what distinguished these collectors from those in other arts was their abiding connection to the artists. They often visited hot studios, the Pilchuck Glass School and university programs; they became friends with the glass artists and involved in their communities. This participation was key to the organic formation of collections before the creation of the Studio Glass canon, which, arguably, had crystallized by the time of the 50-year retrospectives. As mature collectors, many of the donors worked with gallerists and consultants to give shape to their holdings, fill gaps, and create the robust, “comprehensive” collections we have come to know.

A sidebar to this article lists 13 prominent gift collections. While each is unique, it’s worth looking at one example. Marilyn and Eugene Glick, donors of nearly 250 glass works to the Indianapolis Museum of Art, embody many of the characteristics described by the Hellers. Gene Glick was a veteran of the European theater in World War II. He and his wife

Opened in 2008, the Myrna and Sheldon Palley Pavilion for Contemporary Glass and Studio Arts at University of Miami Lowe Art Museum in Coral Gables, Florida, houses the couple’s donation of 150 pieces by 53 different artists.



Donors Beverly and Sam Ross



Works from the Beverly and Sam Ross collection at Christian Brothers University in Memphis, Tennessee.

TOP: **Harvey Littleton**, *Pale Jade Conical Intersection with Yellow Ovoid*, 1985. H 10 ½, W 3 ¾, D 4 ½ in. MIDDLE: **Shane Fero**, *The Fire Lark*, 2008. H 4 ¾, W 7 ¼, D 3 in. BOTTOM: **Bill Boysen**, *Venus Flytrap*, undated. H 13, D 15 ½ in.

made their fortune with the Glick real estate company, which builds and manages homes in Indianapolis and elsewhere. The Glick foundation supports many philanthropic projects in Indianapolis and gives its name to an eye institute, a cultural trail, a community fund, an authors award, and a state history center. In nearby Muncie, Indiana, the Marilyn K. Glick Center for Glass, a center for teaching Studio Glass, opened in 2010 as a part of Ball State University's School of Art. According to IMA's director, Dr. Charles Venable, it was fitting for the museum to incorporate the art collection and family name as a further connection to Indianapolis culture and philanthropy.

In the Midwest, now home to several prominent collections, Studio Glass is often understood as a "local" or "regional" art movement, especially considering its Toledo epicenter, the establishment of the first educational studio hot shops at Midwestern universities, and broader cultural and industrial histories, which include Ball canning jars, Fenton glass and the first Cola-Cola bottles.

It's worth noting that these donations have entered museums as named legacy "collections" for which museums take on the responsibilities of storage, care and exhibition. The museums also make commitments to keep the collection intact and not to sell off parts of it. While all of the collections have some first-rate works, not all are of consistent quality; some have more (or fewer) objects, some focus on regional or global representation, while others may have depth in the acquisition of work by certain artists (such as the numerous Richard Marquis or Tom Patti works in the Heineman collection). Museums may take on large, if inconsistent, glass collections because they have been promised other works or funds from the same donor, or are keeping a local collection in place.

Donors Bruce and Ann Bachmann



Donor Bruce Bachmann with Patricia Mooradian, president of The Henry Ford, and executive vice president Christian Overland. The historic museum in Dearborn, Michigan, is raising funds to build a permanent glass gallery inside its Greenfield Village Liberty Craftworks district.



ABOVE: Works by Dale Chihuly and Lino Tagliapietra in the Bachmann collection.

As museums become more and more saturated with Studio Glass donations, it remains to be seen how the distribution of similar collections will change.

Significant gifts accompany some donations of glass art. The Myrna and Sheldon Palley Pavilion for Contemporary Glass and Studio Arts, which opened at the University of Miami's Lowe Art Museum in 2008, stands out among these capital improvements. The Palleys contributed \$1.7 million toward the pavilion, which houses their glass, ceramics and fiber collection, valued at \$3.5 million. They donated an additional \$1 million to endow the glass collection. June and Francis Spiezer gave their significant collection of art by Chicago artists to the Rockford Art Museum along with their Studio Glass. David Kaplan and Glenn Ostergaard funded the Kaplan/Ostergaard Glass Center at the Palm Springs Art Museum in addition to donating their collection. The Corning Museum of Glass has named its contemporary galleries the Ben W. Heineman Sr. Family Gallery of Contemporary Glass in honor of the family's donation of a significant collection as well as its ongoing support of purchases of contemporary works.

As museums become more and more saturated with Studio Glass donations, it remains to be seen how the distribution of similar collections will change. The tack taken by Susan Steinhauser and Daniel Greenberg may point the way. Rather than establishing a single named collection, these donors have strategically placed their contemporary glass in order to enhance the holdings of several institutions, notably the Honolulu Museum of Art, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, the Corning Museum of Glass, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

It's worth noting that such gifts to public institutions are an American phenomenon, and that despite the parallel emergence of Studio Glass programs and practices in Europe, the establishment of similar legacy collections is limited. According to Hans-Martin Lorch, of the Lorch +



Donors Eugene and Marilyn Glick

Installation view of "Masters of Contemporary Glass: Highlights from the Marilyn and Eugene Glick Collection."

