



Art of Glass

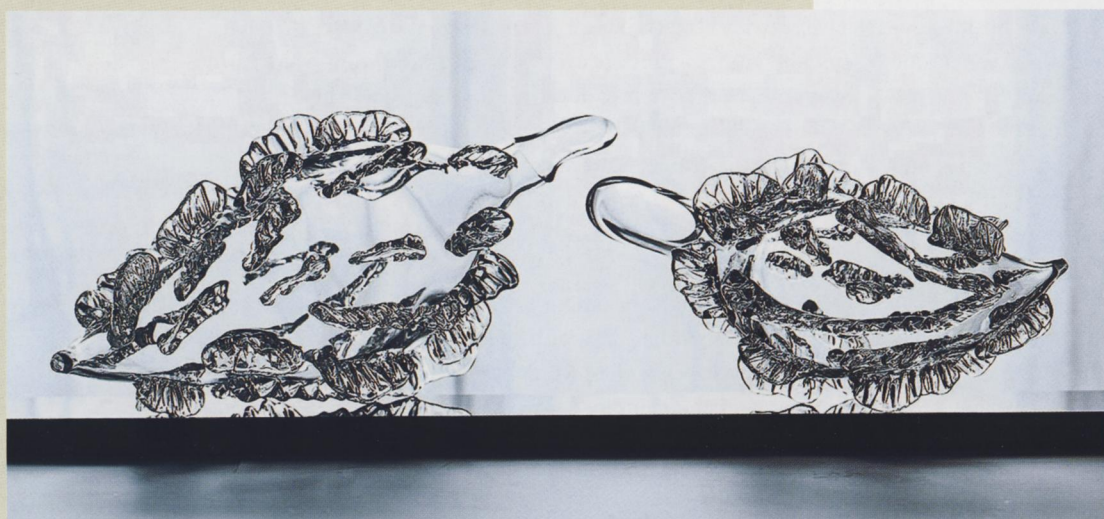
AUDREY WHITTY introduces work by six artists chosen
to represent Ireland at European Glass Context 2008

The Danish island of Bornholm will again play host to a European Union-wide exposition following on from the successful European Ceramic Context in 2006. On this occasion the theme is simply 'Glass'.

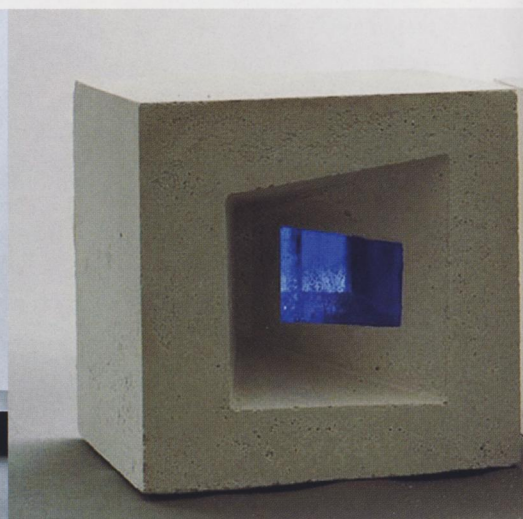
Following the model from 2006's exposition, six artists have been chosen to represent each EU state in addition to Iceland, Norway and Switzerland. A national commissioner from each country was asked to select artists across three exhibition categories: established artists, emerging artists, and industrial design. The overall European winner in each category will receive €10,000 in prize money when the main exhibition opens at the Kunstmuseum, Bornholm on 13 September.

Peadar Lamb and Caroline Madden have been chosen in the established category. Lamb who trained at the National College of Art & Design (NCAD) and Brierley Hill, Birmingham uses techniques that have changed little since the 11th century, and describes his artistic output as being the essence of translation rather than illustration. Heavily influenced by Ireland's rich cultural heritage, one of his works for European Glass Context makes this point quite succinctly, *Cré na Cille* (Fig 1) translates from Irish as 'Soil of the Grave'. It is based on the play of the same name by Mairtin O Caidhin. Set in the 'ha'penny place' in the graveyard, the characters in this novel are concerned in death with the gossip of the living. They are shocked to discover that they are buried in the 'ha'penny place' – usually the dark part of the graveyard with no view. The figure and pipe represent the comedic figure, who even in death continues to smoke.

Caroline Madden is an internationally renowned artist of glass sculpture by virtue of her public art installations in both the United States and Ireland. Her two works for European Glass Context are entitled *Birds Conversing at Lough Boora* and *Fruits of Lough Boora*, the latter being an ambitious floor installation that will measure 360 x 90 x 60cm. Over the past twelve years she has concentrated in her work on the theme of 'Conventional Love'. Each piece is based upon a combination of personal emotions and literary resources. The thoughts and ideas which influenced *Birds Conversing at Lough Boora* (Fig 2), stem from a poetic quality in her own writing: 'Winding lanes,



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reaching up either side of the wheel tracks that travel the peatlands. Raised dishevelled banks, faces cut away, rectangular incisions running horizontally along the broad surface bearing homage to the movement of the slane as each sod is removed.'

