

PASSION AND FIRE.

The Glass Sculpture of Sue Parry.

The passion which the seductive quality of glass as an artistic medium can generate in people's imagination is nowhere better exemplified than in the work of Sue Parry. Few artist makers have altered their whole life style and careers on the initial inspiration to create an artwork for their own property. In Sue's case she started exploring glass when she wanted to create a glass 'crow's nest' at her house overlooking a lake and surrounding landscape. The first glass course of one week was followed by other short courses and then two full years at the International Glass Centre at Brierley Hill in the West Midlands where she honed her skills in her chosen technique of glass sand-casting. From those tentative steps in 2002 she is now, after a mere six years, recognized by her peers as one of the innovative glass artists of her generation and has been awarded a glass studio at the prestigious Ruskin Glass Centre near Stourbridge.

Now into her fourth year as a professional glass artist she has reached a turning point with exciting new techniques being explored and an offer of an international residency beckoning to new artistic horizons. At the start of her career her work had two styles; the first were large textured platters and wall panels where the surfaces received their detail from carved clay forms over which the glass was poured. The second, using sand-casting glass, created flowing forms which echoed the material itself but were inspired by her native Dartmoor, the North Cornish coast and her early fascination with geology. With those influences of sand, rocks and water it is perhaps no surprise her sand-cast pieces have titles such as 'Frozen Surf' and 'Sea Foam'. Many of them were set on chunks of rock or on Raku pottery which she made and fired herself. Working with another local glass artist Alistair Malcolm, Sue Parry has developed a series of wall panels in which small bubbles of multi-coloured glass, blown by Alistair, are squashed flat, then cut into fragments and layered and fused to form intricate, flowing and sensuously stunning 'watercolours'. More colourful than the earlier work this new range of work reveals the exotic influences of the sea, corals and marine life of the Caribbean. But these works are not simply an exploration of the possibilities of one particular glass technique. For her the glass offers a process of self-discovery and it brings to mind, watching on dvd, the sculptor Andy Goldsworthy at work and experiencing the pain of a stone egg form collapsing by the water's edge and the patience to begin again and know the material better. For Sue the act itself of gathering and pouring molten glass straight from the fire and the furnace is an emotive and passionate experience which by that strange and elusive process of creativity sneaks into the work and is felt directly by the viewer. On a more practical level Sue compares the process to creating a stir-fry meal, the preparation requiring hours of planning and assembling the individual ingredients then the sudden heat and intensity of creating something greater than just a sum of the parts.

In 2007 Sue Parry was one of twenty-one regional artists trained at the International Glass Centre who were invited to take part in an exhibition entitled '1000 Glass Miles' in Frauenau in Bavaria. This summer a follow-up exhibition at Frauenau entitled 'Same Difference' again included Sue's work alongside thirteen other British glass artists and fourteen German artists. Both exhibitions were part of a number of

initiatives under the heading of Glass Collaborations, the brainchild and inspiration of Denise Hunt at the IGC who applied and raised the necessary funding and made the contacts with Erwin Eisch, his daughter Katherina Eisch-Angus and Mark Angus at the Eisch atelier and Frauenau glass school and museum in Southern Germany. Erwin Eisch needs no introduction to the glass fraternity as one of the leaders of the studio glass revolution in Europe in the 1960s and he continues as a much-respected glass force. The Eisch Atelier itself is a model of excellence in glass philosophy, teaching and practice and supports and promotes original ideas from glassmakers worldwide. In that context it comes as no surprise that the achievements of Sue Parry as an exciting new force in glass art have been recognized by the Eisch team and she is the first artist from the '1000 Glass Miles' group to be invited for a month's residency in February 2009 at the Atelier.

During those four exhilarating weeks Sue Parry will have access to two furnaces for four hours a day and complete free access to the rest of the facilities in the glasshouse including wood turners and metal workers. The Eisch atelier is keen to see her take the Caribbean-inspired colour themes into new areas and she has already been planning different shapes and combinations of those pieces. One facility on offer at Frauenau is access to sophisticated cold working equipment, something which she currently lacks in her own studio, and where she will be able to achieve her vision for those pieces. During the residency the Eisch factory have requested a prototype range of products by Sue which will be created by the factory as a commercial product and sold under the "Eisch Atelier by Sue Parry" label. The final icing on the cake of the residency will happen during the summer when the Eisch School hosts the annual Bild-Werk Frauenau international academy, a gathering of the best of European and international glass makers and artists to discuss their cultures, glass and fine art. During that time between June and August the Eisch museum will feature a solo exhibition of Sue's work under the personal heading of "Passion and Fire" featuring the products of her residency and her most recent work in Stourbridge.

Part of her month residency requires her to realize two public works of art, both exterior pieces to be situated near or around the Eisch exhibition gallery. Currently Sue Parry has not had time to imagine any ideas of how these pieces will look, let alone their size, colour or techniques. But she admits that her first inspiration for glass was never realized so it may be that the glass crow's nest may become the kernel of an idea for one of those public works in Frauenau. That would certainly be a romantic way of closing the circle in the first stage of her career while looking at the widening glass horizons over the Bavarian mountains as she moves on to other passionate and fiery creations.

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December 2008.