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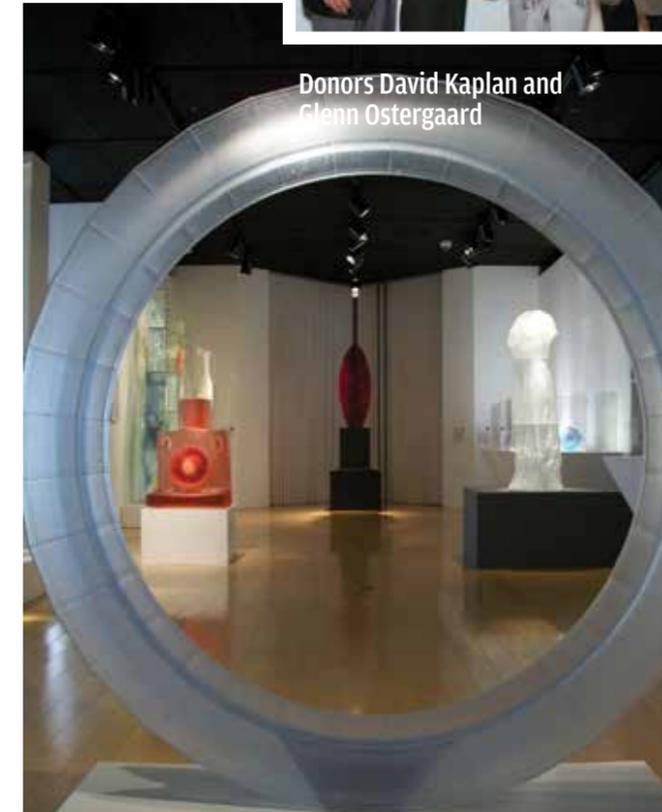
Seidel Contemporary gallery in Berlin (who represents Dafna Kaffeman, Marta Klonowska, and Silvia Levenson, among other artists using glass), European collectors and institutions tend not to organize collections around a particular medium. However, there are a few exceptions of private glass collections becoming public, most notably the Peter and Traudl Engelhorn glass collection entering the Museum of Contemporary Design and Applied Art (MUDAC) in Lausanne, Switzerland. The Kurt and Lily Ernsting collection become the Glass Museum of the Ernsting Foundation in Coesfeld, Germany, and the Alexander Tutsek and Dr. Eva-Maria Fahrner-Tutsek collection transformed into the Alexander Tutsek Foundation in Munich, Germany.

Though they may not motivate benefactors, the nuts and bolts of tax law and estate planning inform U.S. donations. Generally speaking, donations are made to public institutions because the I.R.S. code requires giving to public charities if givers wish to reduce or eliminate certain taxes. The donations provide desirable estate tax relief, especially given that the glass assets aren't easily liquidated at their retail value.

Secondly, such donations waive capital-gains taxes—a situation particularly beneficial to collectors who may have bought works for hundreds of dollars that are now worth thousands or tens of thousands, as exemplified by the Spiezers' early purchase of Joel Philip Myers's *White Hand* (c. 1973). It's no coincidence that couples are named for all of the gifts listed in the sidebar, as this practice maximizes the benefits to the family estate, as couples can donate twice the tax-free amount annually that an individual can.

Art appraiser and consultant Kate Elliott, who consults clients with glass collections through Elliott Arts West in Bend, Oregon, offers her insights about museum donations. She notes that donating works is often the more attractive option, because selling works through retail channels can take years, and there are transaction costs such as dealer's fees, even though higher prices may be achieved than at auction. Auctions, on the other hand, can generate quick cash but are a gamble; sometimes lots receive no or very low bids. She adds that some collectors purchased works in the heady years between 1996 and 2001 (roughly

A 2014 photo of donors David Kaplan and Glenn Ostergaard at an opening reception at the Kaplan Ostergaard Glass Center at Palm Springs Art Museum in Palm Springs, California. Also pictured are the owners of Bullseye Glass, Lani McGregor and Daniel Schwoerer.



ABOVE: An installation shot of Daniel Clayman's 2010 work, *Circular Object 4*, purchased with funds provided by Kaplan and Ostergaard.

the dot-com boom) when prices for blue-chip glass were highest, and the markets for most glass artists have not recovered since.

Elliott offers another consideration: "This art is fragile and needs to be taken care of." Museums with storage space and conservation experts are far better equipped than the children of collectors to deal with these delicate objects. She often advises clients to donate to museums out of a sense of preservation, especially when collectors subscribe to the idea that they own the work in safekeeping for posterity. Sharing sentiments expressed by other donors, Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser eloquently summarize this aspect of philanthropy: "The work is destined, if we have done our job right, to take up permanent residence in public places, especially museums, where it can be enjoyed by many, and people can learn and be moved by it.... There is a time for us to live with art, a time for us to share with others, and a time to let it go. We are only temporary stewards." ■

WILLIAM GANIS is an arts writer, a professor of art history, and chair of the Department of Art and Design at Indiana State University.

Major Recent Donations to American Museums

Bruce and Ann Bachmann

Henry Ford Museum, Dearborn, Michigan

Marilyn and Eugene Glick

Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis, Indiana

Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser

The Corning Museum of Glass, Corning, New York
 Honolulu Museum of Art, Honolulu, Hawaii
 Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, California
 Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minneapolis, Minnesota
 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Boston, Massachusetts
 Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Houston, Texas

Elice and Dr. Rhodes Haverty

Mobile Museum of Art, Mobile, Alabama

Ben W. Heineman Sr. and Natalie G. Heineman

The Corning Museum of Glass, Corning, New York

David Kaplan and Glenn Ostergaard

Palm Springs Art Museum, Palm Springs, California

Philip and Nancy Kotler

John & Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, Florida

Adele and Leonard Leight

Speed Art Museum, Louisville, Kentucky

Myrna and Sheldon Palley

University of Miami Lowe Art Museum, Coral Gables, Florida

Beverly and Sam Ross

Christian Brothers University, Memphis, Tennessee

Dorothy and George Saxe

De Young Museum, San Francisco, California
 Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, Ohio

June and Francis Spiezer

Rockford Art Museum, Rockford, Illinois

Donald and Carol Wiiken

Racine Art Museum, Racine, Wisconsin
 Rockford Art Museum, Rockford, Illinois