



The Flora Collection by In Common With and Sophie Lou Jacobsen in production at Urban Glass in Fort Greene, Brooklyn. Photo: Sasha Arutyunova

Behind the Design

The Wizardry Behind Sophie Lou Jacobsen and In Common With's Latest Collab

AD PRO sits in on the making of the Flora collection at Urban Glass in Brooklyn

By Hannah Martin

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[Urban Glass](#), a 17,000-square-foot glass making facility in Fort Greene, Brooklyn, is something of a cave of wonders. Filled with confections in progress—think In Common With pendants, Lindsey Adelman chandeliers, and tableware by Anna Karlin—the site is the birth place of many of Brooklyn's most loved [glass designs](#). (Emerging talent Dana Arbib, who usually works in Murano, was recently spotted there exploring local production options.)

In early August, AD PRO paid a visit to the studio to get a behind-the-scenes look at the making of the Flora lighting collection, a line of fanciful [glass fixtures](#) inspired by the timeworn techniques of Murano, but made right in Brooklyn. The series, featured in *AD's* October issue, was the brainchild of New York design darlings [Sophie Lou Jacobsen](#) and [In Common With](#).



Furnaces at Urban Glass reach 2,200 degrees. Photo: Sasha Arutyunova



Elements of the Flora collection in progress. Photo: Sasha Arutyunova



A Fazzo shade in the making Photo: Sasha Arutyunova

Jacobsen is best known for her colorful glass [tableware](#), and In Common With—founded by Nick Ozemba and Felicia Hung—is known for its artisanal yet utilitarian glass lighting.

As it turns out, Jacobsen and In Common With had partnered with the same artists at Urban Glass—Adam Holtzinger and Susan Spiranovich, the husband-and-wife team behind glassblowing studio [Keep](#)—to produce their wares. “As makers, you’re working *with* the designers,” explains Holtzinger, who has worked at Urban Glass for 20 years. “It’s important to find the right vibe. You have to have a really good relationship and understanding of their aesthetic so that everyone is on the same page, and you can show the designer what is possible and what isn’t possible.”

To get things rolling on this collection, Jacobsen, Ozemba, and Hung met at the studio with Holtzinger and Spiranovich. After sharing drawings, the five of them set to work, figuring out if they could turn those two-dimensional mock-ups into reality. Spiranovich explains the process: “They’ll specify the scale, how many embellishments go on each side, exactly how much color you’re using—any kind of idiosyncrasy.” (Urban Glass always uses clear glass as a base, and color is applied separately.)



Fin embellishments are heated and fused to the Calla shade. Photo: Sasha Arutyunova

“I give them a drawing, and it almost always gets translated exactly how I’m imagining it,” Jacobsen explains of her trusted [collaborators](#). “We just have a language and communication style that works really well. We understand one another.”



But that doesn’t mean there’s no trial and error. It takes time and experimentation to land on what works best—especially for pieces that need to be manufactured consistently and at scale. To make the production process more efficient, for example, the designers and the glassblowers opted to outsource the creation of the glass fin and dot embellishments to some friends in Ohio, later applying those details back at the Urban Glass facility. Meanwhile, for the Calla pendant, they blew the shade form into a wood mold to ensure consistency in the shape and dimension. They plan to try that approach with the Fazzo pendant as well (the name is a nod to *fazzoletto*, Italian for “handkerchief,” a technique used to achieve that wavy skirt effect). For the Vera sconce, they decided to slump mold it after some trials, since nearly any inconsistency for that design made it incompatible with the sconce wall fittings. Even on my visit in early August they were still workshopping designs and figuring out the best mixture of red color so that you get a warm glow, but not a hotspot, where the bulb is.



A cut sheet of olive glass that will be slump molded to create a Vera scone. Photo: Sasha Arutyunova



A Calla pendant in progress Photo: Sasha Arutyunova

“Some people think that mold blowing is not handmade glass, and that couldn’t be further from the truth,” Holtzinger explains. He narrates his process: “I’m going to blow the glass into this wood mold which gives us a pretty shape that we can transfer and finish opening up by hand. Once this dimension is set, everything else kind of follows.”

The process is mesmerizing to watch, and it requires a sort of choreography and understanding of the material that can only be achieved through years of practice. Molten glass, retrieved from furnaces reaching 2,200 degrees, is coaxed gently into the desired form, then reheated constantly to keep it pliable. To achieve that wavy *fazzoletto* effect, the shade is spun on a rod, almost like a baton, allowing gravity to pull the glass into perfect ripples. Each piece takes time, finesse, and a lot of hydrating—in August, the studio temperature regularly topped 100 degrees.



The Flora collection installed at Schloss Hollenegg, as seen in AD Photo: William Jess Laird



The Fazza lamp Photo: William Jess Laird



The Calla pendant Photo: William Jess Laird

But even though Holtzinger and Spiranovich are the ones handling the molten glass, it's all about collaboration: "We might get feedback that something needs to change, and we have to problem-solve and figure out a way to make that happen."