

GLASSY

magazine

FEATURE STORY

YOU ARE MY FRIEND FROM FAR AWAY

MENG DU X CHRISTINA BOTHWELL

JULIE ZHU & IVAN MARES



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ZHANG LIN

President of Shanghai Museum of Glass
Executive Director of Glassy Magazine

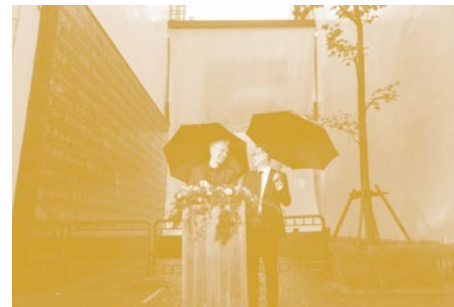
GOING BACK TO THE MUSEUM

Shanghai Museum of Glass is now 5 years old. In these years it has grown from an infant to a young child, and now, the long-term plans begin.

During this past period of growth, we have continued to ponder which direction we should choose so that the impending but valuable phase of adolescence will not be wasted. Looking at other models suddenly made us realize that we should insist on a pure museum identity, not a glass theme park. Although it may include everything, it may not be fully understood or accepted by the very people it exists to serve. This is because in the post-industrial era the spiritual pursuit that people demand of a cultural space surpasses the material, not just in terms of amount, but also quality. What people need is enriching travels through art and culture, not your typical pay-and-enjoy theme park that hardly covers anything from a profound angle. Hence, Shanghai Museum of Glass has proudly begun to re-confirm its identity, and to satisfy the city's development.

Shanghai Museum of Glass

For fulfilling such a task, this year a new **Design Wing** grandly opened in the museum park for permanent exhibitions that have included some of the world's top pioneering designers' glass masterpieces, as well as temporary exhibitions that are cooperations with art and design colleges or schools in China. This is part of the ongoing actions taken for exhibition area expansions and the enrichment of our collection. Another part has included reorganizing the hierarchy of brands including the Shanghai Museum of Glass-founded "**Let's Talk Glass**" and others that cater to a variety of tastes and consumption levels. The aim is to leave visitors with a profound impression of glass. Together with the newly opened **DIY Lifestyle Workshop** this year, the museum has not just set a brand value space, but also gradually found a medium: through a development of experience-based and syllabus-based educational activities, a consistent brand value is delivered to target customers, as well as satisfying the needs of both groups and individuals. This has extended the museum's function as an art education center outside of the campus. The museum park has also built upon one of the most ancient games in the world **The MAZE** has turned the idea of a labyrinth into a one-of-a-kind design experience, adding another layer to our museum. In addition, the museum has programs that focus on science education, combining textbook knowledge with hands-on experience. This year, we celebrated the **twentieth Bobo & Lili Lab with a carnival**, inviting the Shanghai Institute of Organic Chemistry, CAS and Department of Chemistry, and Fudan University to join in. What's more, the **Kids Design Glass** exhibiting tour has been unveiled in shopping centre The Place with the theme Dreamland Adventures. A successful collaboration with the Museum of Glass in Tacoma that shares glass art with kids and adults alike,



“What people need is enriching travels through art and culture.”

it also shortens the distance between cultural institutions and common people. Just as significantly, after the “Daily 2” contemporary glass art exhibition, the museum park shared the works “**Glass Intestine**” and “**Plain**” in the theme of **Annealing** for pioneering artists' artworks show, which coincided with **Infuse**—the tenth anniversary exhibition of glass art by faculty and students from Glass Workshop, College of Crafts, China Academy of Art. These events have all been echoing within the refurbishment of the museum's main hall to enhance visitor experiences in the New Year. I myself was invited as an official delegate to attend the **UNESCO** High Level Forum on Museums in Shenzhen. The forum was held by UNESCO in liaison with the State Administration of Cultural Heritage. There I witnessed the approval of the Shenzhen Declaration and its release, whose contents will, undoubtedly, support the path that Shanghai Museum of Glass has chosen.

The work does not end here. Looking ahead, the renovated glass instrument factory in the park will be open for visitors next year. It offers a summary of the museum park's history, and it will finally become a tourist destination summarizing its original purpose. In Daoism there is a proverb that says the path begets one, and three begets all things in harmony – which is to say “three” creates an infinite connection in the world. So, for our third issue, here's to a redolent childhood and well wishes for the museum's adolescent years.

For now, we're going back to the museum.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Thank you.



FOREWORD

Apart from our family and friends, there is something, which is not necessarily crucial to our daily life that is still important and cherished in our hearts. In every field, people find their idols, which is also true in glass art. For every young glass artist in China some admirable figures hover in their minds.

At this time last year, I came up with the idea that if time and luck permits, could we have local glass artists contact their own idols to engage in a long and profound dialogue? I thought that would be fun.

