



Honorary Lifetime Membership Award: BULLSEYE GLASS COMPANY

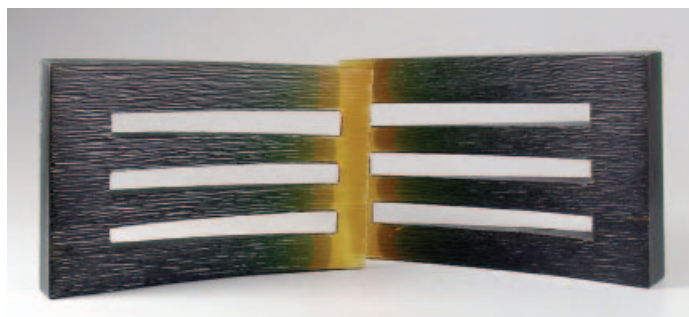
AT the GAS conference hosted by Ausglass in Adelaide in May, 2005 Lani McGregor and Daniel Schwoerer of Bullseye Glass Company will receive an Honorary Lifetime Membership Award for outstanding service to the Glass Art Society. This company has a long history of working with glass artists to develop its products and, through their work, to demonstrate how they can be used. It also has an exemplary record of supporting experimental projects and emerging artists.

Bullseye was set up in Portland, Oregon, in 1974, by glassblowers Daniel Schwoerer, Ray Ahlgren and Boyce Lundstrom. Schwoerer had studied glass as a graduate assistant to Harvey Littleton at the University of Wisconsin during the 1960s as well as doing graduate work in engineering. Although they were glass blowers, they wanted to support their art through an income-generating industry and saw a need for a manufacturer of flat glass. Schwoerer explains, 'In the early '70s the few American companies making opalescent glass were back-ordered for at least two years and weren't taking on new customers.' In the following years Ahlgren and Lundstrom moved on and Lani McGregor, now artistic director of the Bullseye Connection gallery, joined Schwoerer as partner in 1985.

Bullseye's specialty is kiln glass and the company continues to work towards an integrated system of soda-lime glasses: frits, powders, sheet, stringers and billets, and a "perfect clear sheet". They have developed a range of over 1,000 products not only for flat and fused kiln-formed glass, but also now for



blowing and torchwork. Bullseye kept closely involved with the needs of the marketplace through direct links with the art world and artists who have worked with them over the years include Dante Marioni and Jun Kaneko. In the early 1980s German-born Australian, Klaus Moje, wanted to make kiln-formed mosaic glass and needed colours that fused compatibly. Moje met Lundstrom at the Pilchuck Glass School and discovered they had a mutual interest in the development of what became Bullseye's Tested Compatible sheet glasses. This liaison had far-reaching repercussions, especially so for Australians, because Moje moved to teach at the Canberra School of Art in 1982: 'Bullseye made hand-rolled



glass for architectural purposes. They saw the problems I had with compatible glass and a limited colour palette and began to see a serious way of entering the studio glass movement with their product.' Bullseye's involvement with glass artists stretches around the world, from Portland in Oregon to Caithness in Scotland. They became involved in education through a range of programs for artists, architects and teachers at their factory site workshops, while the Bullseye Connection gallery, which from 1995 had operated as part of the resource centre, was opened in 1999 offering solo and thematic exhibitions, and exhibitions that reflected their workshop program. In 1998 they established the first International Young Artists in Glass residencies with four Australians, Claudia Borella, Jessica Loughlin, Giles Bettison and Mel George.

Bullseye's connection with Australia was established mainly through Moje's interest in providing opportunities for colleagues and graduates to travel, study and exhibit overseas, that were continued later by his successor Stephen Procter, and Jane Bruce. In turn Bullseye became involved in supporting programs in Australia, such as the Latitudes workshops and exhibitions of 1995 and 1997, organised at the Canberra School of Art by Kirstie Rea, where participants experimented with the array of options now possible. Kirstie Rea and Scott Chaseling continued their own explorations of these new possibilities, and became well-known in the 1990s for their international "Roll-up" workshops. In fact, just before the GAS conference in Adelaide, Bullseye will run workshops with a small group of Australian painters experimenting with "painting on glass", coordinated by Gabriella Bisetto from the University of South Australia.

Bullseye, in fact, operates somewhat as a studio workshop itself, with teams that gather molten glass in stainless steel ladles by hand, and dump it onto the presses for hand-rolling into sheets like molten dough. The recipes for glass are the subject of extensive personal and specialist research, yet the company's orientation, as with those who use its glass, is one of creative artistic endeavour associated with practical planning for viability. Bullseye are to be warmly congratulated on this well-deserved award.

Grace Cochrane

Grace Cochrane is Senior Curator of Australian decorative arts and design at the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney.

This article is adapted from her essay, 'Seat-of-the-pants to state-of-the-art', in the forthcoming book, Australian Glass Today, edited by Margot Osborne, published by Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 2005.