



JOANNA MANOUSIS



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Todd Merrill Studio

For over fifteen years, Todd Merrill Studio has exhibited and purveyed the finest selection of post-war American studio furniture. Shortly after Rizzoli published his seminal book on the subject, "Modern Americana: Studio Furniture from High Craft to High Glam", 2008, Merrill launched Studio Contemporary, representing the work of an international group of established and emerging contemporary artists. Today, their work is sought after by a wide range of art patrons, from collectors and decorators, to curators and museum academics.

While each artist uses his or her chosen medium--from textile to porcelain, to marble and LEDs - Studio Contemporary relies upon their shared drive to push those materials to their absolute aesthetic limits. The result: dynamic, handmade, and unique pieces that contribute to today's increasingly relevant "grey space" between art and design.

The gallery has progressively cultivated and established new artists, placing their work into private and public collections which include The Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum (New York), The Museum of Fine Arts (Boston), The Museum of Art and Design (New York), The

Victoria and Albert Museum (London), Centre Georges Pompidou (Paris), The High Museum of Art (Atlanta), and The Brooklyn Museum (New York), amongst others.

Throughout the year, the gallery exhibits at the best art and design fairs worldwide, including: Design Days Dubai (Dubai), Collective Design Fair (New York), Art Miami (Miami), Design Miami (Basel, Miami), FOG: Design + Art (San Francisco), Pavilion of Arts & Design (New York, Paris, London), Masterpiece (London), Gallery Seoul (South Korea), Spring Masters (New York), The International Fine Art and Antiques Dealer Show (New York), Zona MACO (Mexico City), Salon Art + Design (New York) and The Winter Antiques Show (New York).

Introduction

By Dallas Dunn

British born artist, Joanna Manousis lives and works in the United States, creating sculptural objects and installations in glass and mixed media. It would be easy to describe artist Joanna Manousis as a “glass artist” and certainly many have. Glass (specifically crystal), is indeed, the primary medium of her work, yet the categorization is short sighted. Manousis has mastered control of the medium, manipulating it through a multi-disciplinary process that often incorporates other materials such as cast bronze, enamel, and even taxidermy. Her works are multifaceted, rich in history and symbolism, often challenging the viewer with a distorted sense of feminine domesticity and self reflection. Her work captures and animates liminal moments, revealing a world in which objects, beings and places are interconnected, inducing reflection in the viewer, both physically and metaphorically.

Manousis has earned numerous international awards and nominations for her work, including a Louis Comfort Tiffany

Foundation Nomination, The Margaret M. Mead Award through the Burchfield-Penney Arts Center, the Hans Godo Frabel Award for ‘Outstanding Achievement in Glass’, and a Bombay Sapphire Award nomination for ‘Excellence in Glass’. Manousis has created her work within major public museums and studio residency programs, including The Toledo Museum of Art, OH, The Museum of Art and Design, NY, The Corning Museum of Glass, NY, and Cité Internationale des Arts, France. Her work has been exhibited internationally at institutions and art fairs including The Glasmuseet Ebeltoft, Denmark, The British Glass Biennale, UK, Salon Art + Design, NY and FOG Art + Design, San Francisco. Holding a Masters of Fine Arts in Sculpture from Alfred University, New York, and a First Class Honors Bachelor Degree in Fine Art from The University of Wolverhampton, England, Manousis has worked, studied and taught in Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia.



Demeter II takes on the formation of an oculus window, commonly found in churches of the gothic architectural style. Rather than saturating light into a sacred space, *Demeter II* refracts light to its viewer. The clear crystal segments act as apertures for the residual details of wheat and seed-like formations that lie within. Here, both the wheel and the wheat pay homage to the ever-flowing cycle of life and death, a rhythm that is embodied in Demeter, the Greek goddess of the harvest. For centuries, the 'wheel window' has been used as a symbol of spirituality and that which is infinite: the universe or the cosmos. *Demeter II* is stripped of the color and grandiose iconography usually presented in church windows to deliver what is essential and unifying to us all.

Cast in glass using 'core-casting' techniques, the negative spaces within the glass are formed by refractory 'positives' or 'cores' within refractory molds. In *Demeter II*, wheat and seedpod formations are sculpted in clay. Rubber 'mother' molds create a refractory (heat resistant) duplicate of these details and the mold itself. It is these molds that are fired in a kiln. Glass melts into the mold but cannot penetrate where the 'core' is positioned. This then reveals a negative space when the refractory is extracted from the glass upon cooling.

The glass components are then hand polished to a peak shine by hand.

Demeter II, 2018

Negative Core Cast Glass / Forged Aluminum
33.5 h x 33.5 w x 3.5 d inches









Opal glass, reminiscent of the precious stone opal, has been used to embody *Selene*, the Greek goddess of the moon whose gravitational pull connects us to the tides.