To create an inspiring feature that fully embraces emotions and souls, we invited two female glass artists from China who were new to me. I met with Meng Du this March for the first time when she was invited to the Shanghai Museum of Glass to perform glass blowing. Different from what she was like in private, she was so absorbed and incisive with a blowpipe in hand—both looks, of course, were sparkling. I sensed in her petite figure a great power with which she fed her work continuously – like a running stream rather than pouring like a thunderstorm. As a very talented artist, she chose Christina Bothwell, who has a strong connection with Shanghai Museum of Glass. Five years ago, when the museum first updated its international artwork, there was an amazing piece from Christina called “Sometimes When She Sleeps,” which always left a deep impression on visitors. Likeminded people who remain faithful to their characters can feel the waves inside each other, however far apart they may be. Christina must have attracted and inspired Meng’s writings and artworks, and therefore unraveled her beautiful and touching stories for all of us.

When I contacted artist Julie Zhu to ask whether she would also be open to this idea, I barely knew anything about her, so I was a little anxious about making such an unusual request. My anxiety was soon relieved by her affirmative and friendly reply as well as her most sincere love for Czech glass art. It was her sincerity and passion, I believe, that made her idol Ivan Mares, an eccentric master in glass art and Czech Republic national treasure, open his heart to her. Their conversation, full of genuine emotion, becomes more touching and gratifying as one reads. As a summary of Julie’s memories about her communication with Ivan, the dialogue unveils fascinating details: warm, fun, and thorough, showing a brilliant and vivid image of the master.

Someone important, someone special, someone admirable, and someone to share an idea with...they want to talk and learn more about each other. The dialogues continue, and so does this project. Who comes in our next feature? Prepare to be surprised.

TEXT: HAIBING

Photos Courtesy of: Meng Du / Robert Bender

Text: Meng Du, Christina Bothwell

Meng Du

CHAPTER 1 : SOUL

Christina
Bothwell

FROM DUSK TO DAWN

**“It’s about birth,
death, and rebirth.
Lights are lingering
within and without
these sculptures,
igniting the sparks
of life in them.”**

“From Christina’s works, we have seen those ‘unseens.’ They were faintly captured and reflected by the mysterious nature of the glass, circling around us yet elusive. It’s about born, death, and reborn. Lights are lingering within and without these sculptures, igniting the sparks of life in them. Having read her previous interviews and seen her works, I found there is a lot in common between us. The way of her being a narrator by using glass is what I found the most touching behind her works. Be it her dreams, or the strangers she came across, they are the dots that are finally connected by Christina to create these fragile, yet profoundly beautiful pieces. It’s these stories that I want to share with our readers in China.

Before I sent her my first email, I got an idea for the title: From Dusk to Dawn. It’s a period of time in the day that has a lot of subtlety. We are in dreams, but we are also in reality. We can even experience some inexplicable supernatural feelings. So, let’s imagine this: it’s after dinner, we are gathering around the fireplace, having a conversation with a cup of tea in our hands. We tell each other about the people we have met, and things living in the past.

A few times when I was reading the stories Christina wrote to me, my eyes reddened with tears. I always find myself touched by ordinary things very easily. My heart is always going up and down with these stories full of sensations. I understand my words are not enough to express her in full, but still, I want these stories to reach as far as everyone who wants to know Christina the artist.

Thank you.”

Text: Meng Du

BEING A GLASS STORYTELLER

Hi Christina,

This is Meng Du from the Rochester Institute of Technology Glass Program. Actually, I just moved back from Rochester, New York after six years of living in the States and am currently located in Beijing, China. Even though I left RIT, I still love to consider myself as part of the crew. Not only as an alumni, but as someone who would love to share experience and knowledge like everybody else in the program.

I am very pleased to have this opportunity to be part of the Shanghai Museum of Glass Artist Dialogues! To me, you are the artist who led me into the glass world. Back to the year 2008, I was still a graphic designer who just got out of school and didn't have any idea of what would be the next. A trip to the States completely changed my life and since then I got hooked on glass and started researching everything about it. Finally, it led me to the path of applying for graduate school in glass and moving to the States. I clearly remember when I saw your work online – a lot of stories about my family and memories from childhood were triggered immediately and enlarged my feelings about life. I guess that’s why, when I work with glass today, I love to start from a narrative content, or being a glass storyteller from time to time. In fact, I spend a lot of time researching and reading all the publications about your works and yourself as an artist. The most touching parts I found are the stories behind the works. Like the woman who is mourning over her twin, or the deer gazing at you in the freezing morning... After reading all these stories, the resonance of your meaningful works has been echoing in the bottom of my heart. And these moments are what I truly want to introduce to Chinese audience and viewers.

So my idea for this special Artist Dialogue is called From Dusk to Dawn. Since your works are about the processes of birth, death, and renewal, and a lot of your inspirations are from your dreams, it would be great if you could share three recent stories each about birth, death, and renewal. It could be a dream you recorded, or a story you hear from others, or some subtle feeling triggered by an object. Actually, my initial idea was doing this project seven days in a row like a diary. One story / work a day. But I am afraid it will take you too much time... Anyway, I would love to see how you feel about it and how you would like to respond to this idea. I am up for any discussions and am really hoping it could be a fun project that we share with each other.

Please feel free to check out my works and I would love to share my stories with you, too.

Looking forward to hearing back from you!