The emerging artists' category will showcase work by Alva Gallagher and Suzannah Vaughan. A graduate of NCAD, Gallagher was awarded the first Irish scholarship to the respected American glass school, Pilchuck in Seattle, Washington. Gallagher explores concepts of depth and rhythm through the medium of molten glass (Fig 5). Photographic images sometimes float between semi-transparent layers, incorporating snatches of text lying within the depths of each glass sculpture. Later this year she will also display work in 'Is Mise Ireland' – an exhibition of contemporary Irish art at 411 Galleries in Beijing and Shanghai to run in tandem with the Olympic Games.

Suzannah Vaughan is based in Salthill in Co Galway. Like Gallagher she is a recent graduate (2003) from the NCAD, and in 2004 won the sought-after Golden Fleece Award for her sculptures in glass and concrete. Heavily influenced by architectural design, Vaughan describes her work within architectonic terms: 'A building's exterior does not always define the internal space, but there is a connection between them. I have explored glass as an instrument for retaining the balance between the internal and external. Each piece plays with light and the idea of space.' One of the works to be exhibited in Bornholm is a triptych entitled *White Picket* (Fig 3), which consists of three individual pieces of kiln cast glass and cast concrete.

Two high quality design companies – Design Partners and Marcus Notley Design Ltd, will represent Ireland in the Industrial Products category. Founded in 1984 by Brian Stephens, Design Partners is a multi-disciplinary consultancy. The lead designer on the Waterford range, Cathal Loughnane, explains the source of its inspiration: 'We decided to imbue our

work with the qualities that made Waterford Crystal famous; weight, traditional cutting, and absolute transparent clarity... We discovered from experiment that subtle forms can get lost in transparent material and that a more incisive approach working with the natural weight of the medium was much more successful (Fig 6)'.

Marcus Notley is a graduate of the NCAD in Industrial Design and is a freelance product designer who specialises in the consumer lifestyle products industry. Notley was designer of the Tipperary Crystal *Random* stemware collection and has collaborated with Louise Kennedy on her own Tipperary Crystal range. The concept behind the *Random* stemware collection was an examination of the way in which traditional cut-crystal, full patterned heavy cutting, could be re-interpreted in a contemporary way that was not a minimalist aesthetic (Fig 4).

As with their ceramics biennale two years ago, the Danish organisers of European Glass Context should be commended for the realisation of such an ambitious continent-wide project. A similar event in the applied arts sphere could also be achieved in Ireland, if the country's appropriate institutions, agencies and educational establishments (National Museum, Crafts Council, NCAD) were so inclined. Such a series of exhibitions encompassing conferences and workshops on an all-Ireland basis would have significant potential. ■

AUDREY WHITTY is Curator of Ceramics, Glass & Asian collections, National Museum of Ireland, Collins Barracks and Irish Commissioner for European Glass Context.

'European Glass Context 2008'
Bornholm's Kunstmuseum
and Gronbech's Gard on
Bornholm, 13 September –
19 October 2008.

1 PEADAR LAMB
Cre na Cille #1 2008
640 x 690cm

2 CAROLINE MADDEN
Birds Conversing at Lough Boora 2008

3 SUZANNAH VAUGHAN
White Picket 2008
15 x 15 x 15cm
each

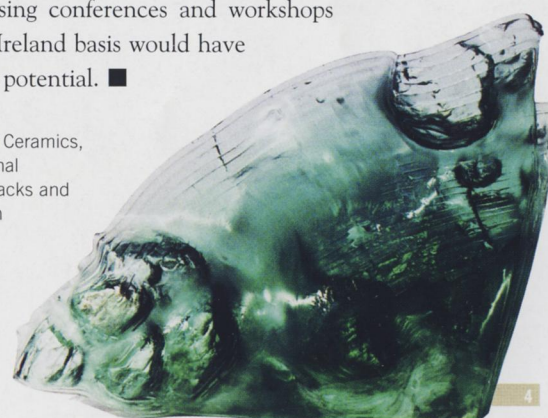
4 MARCUS NOTLEY
Aurora Candleholder 2008
15.5cm
diameter x 63cm
height

5 ALVA GALLAGHER
Tidal I (diptych) 2008
61 x 46cm

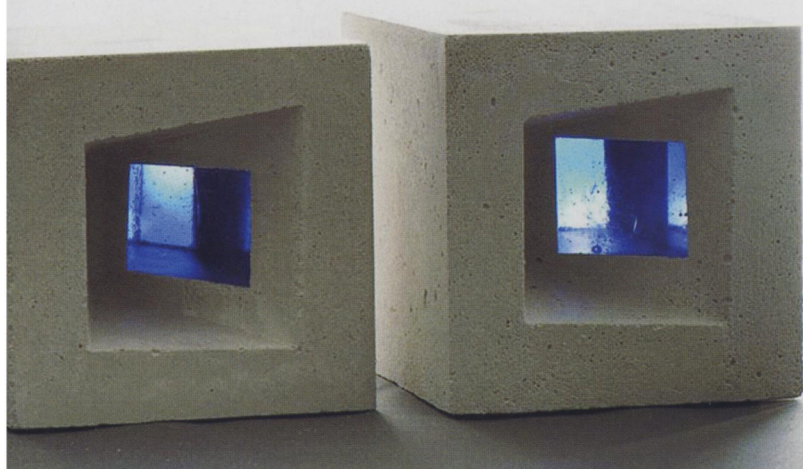
6 DESIGN PARTNERS
Signia Bowl 2008



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