Selene represents the culmination of several months of studio-practice research for Manousis. The opaline glass used to create *Selene* changes its color saturation based on the length of time it is held at a developing temperature in the kiln. A series of twenty tests were conducted to perfect the final, varied hues evident in *Selene*. The castings were held from 15 minutes to 200-hours at this advancing stage, creating a varied spectrum of colors. The segments that comprise *Selene* were cast in separate kiln firings, each differing in its developing hold duration in order to present distinct opacity shifts in the finished sculpture.

Selene, 2017

Core Cast Opaline Glass / Aluminum / Stainless Steel
33.5 h x 33.5 w x 3.5 d inches



In the Greek language, The Dominant Sophia refers to the all-seeing eye of a higher power. Radiating outwards, each segment holds the negative spaces of abstracted wheat grains. Gilded with 24ct. gold, the viewers gaze is drawn inward towards the installation's brilliant center point. *Dominant Sophia* was the first example of Manousis referencing the rose window from Gothic Architecture.

The rose window of the Middle Ages has its origin in the oculus of Ancient Rome. Frequently found in structures such as Pantheon, a circular cut-out in the ceiling of a structure connects the floor to the sky, allowing light to flood into the space .

Unlike Selene and Demeter which employ soft, curvaceous feminine forms, Dominant Sophia is linear and masculine, reflecting its visual power.

Dominant Sophia, 2014

Glass / 24 ct. Gold, Stainless Steel
40 h x 40 w x 3.5 d inches





Figs and Urns is comprised of 24 cast crystal spears and 24 cast crystal tear drop formations that radiate outwards in rings to give the suggestion of light rays being emitted from the sun. Each solid crystal piece contains the gilded recessed silhouette of a fig or urn formations, entities that are symbolic of life and death. The cycle of life is echoed in the configuration of the circle, the 12 spokes of a wheel, and the golden light reflected from the sun itself, our primary energy source.

The *Figs and Urns* installation is a further iteration of *Dominant Sophia*, 2014. The form and internal details within each piece have been distilled. This reduction takes the installation away from the oculus window motif to a more 'wheel-like' or mandala format. Light bounces between the inner concentric circle of the glass pieces, presenting a splintered halo of light to its viewer.

Figs and Urns, USA, 2016

Cast Crystal / 24ct Gold Mirror / Aluminum
Dimensions: 45h x 45w x 3.5d inches







Indra's Web refers to a complex system of multifaceted jewels that was used to describe the interconnectedness of society and the universe in Hindu cosmology. Configured like a star cluster, the 50 clear crystal prisms that comprise Indra's Web contain the negative spaces of prisms with alternating angles that have been gilded internally with silver nitrate. The prisms refract and reflect light internally from their mirrored surfaces, thus alluding to the reflective plain to induce self-awareness to our connectedness with each other.

Indra's Web, 2015

Core Cast, Hand-Polished Crystal / Stainless Steel / Aluminum / Mirror
60 h x 60 w x 7 d Inches







Joanna Manousis

By Eve Kahn

Joanna Manousis mines her life experiences while exploring broader themes—materialism, memory, domesticity, vanity, iridescence—in acclaimed sculptures that mingle glass with wheat husks and taxidermied birds. Viewers may find themselves reflecting on the transience of existence while seeing themselves literally and metaphorically mirrored in her works.

A native of Shropshire, she was an only child, raised by her mother and maternal grandmother. From her earliest recollections, she says, “I was a homebody and would love drawing and painting for hours on end.” Glass played a role in her childhood, too. She admired her grandmother’s stashes of jars full of pickles and buttons, and when Joanna sometimes gazed intently into mirrors, it seemed that “the person staring back at me would become detached like an empty vacant shell, my spirit floating above in disbelief.”

In college, she set out at first to become a painter, and she earned a diploma in art and design at Yale College in Wales (now part of Coleg Cambria). But the canvas plane gave her a kind of artist’s block: “I couldn’t think beyond the photorealistic portrait—I felt, well, what more can I bring to the canvas?” She enrolled at Wolverhampton University, for a bachelor of fine art-glass degree, and during a year abroad, she studied neon and glass casting and blowing at Alfred

University in western New York. In 2008, she earned her MFA at Alfred, and by then she had met her future husband, the Maine-born glass artist Zac Weinberg. (Their daughter Esme was born in 2017.)

Joanna has since traveled the world to teach, exhibit, and make artworks, while winning awards and grants and continually analyzing the alchemical transformations and paradoxes of glass. The raw material can evolve from stiff opaque powder through molten stages and then harden into transparency. It can serve as protective containers for delicate, perishable, or hazardous substances, yet it shatters into dangerous shards. Mirrored rooms, Joanna says, tantalize with “a fraudulent sense of reality beyond the wall.” An underlying commentary in her artworks is “the superfluous nature of accumulated luxury when faced with our own impermanence.”