All my best,

From Meng Du

2016.10.02

THERE IT WAS. I WAS,HAPPY

DEER (PART) / 2014-2015
by Christina Bothwell



Dear Meng Du,

I have been thinking a lot about your email to me. I could tell you about a few dreams I have had, but I keep thinking of a story a friend of mine told me.

My friend Becky lost her daughter to a high fever. This happened years ago, when her only child was two years old. It was one of those things that just happened. Her daughter got a high fever, and by that afternoon when Becky took her daughter to the hospital, her two-year-old had died. Her husband blamed her for their daughter's death, and their marriage ended. Becky blamed herself for the death as well for not getting her daughter to the hospital earlier. She was deeply depressed.

Ten years later, she met a lovely man, and they eventually adopted two little boys. One day, Becky went to the childcare center where her little boy spent a few hours each week. Her son was sitting on the floor in the classroom, playing with a small toy car.

He looked up and saw her, and he shouted out happily, "Mommy! Mommy! Mommy!"

Becky told me that she suddenly noticed that she had a strange sensation, a feeling, that suffused, filled her whole being. She stood quite still, trying to identify what she was feeling.

Happiness.

She felt happy. She later told me, "It had been so long since I had felt that way, and I had believed I would never again experience happiness. But there it was. I was happy."

Becky's story stayed with me, it is something I have always remembered. (I will write you more later, dear Meng Du. I love your work, by the way, I looked it up.)

Best Regards,

From CHRISTINA

2016.10.12

“My aunt blames herself every time when she see my cousin is not able to do things other people can easily accomplish...”

Hi Christina,

Thanks for sharing that story with me. I am so pleased to read till the end of her story that happiness finally returns to her. It reminds me my cousin, too. He had a high fever for weeks when he was two years old and was also taken late to the hospital because of my aunt. Luckily, he survived, but unfortunately he caught meningitis. It caused many problems for him as he grew up. My aunt blames herself each time she sees my cousin is not able to do things other people can easily accomplish...she's a strong woman who always stays positive to others. Only my mom knows how many times she has cried over this.

Looking forward to reading more stories. And thank for your kind words about my works!

Loves,

REMEMBRANCE (PART) / 2012
by Meng Du



From Meng Du

2016.10.12

FOLLOWING YOUR HEART

Dear Moe,

I apologize for keeping you waiting! I have two big deadlines which have been taking up most of my attention. But I have not forgotten about you, or our discussion!

I wanted to tell you about two encounters I had with women I met. I only met them on two occasions, but meeting them changed me in terms of how I view my life. I will write each story in a separate email, so please don't think I am sending you duplicate emails - each will be different from the other!

One evening when my children were in preschool, (about seven years ago) a musician visited their school to perform a little concert. Her name was KJ, and she played songs she had written on her guitar.

KJ had a special glow about her, it was if she emanated light from within. I was mesmerized, and couldn't keep my eyes off her. During the intermission, I went up to her and asked her if she could tell me her story. I told her I could see that she was a very special person.

She told me that as a child, she had had problems with attention and behavior, and had to go to a special school for problematic children. The only way she was able to finish her homework was if she wrote a song for her homework. This her teachers allowed her to do. Still, her parents were not supportive of her, and often told her she had a terrible singing voice, and they believed she was not talented enough to succeed as a musician. They urged her to study business at college, as they feared she would be unable to care for herself financially.

So, KJ went to business school, and eventually got an office job, which she hated. She did her boring job faithfully for over twenty years, feeling more and more dead inside. Finally she found herself quite unable to leave her bed.

Doctors discovered she had advanced cancer, which had spread from her colon throughout her entire body. The doctors told her sadly that she had three months to live.

She went home and realized that despite her apparent lack of talent, if she had only three months to live, she wanted to spend her remaining time on earth playing and performing music.

She telephoned all the bookstores and coffee houses she could find, asking them

SOUL OF MY SOUL (PART) / 2010 - 2011
by Christina Bothwell



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you about two
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if they would be willing to let her perform free of charge to their customers. They all agreed, and as KJ spent her remaining weeks, she began feeling more alive and energized. The pain in her body was disappearing, and soon she realized, she had never felt better.

When she went to her doctor, he was confused and eventually angry when he discovered that her tests were clear and the cancer had spontaneously disappeared, never to return. There was no logical explanation that he could find to explain her health situation.

She told me, “It's a funny thing - as soon as I began following my heart, my cell tissues fell into line and I became healthy.”

Today KJ Reimenschneider makes her living performing for people all over the country. She has written songs for famous country singers, and has released about ten CDs.

Moe, since I don't have a computer, only this iPad mini, I am going to send this email as it is to you now and write a following email, as sometimes this little iPad shuts down and I lose everything I have written.

I hope you like this story about a remarkable woman who inspired me, and whom I still think about.

Best regards,

From CHRISTINA

2016.10.17

GOD IS EVERYWHERE

Dear Moe,

I hope you received my previous email about the musician I met named KJ.

This story is about another woman I met about five years ago, but I never learned her name. I have spoken about this young woman in various interviews, as meeting her inspired me to make a large sculpture which now resides in India.

At the time I met this young woman, my twins were four years old and I had just taken them to a large indoor public swimming pool. I was sitting on a bench along a wall next to the pool, watching them play in the water.

