



LACE

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FROM LACE TO GLASS

A REINVENTION OF THE 'CRAFT' AESTHETIC

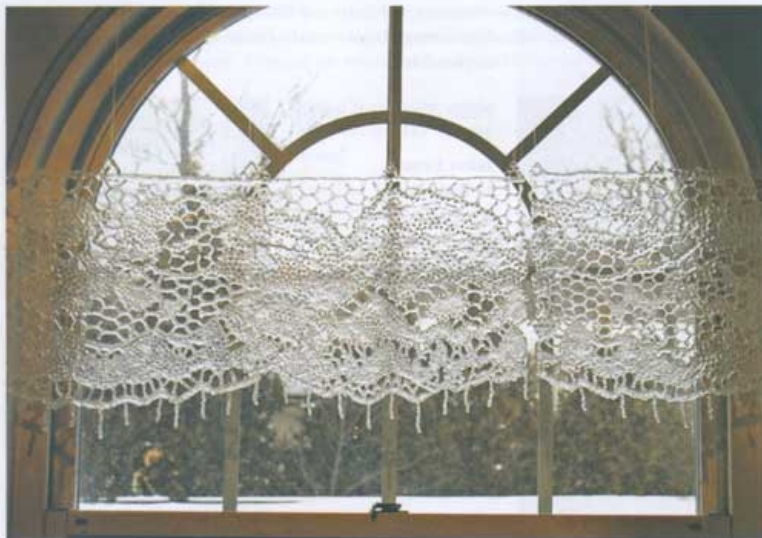
FROM JOANNA MANOUSIS

Joanna Manousis is a young, talented glass artist and painter who has seen major public attention in the last couple of years for her unique replication of antique lace pattern and imagery in glass. Joanna graduated with a first class honours degree in Glass from the University of Wolverhampton in 2007. She is now living in New York, USA completing a Masters course at Alfred University. Joanna has received numerous scholarships and awards for her large scale lace canopies, including, 'Best Newcomer' from Pearson's Glass of Liverpool, 'The International Student Award', The Glass Arts Society of America, and a short listed nomination for 'The Bombay Sapphire Award 2008', an international touring exhibition of 30 glass artists and designers that is arguably one of the most prestigious and recognised in the field of glass worldwide. Sue Dane saw Joanna's fascinating work and asked if she could share her work and its inspirations with us. Here is her story.

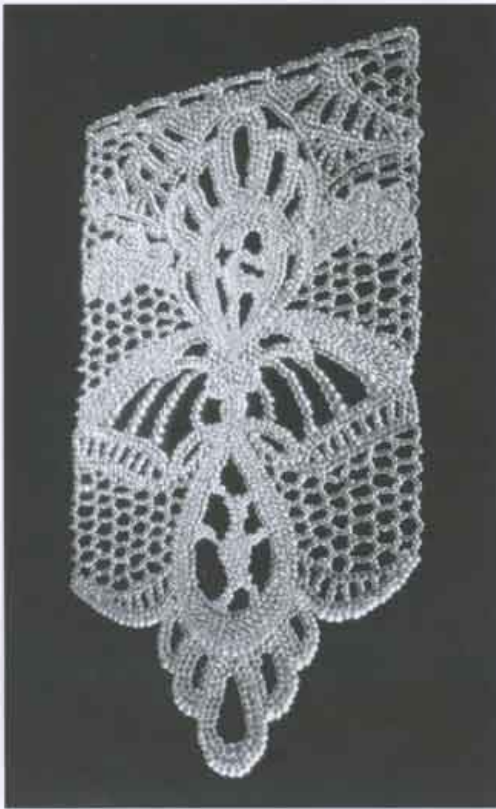
From the age of three, my mother took me each weekend to visit Shrewsbury Market Hall, a rather dark, depressing concrete monstrosity erected in the late 1960's for farmers to sell local produce as well as other items such as handbags, clothing and antiques. We would enter its double wooden doors to be confronted with an array of colours, smells and sounds to intoxicate the senses. I clearly remember the smell of stale fish and the bustle of shoppers eager to get the best produce of the day. Situated on the top gallery balcony of the hall stood 'Bill's Buttons', a small haberdashery renowned by many dressmakers for its cost-effective lace and material. My grandmother worked in the shop every Saturday morning