In her feats of trompe-l’oeil, glass looks like Mylar balloons pierced by bronze arrows, lace canopies in petal and scrollwork patterns, and pomegranate seeds spilling from half-peeled fruit. She has projected animations of her handwriting in motion on glass simulations of crumpled notebook paper. Her portraits of 1950s housewives, trapped inside spray bottles, amount to what she calls “an ironic play on the perfect woman in a bottle.” Her clear decanters with embedded milky silhouettes of pears resemble upscale engraved tableware made at West Midlands glass factories, as early as the 17th century. The segments of her rose windows are partly filled with the negative spaces of wheat kernels—there are hollows within hollows. The forms bring to mind the possibly

agnostic medieval glassworkers who built early rose windows, clambering along church steeples and earning wages from farmworkers' tithes. Joanna's taxidermy magpie peers at its reflection within a solid crystal mason jar. The bird personifies the collector and the human urge to impress one's peers while amassing collections of shiny things.

A single component in her sculptures can require months of sculpting, molding, grinding, and polishing. She experiments and calculates in pursuit of effects that "I don't even know if it's physically possible to achieve—it's as if the material keeps luring me in."

As of fall 2018, Joanna lives with her family near Toledo, Ohio, and carries out her practice at the Toledo Museum of Art's Glass Pavilion. Her current obsessions include diamond-shaped chunks of creamy marble that ornament a Victorian chapel at Sudeley Castle in the Cotswolds. The stones were carved with pearls and foliage for the tomb of Katherine Parr (1512-1548), Henry VIII's widow. Katherine was interested in glass; among her prize possessions was a book about how mirrors reveal a soul's sins (the volume was a gift from her stepdaughter, the future Elizabeth I). Joanna is creating faceted glass iterations of the tomb panels, and she is enameling internal details that



Reaching an Ulterior Realm, 2010

simulate eroding marble. The artwork, she says, will "allude to the embellished marble façade beautifying the decay that lays beyond it." There will be emotional and spiritual resonances available to anyone who sees the piece—whether they learn about Joanna's techniques, inspirations, and intentions, or whether they just bask in her glass's sheer beauty.



Bottled Pear #4, 2018

Cast and Blown Glass / Bronze / Patina
20h x 13w x 5d inches



It is the transparency of glass as a solid atmosphere that I find most compelling, and I use its intrinsic material value to create objects of ambiguity that, through positioning and placement, can engage a viewer and project a dialogue.

I re-appropriate objects that exist in the world as a device to lure and engage a universal audience.

-Joanna Manousis



Bottled Pear No. 4 is inspired by the 'Williams Birne' pear in a bottle aperitif. A silhouette of a pear rests in the bottom of a half filled decanter, while a bronze pear simulating rotting fruit looks to have fallen from the branch positioned above. Residual memories of loved ones lost is embodied in this piece and our subtle shifts in perception when recollecting time and place.

Bottled Pear is created in blown and 'core-cast' glass. The original bottle (from which molds were taken) is engraved with embellishments that are reminiscent of European cut crystal aperitif decanters. The branch and pear are lost-wax cast in bronze, hand-polished and finished with patina.





Distilled Portraits I, II, and III, 2012

Core Cast Crystal / Stainless Steel
10h x 6w x 6d inches



Distilled Portrait I, II and III consist of three 10-inch-tall mason jars cast in solid clear glass revealing negative spaces that create an image of everyday objects that exist like memorabilia of domesticity. A spool, oyster shells, and pig's feet have been carefully selected to reflect, both literally and metaphorically the identities of three individuals. The interior cavities within each jar have a reflective mirrored surface that gives volume to the residue of each object and in turn reflects both the audience and the environment it inhabits.