A beautiful young teenager came in the room with two small children, and these children jumped into the water. The young woman came and sat down next to me on the bench, and eventually we began talking. I told her I was an artist, and then she volunteered that she was a motivational speaker. I was surprised, asking her, "But aren't you, like, sixteen years old?"

She laughed, and explained that she was 24. She went on to explain how she came from a very religious, conservative Catholic family. She discovered that she was pregnant at 16, and her horrified family threw her out of their house to live on the street. The baby's father wanted nothing to do with her.

"There I was - sixteen, pregnant, and homeless, living on the street."

During a doctor's appointment, she asked her doctor if the lump in her breast was something she needed to worry about. The doctor said no, at 16, it was probably a blocked milk duct, and it would disappear in time.

She had her baby, and over the next year the lump in her breast grew larger and larger. Still, her doctor remained unconcerned, refusing to get her breast tested. She was still living on the street and in friends' garages, sleeping on their couches and floors, scrounging for food to eat.

When her baby was a little over a year old, she went for a doctors appointment and learned that her doctor was on a vacation. A replacement doctor saw her breast and was immediately alarmed, demanding extensive testing right away.

She had breast cancer, and because she had neglected it, it had spread throughout

her body. She had to have a double mastectomy, with 27 lymph nodes removed. The doctors told her that she would probably die within six months, as her cancer was so advanced there was no treatment that would prove effective. They told her that although it was unusual for such a young person to get breast cancer, it was still possible, and the hormones from the pregnancy had quickly helped advance the cancer, causing it to metastasize through her body.

She went back to the friend's house where she was staying, in a state of terror.

Her child was a year old, and she had to find someone willing to raise him... every night she found herself so filled with terror, she was unable to sleep. Night after night she was assailed by the thought of her impending death, and the extinction of her being.

One night, completely exhausted from weeks of sleeplessness, she lay awake on the couch and she fell into a state of awareness that was unlike anything she had ever experienced.

She said a profound state of stillness came over her, and she suddenly knew she would be alright. She told me that she suddenly realized that God was everywhere...if she died, she didn't have to be afraid, because she would be with God. And if she lived, she would be with God also. She understood throughout her body that there is no place God is not. God is everywhere. With that awareness, her fear left her and she was able to sleep for the first time in weeks.

When she went the following week to her hospital for her doctor's appointment, there was a big commotion. Other doctors and specialists were called into the room to analyze her test results.

It seems that the cancer had disappeared.

And it never returned.

The young woman then stood up, collected her shivering children from the pool and said to me, "There is no place where God isn't. God is everywhere."

Then she left, and I never saw her again.

Isn't that a great story?

I made my piece, "One Love" based on meeting her.

Best regards,

From CHRISTINA

2016.10.17

FEEL BLESSED

Dear Moe,

I hope you like the stories I sent you.

This story is more personal. It is how my twins came into my life.

Some background information – I gave birth to my oldest daughter Sophie when I was 41. Her birth was traumatic, and she actually died at birth. It took almost half an hour to get her heart started. For a year we did not know if she suffered brain damage as a result of being deprived of oxygen for so long, or if she had cerebral palsy and would require a wheelchair for all her life.

As it turned out, she was fine. Her life was deemed a miracle. I felt traumatized by the experience of her birth however, but fortunate to have her.

I certainly didn't expect any more children, especially given my age.

Then, a few years later, I had a vivid dream. In the dream it was snowing, and I was on my bicycle, completely disoriented and lost. I saw a small church, and leaned my bike against the building and went in to ask for directions.

Inside, there was a small empty room with a middle-aged man standing, looking at me. He had very clear blue eyes.

I said to him, "Excuse me, but I am completely lost and would like to ask you for directions."

He said to me, "You are actually going in the right direction."

Then he gestured with his hand, and a hologram of a human body in light appeared suspended before me. It was a three dimensional image of an anatomical system, with the skeleton and organs systems showing.

He pointed, and said, "This is your physical system. Your body and health are influenced by your thoughts and fears. Your lungs are your weakest system.

You will be giving birth within a year."

Suddenly I was aware that I was dreaming, and I whispered, "But that is impossible! I am 44 years old!"

Then I woke up.

NEST(PART) / 2016
by Christina Bothwell



A few months later I learned I was pregnant.

I went for a walk in the forest to meditate. I sat down in the woods on the ground and closed my eyes. When I opened my eyes, I was awestruck to see that two baby deer had walked up to me. The spotted fauns were standing about ten feet away, staring at me.

I walked shakily to the house, and told my husband I believed we were going to have twins. I explained about the deer, and my husband shook his head at me. "Honey, just because you saw baby deer, doesn't mean we'll be having twins! We'll be lucky if just a normal baby survives, and has nothing wrong with it!"

The morning of my doctor's appointment, I broke an egg into the frying pan for breakfast. The egg had two yolks.

I told my doctor I believed I was pregnant with twins, and I explained about the double egg yolk, and about the two baby deer twins who had come up to me in the woods."That is not very scientific!" she exclaimed. (She already thought I was crazy because I had told her about my dream.)

