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meet and greet

...Joanna Manousis

In our meet and greet this month we spoke to inspiring artist Joanna Manousis. Currently studying for her Masters Degree in Sculpture at Alfred University in upstate New York, USA, Jo managed to spare us a few minutes in her busy schedule to tell us how she incorporates her knowledge of glasswork and her passion for crafts to create some incredible jewellery designs.

Can you tell us a little bit about your career up until this point?

I was always a very creative child and from an early age I knew that I would pursue an artistic career in some way shape or form. After finishing my A-levels and an Art and Design Foundation I pursued a BA in Fine Art at Nottingham University. My concentration majored in classical portraiture painting and photography, which I felt was not nurtured in the program at Nottingham. For these reasons I decided to pick up a medium that would challenge me technically and artistically. Wolverhampton University is noted for its excellent glass program, literally a stone throw away from my hometown in Shrewsbury, so I decided to break the mould and take up a BA in Glass there. It was always an intention to one-day study in the United States, and this was a desirable factor when starting at Wolverhampton University, the prospect of a one-year exchange at Alfred University, NY – the worlds most recognised institution in the field

glass and ceramics. From there everything is history, I went to New York, learnt a wealth of knowledge, and my eyes were really opened up to what you can achieve in the glass community. I'm now here studying for my Masters in Sculpture.

Tell us about the jewellery aspect of your career?

Jewellery design has always been an endeavour of mine throughout my academic life. I enjoy wire wrapping with semi-precious stones and crystals, and often incorporate glass pieces in my designs. When making my large-scale lace canopies I made small chandelier pieces for necklaces and earrings, which happened to be featured in the Clothes Show 2006 held at the NEC Birmingham.

After recently making hundreds of tiny glass teeth (cast directly from real human molars) for an installation, I utilised them after the piece was finished by turning them into precious necklaces,

the tops of the teeth capped with a gold cap for an added bling factor!

Can you tell us about your studio, where it is based etc?

This is the first year I have had the luxury of my own studio at Alfred University. It's a large space in which I can make moulds/waxes for glass casting, hang up work and sketch out new designs etc.

Do you have any particular material that you prefer to use the most?

I enjoy working with many materials – and am easily bored with one single technique alone. Although I work predominantly with glass, I try to keep up with my drawing and painting skills. I do enjoy using glass, paint and wood. I have just been exposed to metal casting also, which has scope as a favourite tool!



How do you gain inspiration for your work?

Inspiration for work stems from childhood memories, everyday ephemeral objects and the nature of the material I'm using. Most ideas just come to mind through reading and sketchbook work.

Whose work in your field do you admire and why?

That's a tricky question. I would say that I admire artists outside of my medium rather than in the glass world partly due to the technicalities of glass superseding the context.

How would you describe your style?

Excessive compulsive, detailed, beauty in the banal.

What aspect of your work do you enjoy the most?

The journey it takes to get to the required result. I love it when an idea comes to reality, and how

an original intent can change and grow during the path to its finished state. It sometimes becomes something quite different to what you had initially intended.

Do you have anything exciting planned for the following year?

This year I will be venturing to Japan as a visiting artist at Toyama Glass Institute and Aichi University, doing various slide show presentations and demos of my work. After visiting family in the UK, I will be back to the US for the summer. I have just become the recipient of The Hans Frabel Award for Best Artist in Contemporary Glass, so I will be attending the award ceremony in Atlanta, Georgia at the end of June. At the end of August I will be starting my second and final year at Alfred University.

What are your future goals?

Professionally, I hope to have my own working studio and either design work for consignment, or

lecture within a University. A cottage in the country with a pond and some ducks would also be nice.

For someone who is keen to learn more about your craft what advice would you give them?

Take an evening class to gain a taster of what it takes to work with the material. Glass is a very expensive medium, however, you can rent time in a glass blowing facility or take summer school classes. I was lucky to have an insight into stained glass design at Yale College, Wrexham where I studied my art and Design Foundation Diploma.

Selected works can be viewed online at www.joannamanousis.com. Any interest in the jewellery designs featured in this article can be directed to Joanna via the email on her website.