

GLASS SOCIETY OF IRELAND GRADUATE AWARD

As part of the Glass Society of Ireland's (GSOI) ongoing commitment to highlight excellence in glass, increase the visibility of our craft and raise public awareness, we are delighted to award the GSOI inaugural Graduate Award for excellence at student level in the medium of glass. The graduate shows of 7 students were considered for the award, 6 from MTU Crawford College of Art (MTU) and 1 student graduating from the National College of Art and Design (NCAD). In appraising the work we considered how each artist engaged with the materiality of glass, the technical aspects of the finished work and how the art was presented or curated.

All the work was presented professionally and in respect of the spaces within MTU we were very impressed with how each student curated their work in a very considered way with a clear theme and a strong personal narrative resulting in a very engaging experience for the visitor.

The body of graduate work across both campuses fully exploited the qualities of glass through a vast range of glass making techniques which included painting, slumping, casting, tracing and firing, fusing, inclusions, pate de verre, screen printing, laser cutting, sandblasting and traditional leaded stained glass to create large and small-scale works in both 2D and 3D.

GSOI would like to thank both Dr. Caroline Madden of NCAD and Ms. Debbie Dawson of MTU for their assistance in making the graduate work available to us for appraisal. The future of glass art in Ireland is very bright indeed under their direction. We wish each of the graduates every success in the next stage in their glass careers or education and we hope they will stay in touch to keep us updated on their progress.

AWARD:

The GSOI inaugural **Graduate Award for Excellence in Glass** is awarded to **Evan McKenna, NCAD**, for his use of traditional practice to create contemporary works which show a great understanding of process and which bears well for a future in the craft. It is hoped the award will encourage Evan to continue in this field and support him to invest in his practice. The GSOI will also work with Evan to explore opportunities for studio time with a member of GSOI to provide mentorship to him at this stage in his promising glass career.

A second award of **Notable Mention** is presented to **Joanne O'Mahony, MTU**, with particular reference to the considered curation of contrasting glass techniques in her graduate show.

GSOI FEEDBACK

The feedback here is not intended to be a comprehensive assessment of the entire scope of the graduate shows and is focussed specifically on the use of glass as a medium.

Róisín Maher, MTU

Róisín's love of textiles was evident throughout the space, not least in the beautifully crafted glass works, painted and slumped before being stitched together with leather. The use of suspended pieces contributed to the space having a focal point allowing the visitor to walk around and experience the glass sculpture with both natural and artificial light.

Maggie O'Hea, MTU

What strikes the visitor in this space is not just the scale of the art, but the use of different materials to engage the viewer. There is a strong interplay between photography, batik and glass which unifies the space. Maggie is commended for the level of ambition shown in the large-scale float glass panels worked with an illustrative style of monochrome trace line and shading. The story of this space is completed with a beautifully crafted yellow cast glass sword which radiates a warm luminescence in the natural light.

Christina Flynn, MTU

Christina's work uses photography, textiles and glass to explore themes of pain and trauma. The eye is immediately drawn to the seemingly amorphous glass pieces displayed on dark plinths through which artificial light highlights the drama of clear glass capped with dark red glass, almost like visceral open wounds. On closer inspection these have been cast from crochet in a technique which retains the original soft textile texture on the surface of the glass. Christina incorporates other techniques in her glass-making including the use of frit and copper inclusions, and screen printing on glass. The work in this space was beautifully presented.

Maureen Clarke, MTU

In Maureen's work we see an exploration of new technologies – here laser cutting and 3D printing are in the artist's arsenal of tools, but so too is pate de verre, one of the oldest known glass-making techniques. Within a series of connected paper cubes, Maureen has created small, fused elements with glass frit which can only be viewed by peering into the structures, making for a very personal experience. Traditional and new techniques are brought together seamlessly in a beautifully constructed laser cut frame displaying 40 small screen-printed, fused and cold-worked glass panels in the most subtle of colours presented standing in front of the main window in the gallery space.

Christina Loughlin, MTU

Christina's work was strong in its use of mixed media – video, textile and glass – to explore the theme of the linen industry and its place in ancestral trauma. In one of the smaller works in this ambitious space, a piece of a loom has been cast in glass and displayed draped in a set of rosary beads. Following on this strong narrative, Christina suspended large pate de verre elements from multiple threads attached to a traditional loom which drew geometric lines across the space. This gave a feeling of unease – an overshadowing of sorts. This is powerful work.

Joanne O'Mahony, MTU

Joanne's space was curated with an architectural aesthetic to examine the issue of social anxiety – the contrast of dark and light is explored through densely worked float glass panels layered with dark paint applied in blocks using tape as a resist which is then fired giving areas of light and shade as well as carbonised textured areas. In contrast on the opposite wall, float glass is sandblasted creating similarly dense impenetrable patterns and textures – an almost ephemeral response to the darker panels. Light and shade is used again as a sculptural element which is explored through a 3D piece which combines glass and metal to great effect. Joanne's attention to detail left nothing to chance and the metal frames on her work were made by her as a perfect complement to her art.

Evan McKenna, NCAD

Evan's work is recognisable as traditional leaded stained glass using techniques of tracing, shading and etching on a range of glass colours and textures. The largest work is a familiar composition with a religious reference point – a central figure with yellow halo dressed in rich red surrounded by swirling blues and teals. The piece reveals a character wearing a striped red football jersey made with dramatic use of flash glass, surrounded by an abundance of quirky characters which include steampunk motifs, the Simpsons and Japanese manga-style drawings. The work is also dominated by a beautifully rendered arm holding a cigarette in yellow glass against a backdrop of black and white silos. In a second smaller work, Evan has used a broad range of mark-making techniques to create a more traditional copper foil portrait.

Madeleine Hellier

On behalf of

The Glass Society of Ireland

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