Nine months later I gave birth to my twins, Ellis and Violet.

I hope you like my story! When I was pregnant, I was certain I was losing my mind because my life was following a dream I had had.

But now I look back on that experience as a very magical one, and I feel blessed.

Best regards,

From CHRISTINA

“When I was pregnant, I was certain I was losing my mind because my life was following a dream I had had.”

2016.10.17



EPHEMERAL 2 / 2016
by Meng DU

Hi Christina,

Love the stories a lot and I have read them many many times. Each time I read it I learn something subtle from it. About life, about being a human, and about being honest to ourselves... And thanks for the image of One Love. It is beautiful!

Sorry for the late reply. I was on the train a lot. Figuring out how to take trains and subways in Japan is pretty challenging to me. Even though I can access my email I don't want to reply you in a rush. I would prefer to sit down quietly by myself, having a cup of tea on the side just like right now, then write you back like having a one-on-one conversation on a cozy evening. You stories have given me a full perspective of sensations. Like the smell of the summer swimming pool with water splashing, and the chord the other lady was playing. All these elements in your writings are all so lively and made me feel like watching movies that bring you down and up but luckily they all have a happy ending. I really appreciate them and enjoy reading them. Thank you for sharing these with me.

I will start to edit and translate your stories! But please feel free to continue your chapters if you have time to share more. I guess the questions come to my mind after reading these stories are:

1. Most of the stories (even in the dreams) are about women. Why is that? Do you choose them on purpose?
2. I would love to collect some images come along with your stories. They could either be your work, or working process/sketches/daily shots/inspiration photos, etc.

Talk to you soon! :-)

Best,

From MENG DU

2016.10.18

TETHERED TO MY HEART

Dear Moe,

I am a little bit embarrassed that I keep sending you all these inspiring stories, like I am a greeting card company or something!

But these encounters with inspiring people have really fueled my work, and made me happy to be alive, and happy that I make art.

I know you are a kindred spirit (I can see this from your work) so I think you understand. Anyway, I wanted to tell you my favorite story. This came about as a result of a sculpture commission two years ago.

I was at the art show Glass Weekend when a woman approached me with her husband. She introduced herself and told me she had followed my work and she knew I had twins, and she knew that I also had a sort of obsession with twins. She told me that she was an identical twin, and then she told me that her husband was also an identical twin. Then she told me the amazing fact that her husband's identical twin, had married HER twin.

Then she told me that her twin had just died, six months before.

She said she wanted me to make a piece about her and her twin, and she promised to email me photographs of her and her twin together so I could refer to the images while I worked on my piece.

I immediately had an image in my mind of the two twins as children, wearing similar dresses.

But later in the day she came back to me, and told me she had a story she wanted to tell me, about her twin.

She explained that when her twin was alive, they spoke ten or twenty times a day and texted each other constantly. They were extremely close, and even had children at the same time, several days apart.

While her sister was in the hospital dying of cancer, she told her twin (my new friend) that after she died, she wanted her to attend Twinless Twins, which was a national support group for twins who had lost their twin.

She told me she never could go to a meeting like that!

(continue to next page)

“She opened her eyes, and the room was filled with blinding light...her sister lay behind her on the bed, a solid, tangible presence.

After her sister died, my friend wanted to die too. Her husband bought her a vacation home, and after all the furniture was unpacked, her husband drove the empty moving truck back to NYC, while his wife (my friend) stayed behind in the new, dark, house. She explained to me that the electricity had not yet been hooked up, so the whole house was completely dark.

She lay upstairs on the bed in a dark room (it was nighttime by this point) and thought about how long it would take for her to die if she stopped eating. She was so sad. She longed to die, she really felt that there was no point in living any longer.

Then, while she lay there in the dark, she heard someone walking around downstairs in the house. She immediately thought that someone had seen the moving truck earlier in the day unloading furniture, and had decided to break in and steal.

“Good!” she thought to herself. “I hope they murder me”.

Then as she lay there curled up on the bed, she heard footsteps coming up the staircase. She heard the doorknob on the door turn, and the door opened. The footsteps approached the bed, as she lay in the dark. And then she smelled her sister’s perfume.

Her sister climbed onto the bed behind her, and curled around her back, the way she had comforted her when they were young.

She opened her eyes, and the room was filled with blinding light...her sister lay behind

TETHERED TO MY HEART (PART) / 2012-2013
by Christina Bothwell



her on the bed, a solid, tangible presence.

Slowly the feeling of her sister faded, until all she could sense was her twin’s hand upon her shoulder.

After that, she felt that she could go on. She knew her sister was still around her, looking out for her.

I made my piece based on that story. My piece is titled “Tethered to My Heart”.

After she received my piece, she attended a Twinless Twins meeting, and she told me it was wonderful. There were sixty people there who had lost their twins, aged 18 to 80.

At the end of the meeting, they went around the circle, and each person showed an object that represented their twin.

She showed the group my piece.

Since that time, my friend says she often senses her twin around her, and this gives her enormous comfort. She knows that one day they will be together again.

Isn’t that a great story?

I will send you an image of the piece I made for her.