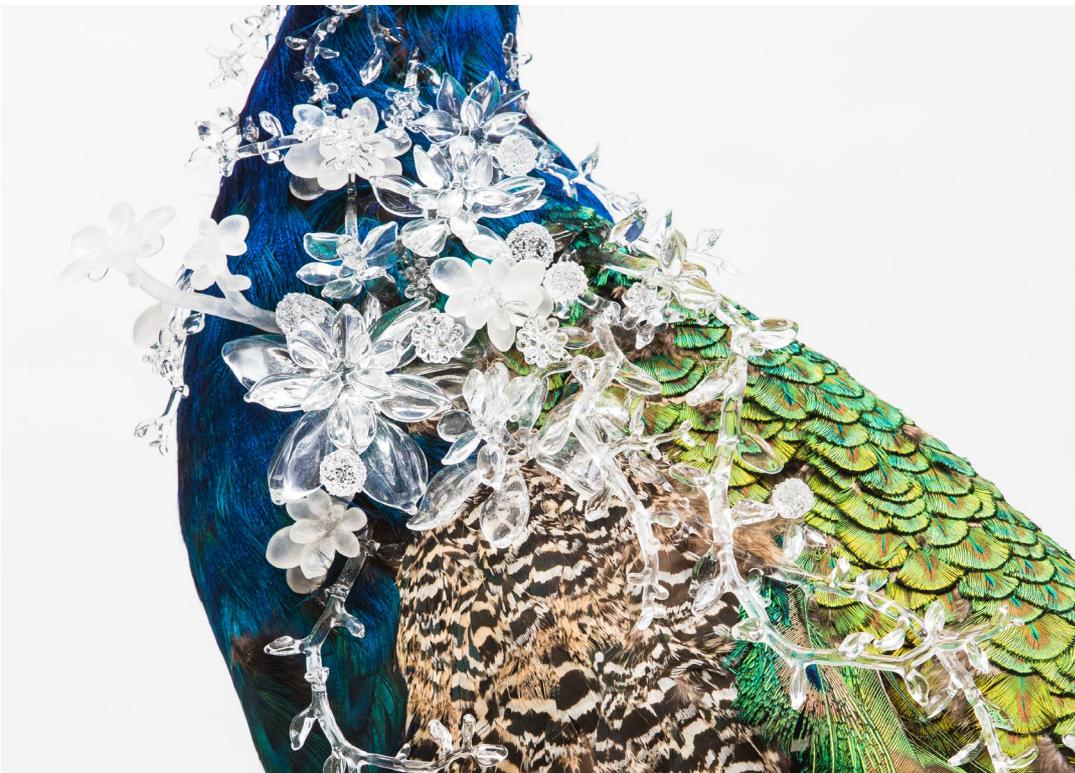
The interior of a solid, cast crystal distillery jar contains the sculpted impression of a magpie sitting on a pomegranate. Gilded with silver nitrate, the negative space of the bird and fruit is transformed into a three-dimensional mirror reminiscent of cast metal. A taxidermy magpie sits on top of the jar peering intently at what seems to be its reflection within. Believed to be one of the most intelligent of all birds, the magpie is one of a few species known to be able to recognize itself in a mirror.

The negative space of the magpie and pomegranate inside the distillery jar is achieved by installing a sculpted magpie and pomegranate made of plaster / silica (refractory) within the refractory mold of the jar. Crystal flows into the mold but cannot penetrate where the 'core' is placed. After a two week annealing program, the refractory mold is broken apart, and the refractory magpie / pomegranate removed, thus leaving the negative space of these formations. The solid glass jar is polished by hand. The interior of the jar is then coated with silver nitrate in order to give the suggestion of a three -dimensional mirrored statuette.

Distilled Portrait, 2014

Core Cast Crystal / Taxidermy Magpie / Stainless Steel
16h x 6w x 6d inches





Fertile Ground, 2014

Flame-Worked Glass / Steel / Taxidermy Peacock
90h x 11w x 7d inches



My work often toys with the sense of what is real and what is artifice. Often, I re-appropriate objects that exist in the world, and in their grouping, materiality and relation to space, bring to light a new dialogue. I am interested in the way that translucent glass can reveal something to the viewer's gaze yet simultaneously act as a barrier. In my recent practice I have taken advantage of the reflective properties of glass and mirror to enliven a surface, thus turning a static object into a living entity.

.- Joanna Manousis

Fertile Ground consists of a full size taxidermy peacock, encrusted with clear glass succulent cacti that appear to be growing from beneath the bird's feathers. The bird acts as a pedestal for its excessive adornment, which in turn explores the relationship of what is real, and what is mimicry. The peacock itself acts as a fertile ground for the embellishment that grows from within it. Here both flora and fauna are a mere reflection of what the living entities once were.





Inverted Vanitas, 2010

Cast/Blown / Pate De Verre Glass / Mirror / Neon / Mixed Media
Dimensions Vary

Existing between sculpture, architecture, painting and object, *Inverted Vanitas* consists of three highly embellished cast glass frames that recess into a wall.

The notion that a frame can be the only three-dimensional part of a painting is reversed. Ambient neon lighting draws in the viewer's gaze to the central frame within the triptych, containing still life objects in the round.

Alluding to the remains of an elaborate dining experience that one would see in a Dutch- Flemish still-life painting, *Inverted Vanitas*, entwines the rich meaning and metaphor of the pomegranate. Its mirrored flesh aims to capture the reflection of its viewer, accentuating its association to vanity and desire, while reminding us of our own fleeting mortality.





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