Joanna assembling lace panel from glass 'murrini'



First glass lace panel

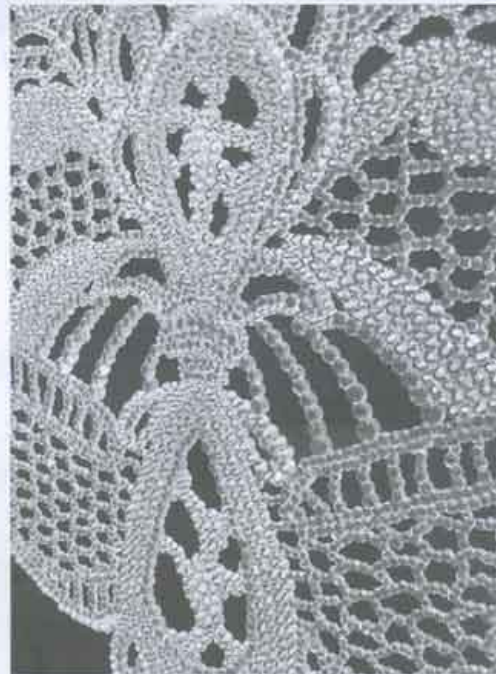


Fired to a peak temperature of 800°C in a glass-casting kiln, the high heat melted the murrini pieces, fusing their edges together to make one complete unit.

At this early stage I found the murrini stood up to being the perfect material to replicate the lace's delicate structure, the various sizes of cane reflecting the density of light captured within them, cascading a visually intricate and beautiful shadow when held up to the natural rays of light transmitted through a window. The only flaw to manufacturing the pieces, on the other hand, was the obvious fragility of the panels, especially when required as an installation piece for the gallery or home. Although my idea was raw and in its infancy, I felt that the three lace pieces initially fabricated at Alfred University had a wider scope to be pursued. I realised I had touched upon a concept and idea with ongoing possibilities, and it was during my final year at Wolverhampton University that I fabricated more refined versions of lace imagery in murrini, enforcing their delicate structures with the addition of water-jet cut sheet glass, cut to the exact perimeter of the lace template and UV bonded to the murrini sheets thus allowing its inclusion in a window or wall setting. A five piece canopy of lace was installed in my final thesis exhibition at Wolverhampton, in 2007, and it was during this year that documentary images of the pieces went on to winning the 'Best Newcomer' section of the Pearson's Glass Prize and a shortlisted recognition for the Bombay Sapphire Awards, a ceremony held at the

international Design Festival, Milan in the Via Turtona area. It had always been my intention to one day study a masters at Alfred University, an institution I had come to know and love during my one-year study abroad experience there. Now in the first year of this programme, many people have been intrigued to know whether I will continue with the lace theme, pushing it further into three dimensional possibilities rather than statutory panel objects. Physically demanding to make, the dilemma of time necessary to produce such pieces has forced me to re-assess the pursuit of carrying out such large-scale intricate work. My wish now is to take advantage of the extensive facilities and constructive input available from the academic faculty to push my work and ideas further to greater heights. Currently, the work I am producing touches on ideas of domesticity, femininity and consumption but in a less obvious, literary manner that at times draws upon the two dimensional skills I acquired within my earlier fine art background. My interest and ideas with the lace have by no means been disregarded however, and the knowledge and limitations I have grasped in making such pieces with such a technically demanding material will aid to my advantage within ongoing thought processes and studio practice.'

Joanna's lace is featured until 22 February 2009 at 'Beautifully Crafted', an exhibition of ingenuity and exquisite workmanship held at The National Glass Centre, Sunderland. If you are interested in the glass lace pieces, and would like information regarding the technique, future exhibitions and sales, please visit Joanna's web site www.joannamanousis.com.



Left and right - Murrini lace panel and detail (photo credit Simon Bruntell)