Love,

From CHRISTINA

2016.10.21

EVERYTHING HAPPENS FOR A REASON

Dear Moe,

It sounds so exciting to be traveling in Japan! Do you show in a gallery there? Where are the galleries you show with? I know the gallery I work with (Habatat Michigan Gallery) would LOVE your work!

I do not know why most of my favorite stories come to me from women. I did have an interesting encounter with a man two years ago, that I would love to tell you about.

It was during the SOFA show in Chicago, and I was feeling very depressed that none of my pieces had sold from the booth displaying my work. I stood there next to my work for eight hours a day, and it seemed that most people walked by with merely a dismissive glance. I heard several people look at my work and say things like, “Oh, I hate her work!”

I didn’t like most of the other work being shown there either. Compared to mine it all seemed really decorative and shiny, and my work (to me) looked dusty and badly made. I found myself miserably questioning why I even bother continue to make my work, when I work so hard and sometimes I get no positive response from people, especially at an art fair such as SOFA, where there are thousands of people.

To make matters worse, my husband had found the hotel for me where I was staying, and it was in the South End of Chicago, miles from the Navy Pier where the art fair was being held. The hotel was very dangerous, the lights burned out in the halls, nobody at the lobby, and scary men lurking around, within the twenty foot high barbed wire fence that surrounded the hotel, like a prison. The hotel was surrounded by boarded up buildings and abandoned stores.

All the furniture in my room was bolted to the floor. I asked the hotel manager if I could get a shuttle bus ride back to the airport the next morning, or a taxi, and a soft spoken elderly black man who was seated in a chair in the lobby spoke up and said he offered a shuttle bus service to the airport, but he would only be able to get there to the hotel at 4 AM if he could get four other passengers.

I said okay, and I asked the manager to give me a wake up call the next morning at 3:30 am.

The wake up call never came, but I woke up on my own and went downstairs to the dark hotel lobby.

The elderly man was waiting for me, and he carried my bag to his car. There were no other passengers, and I asked him, “I thought you could only drive me to the airport if you had four other people?”

He stopped, and looked me in the eye. He said then, “I am meant to be here this morning.”

After he started driving, he asked me what I was doing in Chicago. I explained that I was a sculptor, and I was at this art fair called SOFA, and none of my pieces had sold, and I felt miserable.

He listened to me without saying anything, and then he asked me if he could tell me a story. His story.

He said, “I knew when I woke up that God had a reason I was supposed to drive to the airport this morning. I volunteer once in a while in order to help out the hotel owner who is a friend of mine and struggling through hard times. But this morning I wasn’t planning on getting up at this time, as I was out late last night.

And now that I have seen you, I understand. I can tell, by your energy, that you feel like giving up...but you need to remember that everything happens for a reason. Even though I haven’t seen your work, I have seen you. And I know by what I pick up from you that your pieces are not about making something pretty and shiny to hang in a rich person’s mansion. Your work is like a mirror, and when the right person sees your work, he is seeing an aspect of himself. And not everyone wants to see himself; a lot of people don’t want to look inside themselves at all. Some people are not equipped to see the beauty of your work. And they aren’t interested.

So, for you it is more about finding the right venue for your work. There is not a thing wrong with your work. Your job is to do what brings you joy and through doing that you are serving God. And God will bring your work to the people who are meant to have it, when the time is right.

Let me tell you a story. Thirty years ago I was a very wealthy man. I had vacation homes, a beautiful wife, a big brownstone in the best neighborhood in Chicago. I owned a fleet of trucks, I had a shipping company that made me loads of money.

And all I thought about was how much more money I could have, which parties I was invited to, me, me, me.

Then one night, I was in a car with my driver, and it was such a nice evening I asked my driver to let me out a few blocks from my house so I could walk. It was close to midnight, and the streets were empty.

No sooner had the car departed, when out of seemingly nowhere, three young teenage boys jumped on me, stabbing me. They stole my wallet, stabbed me numerous times,

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slit my throat, and left me there to die.

Someone must have gotten me to a hospital, but I had no awareness of it. I was in coma. I actually died, and experienced heaven, a beautiful realm where I knew love as I had never thought existed. I was asked by a beautiful angel what I had done with my life, and in that realm – my business, my fortune, my vacation homes – none of that mattered.

When I woke from my coma, I learned I had died twice. The doctors had wanted to give up on me, but my mother had fought hard for them to keep trying to keep me alive.

I was paralyzed, and told I would never walk again.

I lay on a hospital bed for nineteen months, staring up at the ceiling. You might think I was a changed man for having experienced heaven, but you would be wrong. I was angry. All I wanted was to regain the use of my legs so I could track down those young men who did this to me, and kill them.

But, nineteen months is a long time to lay in a hospital bed. Eventually I came to realize that the things that had mattered to me before my attack, my homes, my business, the wealthy life of important dinner parties with “the right people,” no longer mattered.

I had an epiphany one night, as I realized I wanted to help poor children in the worst neighborhoods in Chicago get an education and have a safe life, so they wouldn't have to ever turn into the type of person, like those teenage boys, who had attacked me.

And I had a miracle. My paralysis went away, and I learned to walk again. My wife left me, and I gave my trucking business to my son.

