

New at SOFA

GLASSKIBE: Two crafts and two materials pay tribute to Scandinavian heritage

Danish-British art collective Backhaus-Brown and Egeværk is a new act at SOFA. They bring their joint art project GLASSKIBE to the Chicago exhibition, combining fine glass art and masterful cabinetmaking in unique pieces paying tribute to the Scandinavian heritage of the collective. Backhaus-Brown and Egeværk are represented by the Danish Gallery Grønlund.

A fleet of remarkable glass and wood viking ships are exhibited by Gallery Grønlund at this year's SOFA in Chicago. The art collective behind the Glasskibe (Danish for Glass Ships) is new to SOFA.

Glasskibe are made in a collaboration between the glass artist duo Backhaus-Brown and award-winning cabinetmakers Egeværk. Each ship is constructed of a unique glass hull decorated Battuto-style. The keel is meticulously crafted to fit the glass hull - in dimensions as well as expression. The process of creating a glass ship is long and painstaking - and actually begins three months prior to assembling the ship; first of all the perfect piece of wood is selected and stored for drying. Once the creation really begins, each ship literally goes back and forth between the two workshops several times before it is done.

Two materials

The ships are creative abstractions of the famous viking ships. The ships combine glass and wood in a new - and equal - fashion. Wood in combination with glass has traditionally played the role of a practical or decorative detail of a glass piece - a lid on a jar, a cork of a decanter. Looking at glass from a cabinetmaker's perspective, it has primarily been used as a decorative detail on rare, bespoke pieces of furniture.

Combining glass and wood as equally important components of an artwork has proven to be groundbreaking, which might be one of the reasons why Glasskibe became an immediate success.

The Glasskibe collective also experiences that a global audience are fascinated by the Norse legends and myths, and the imagery the ships bring to life: "People are instinctively drawn to the ships, and collectors from all over the world have responded to them," Nanna Backhaus Brown explains. "And then people simply find them to be very very beautiful and recognize the craft that goes into each work. There are so many demanding processes that go into each ship in both workshops, and our audience really appreciates it", says Mette Bentzen from Egeværk.

18 months into the Glasskibe project, the quartet are still taken by surprise every time a ship is completed: *"We have strong teams in both workshops"*, Lasse Kristensen of Egeværk explains, *"We have the specialized crafts and a strong and inspiring collaboration between the glass team and the wood team in place. Still, we cannot predict the expression of a given ship. We literally have the two materials in our hands for so long when we create a ship, and still, we are surprised every time a ship is done. They seem to be getting a life of their own once the glass and wood merge!"*

Inspired by a magnificent past.

The base of the creative collective is found an hour's drive north of Copenhagen in a peaceful and scenic area. Backhaus-Brown and Egeværk are next door neighbors at the quayside of Hundested Harbour with stunning views of both Kattegat and Roskilde Fjord. This is an area where some of the most important historical viking ships and other artifacts from the Viking Era have been excavated.

The inhabitants of both workshops enjoy taking a moment to gaze at the horizon imagining the busy traffic of the Viking Era. Andrew Brown - a glass artist specialized in the 'cold' Battuto grinding technique - was one day inspired by a reflection in the water that reminded him of the way the planks of the viking ships were carved. Maybe it would be possible to capture the expression and the masterful craftsmanship of the viking ships in a work of art? And maybe next door neighbours Egeværk could create parts of the ship? According to Andrew, this was the beginning of something beautiful; the creative collaboration sparkled and the viking ships becoming an overnight success: *"The partnership with Egeværk has been great, and the response from our surroundings - clients, colleagues, the media etcetera - was overwhelming right from the beginning, and made us keep on developing the viking ships. Conceptually, they have become very strong and have somehow gotten a life of their own."*

Luck would have it that gallery owner Anne Merete Grønlund also fell in love with the viking ships in glass and wood - and chose to give them her full attention with a whole booth at SOFA 2017 dedicated to the Nordic artworks.

GLASSKIBE are exhibited at booth 1202

**Backhaus-Brown and Egeværk will lecture on Nov 3: GLASS AND WOOD
Online booth at Artsy**

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