

VISUAL ARTS

Glassworks share a common fragility



Heather Konschuh's colourful creations are on display at Seymour Art Gallery. PHOTO CINDY GOODMAN

16 artists exhibiting their wares at Seymour gallery

■ **Handle With Care:** Glassworks from Terminal City Glass Co-Op, until Aug. 9 at Seymour Art Gallery. Artist demo: July 27, 2-4 p.m. seymourartgallery.com

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Transforming a melted substance into a delicate bowl or tiny beads is the basis of glasswork and a new exhibit at the Seymour Art Gallery.

Handle with Care, Glassworks from Terminal City Glass Co-Op, is the latest exhibit at the North Vancouver gallery, on now until August 9.

"Essentially melted glass is melted glass and it's the tools that you use and the processes that you apply to it that can help it become all of these other different things," says Cathy Beaumont, office

manager at Terminal City Glass Co-Op.

There are 16 artists participating in the exhibit and visitors can expect to see vases and jewelry, as well as a whole range of art glass applications, says Beaumont.

"One of the great things about working with glass is that there's so many processes that you can use in order to take this molten substance and turn it into a solid piece of art," says Beaumont. "Some of our artists are glass blowers, so they're using molten glass directly from the furnace and turning that into large vessels and then treating the surface in a variety of different ways either with sand blasting or applying image transfers directly onto the glass."

Other artists use the glass in a much more miniature way, says Beaumont, using a table-mounted torch to melt

rods of glass in order to make beads. Glass can also be fused, which is done by taking plate glass, assembling it and putting it into a kiln, then melting it into its final shape.

"This is one of the reasons why glass is just so infinitely wonderful," says Beaumont. "You can do so many different things with it to bring basically your own artistic vision to life."

According to Beaumont, Terminal City Glass Co-Op, founded in March 2012, is Canada's first and only non-profit art glass co-op.

"The co-op was established to support and develop artists who want to work in glass and also improve the profile (of) glass as an artistic medium in Vancouver," she says. "So to do that we have the studio here available for our members to use and we also have an extensive program of education courses for people who want to learn glass blowing or bead making or flame working or sand blasting."

Heather Konschuh, a

glassblower and exhibit participant, has three different pieces on display that were all made at Terminal City.

"They're all hot off the press," says Konschuh. "They play with how the light can go through glass in terms of opaque and transparent colours."

Konschuh says her pieces, including large and small bowls as well as cylinder vases, have a similar colour scheme, using both warm and cool tones.

"They have a combination of transparent and opaque colours in the same family, so it would be maybe a pale, opaque blue with a transparent aquamarine," says Konschuh. "They're made in such a way that those colours sometimes overlap and create a third colour where they join."

Konschuh has been glassblowing for about 12 years, travelling all across Canada and the world, including England and

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Australia, honing her craft along the way.

"One of the more challenging things is that I tell people it's a little bit like turning clay only you can't touch it because it's too hot and you have to make it sideways," she says. "So we have to use metal tools and wood and thick, soaked paper to form the glass and then we have to manually turn it with one hand and form it with the other and you build

everything sideways."

The self-professed farm girl from Saskatchewan has been creating glass art for 12 years and teaches the art form at Terminal City Glass. She says she supplies to galleries across Canada and England, making glassblowing her full-time job. Konschuh says the longer one devotes to the art, the easier it becomes.

"In the beginning when you're learning how to blow glass, it's very unnatural because (it's)

sort of like you pat your head and you rub your stomach, you do two things at the same time, but practice makes perfect," she says. "It took me three years to make anything that I was proud of."

Konschuh says most art forms come quite naturally to her so grasping the process of glassblowing was a challenge.

"Now that I've been doing it for 12 years, I can sort of look at something and quite quickly be able to make it, or know the

limitations that there are with the material that we're using," she says.

Although Konschuh's work has been featured in numerous galleries, she still finds participating in exhibits exciting.

"It challenges you to make a nice, solidified group of work, that they're cohesive together and kind of show off your talents and of course you only want to submit your best," she says. "It's nice to do a show alongside your peers and see what they've been

working on too and see it properly displayed."

Beaumont says many of the other exhibit participants are also career glass artists that have shown their work before too, while the rest have never exhibited before.

"The wonderful thing for us is that we're able to support these artists who are really just getting their careers started as well," she says.

Terminal City Glass Co-Op has seen a significant jump in membership since

its inception in 2012.

Beaumont says two years ago they had about 36 members and now they have 110, as well as a couple hundred people that participate in the education program every year.

"Part of the explosive growth that we've had in our membership has been because people have been getting entranced by the glass, and the more they learn about it and the more they learn to work with it, the more they want to do that," says Beaumont.