I was asked to speak about my near death experiences at churches, and people began writing me checks for my project to help needy children. Someone gave me a mansion! I used it to for orphans, and children of jailed and drug-addicted parents. My son gave me a bus, and then I had volunteers who picked up children from the worst neighborhoods in Chicago and got them to school and then home after school. I now have a group of buses for this purpose, and volunteers who drive these kids every day. Last night I went to a dinner party, a celebration, which was held to honor five of my ‘boys.’ One is a lawyer, one is in medical school doing his residency, one is going to graduate school for physics, all of them are doing something with their lives, and these are kids who came from poverty.

So, not a day goes by that I don't give thanks for that night thirty years ago, when those boys stabbed me. Because I did die. The selfish, self-absorbed shallow person I was before my attack no longer exists. Today my life is filled with love, and purpose,

DOG WITH PASSENGER (PART) / 2016

by Christina Bothwell



“Eventually I came to realize that the things that had mattered to me before my attack, my homes, my business, the wealthy life of important dinner parties with “the right people”, no longer mattered...”

and I have a sense of joy in all I do.”

Then he turned to me and said, “Everything happens for a reason, and in the best time possible. Just trust God that you are doing His work, by following your heart. And you don't have to worry about your future, or about money. Everything will work out for the best, you will see. Just like with me, at the time I was nearly murdered, it all seemed so senseless. There seemed no purpose behind what I went through. But now I see that it was all part of a bigger plan. And I don't regret any of what I went through. Instead, I am grateful every day for what happened to me because I wouldn't be here living this life if it weren't for that.

Your job is to have faith.”

Then we pulled up to the airport, and I hugged him goodbye (I was sobbing).

‘Ken’ drove away, and I never saw him again. But I think about him, and his incredible story, often. He is a human angel, living in Chicago!

I have to go, but I will try to send you some sketches and one other story if I have time.

Love,

From CHRISTINA

2016.10.22

LOST IN TRANSLATION

Hi Christinal

I finally got back home from my trip to Japan. Sorry I have been disappearing for days. The last couple of days in Japan were fully packed and I only got four hours of sleep everyday. Very very tired from transferring from place to place. But considering how amazing those days were, everything worth it. I got to visit my friends and spend time with their family, and I got to meet new friends through the Kanazawa Exhibition, my Airbnb, and through my lecture at Nagoya University of Arts. They have been taking care of me so well that I don't know how I can return their kindness. They are all beautiful human beings. That's why I appreciate traveling so much. You never know which corner shop you will stop for a break or which person you will bump into. They all are threaded to each other for a reason, like turning pages of a book that may lead you to one stunning chapter after another.

In Kyoto, my Airbnb host Ricky is a musician. He's the drummer in a band and also writes songs and sings. A super nice guy indeed who doesn't want to limit himself to a cubic office space. The evening we met I was actually extremely exhausted from walking all day long. I had dragged my heavy luggage from the subway station and walked 20 minutes trying to find his house, but was totally lost in the hidden alleys for a long time. Luckily, he showed up by his house and was waiting for me when I was crossing the street with an anxious look. The second he came up and talked to me, I was like "Phewwww...glad I'm not sleeping on the street tonight!" and all my strain went away immediately. We ended up walking for another 25 minutes looking for a restaurant that is open on Monday evening, which took us a good amount of time, for local special treats. That was my first adventure traveling alone in Japan. And I am so grateful that I met someone like Ricky, who has a warm heart, and willing to share his world to me. He's been sharing his music (the band's name is YeYe), talking about the amazing live tour with the band, and also his boring job in the office that he still has to deal with just for making a living.

This is such an unforgettable experience to me! :-) It's so lively, so real, it makes me want to stay longer to learn more about people's lives here! Of course, I shared my artwork with him too. I brought postcard books as gifts to the people I visit in Japan. And I gave one to him too. I took all the photos in the postcard books about ten years ago during my sophomore trip in western China. My class and I traveled 34 hours by train all the way to Dunhuang, a city on the edge of the desert. Then we took bus slowly heading back east, to Xi'an where we discovered the Terracotta Soldiers. That trip has changed my view of life. Growing up in the city, I had no idea how poor people can be in other areas of China until I went to this area. There were no roofs on the house, sometimes no electricity either. All you can see is the horizontal lines of the desert.

From MENG DU

BAI (PART) / 2013
by Meng DU



I have to go now but I will keep writing once we come back!

Later!.....

All the photos I captured were horizontal lines from one place to another. The endless Gobi desert, the quiet Qinghai lake. None of these landscapes have crossed paths with my life before. They are breathtakingly gorgeous with a sense of inner peace. For a second I felt I was going to melt into the ground and become part of the earth. This memory was deeply sealed in my mind until today. When Ricky and I were talking, I did mention a little about my experience of being a solitary misfit after I moved back to Beijing. Especially after living in Rochester for six years, I am so used to a simple way of living. Studio, home, grocery shopping at the farmers' market, cuddling with my cats, enjoy the seasons changing, and making eye contact with the deer at two in the morning on a freezing winter snowy night, and also the horizontal lines by the Ontario beach. I miss that A LOT. Now, standing by the crossroads watching people rushing by and cars honking, everything in front of me is complete chaos buried in this concrete jungle. I guess the only phrase that could describe my feeling is "lost in translation." But I understand why people are doing things like that. Make a living in China for middle-class and lower-class people is ridiculously difficult. And they are fighting every second under unbelievable pressure to try to make their life slightly better. It is not easy, for sure. However, I still wish I could jump out of this chaos and live in a place with an open landscape. It balances my heart, and goes deeper into my work...

When I stopped with a sad-looking face, Ricky said: "The horizontal lines are always living in your heart like your photos. They are the mirror of yourself that quietly shows the beauty behind the scenario. And your gentle smile will take you to every corner of the world. People like me will be happy to meet and be friends with someone who has such a warm smiling face as you do. This positive energy will gather people who are similar to you around your side. No worries, you will be good and do great things." :-) Then he smiled. And he apologized for his broken English. (I think his English is great!) It made my day extra unforgettable and stunning.

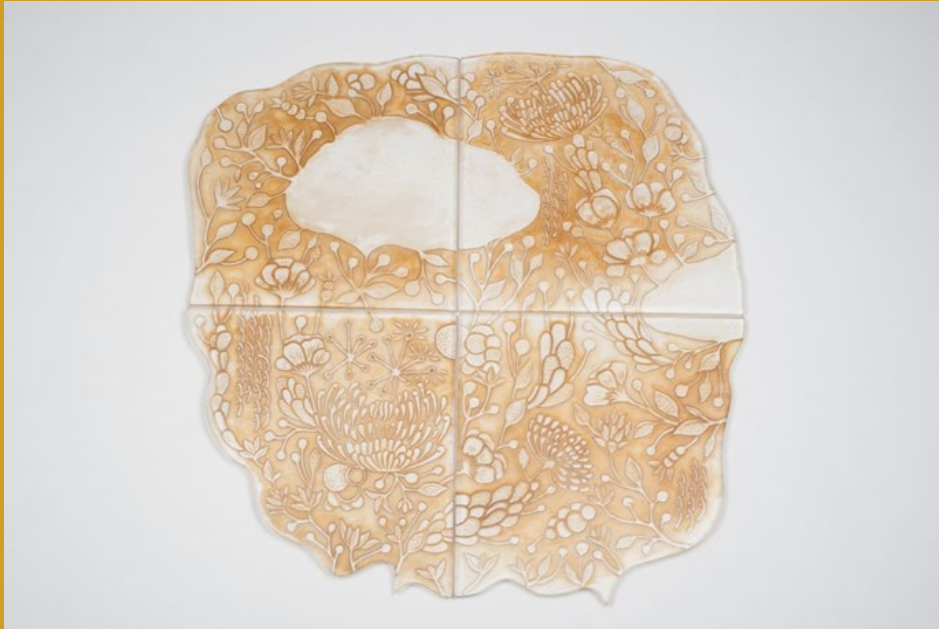
Later.

Best,

2016.10.26

PROBABLY NEVER END

EVANESCING SCENERY
NO.1 / 2013
by Meng DU



Hi Christina,

I just got the first translation draft from the museum team. They did an excellent job on translations! I am so excited! And it made me tear up again when I read the story in Chinese about the gentleman you met in Chicago. He is a saint!

So far, about 80% of translation work is done and we have roughly 12,000 words. The team asked me to write something for ending this project since our emails are not closed yet (probably never!). Also, I will write something to introduce us in the very beginning of our artist talk. :-)

The interview will be officially published in the December issue. I will keep you posted!

All my best,

From MENG DU

2016.11.05

AN AUSPICIOUS SIGN FROM UNIVERSE

HAIR / 2010 - 2011
by Christina Bothwell



Dear Moe,

I can't wait to look at it! Thank you so much for sending it to me.

I am in the Chicago hotel, waiting to go to the airport. (So I have Wi-Fi.)

I didn't sell anything, which always makes me feel shaky and insecure. Yesterday

I walked out from the art fair in the early afternoon and went back to my hotel room and ate Indian takeout food on my bed.

It felt so much better than standing on that cement floor and seeing my work not sell!

This morning I was just coming back to my hotel from having picked up some breakfast, and I had a small wish that the universe would send me a tiny sign to let me know that things are still going okay and I am being taken care of. At just at that moment, my favorite actor from the British television show I have been addicted to all summer (and just finished watching the final episode from six years of the show) walked right by me on the sidewalk! It was terribly exciting. I had to touch him on the shoulder and ask him if he was the actor from my favorite show, and it WAS him!

And he was so delighted to have been recognized...

It felt like an auspicious sign, and I felt totally picked up by it.

Anyway, I hope you are doing well...I have enjoyed so much, talking with you. I hope we can continue our friendship, my friend from far away.

I am very impressed you are teaching at the academy! Those students are so lucky!

Love,

From CHRISTINA

2016.11.05

END OF CHAPTER 1

“Sent” clicked.

With my last email being sent to Christina Bothwell, the Artist Dialogues officially comes to an end. In the meantime, Christina has been on the other side of the planet, just finishing up her trip to Chicago for the Sculpture Objects Functional Art and Design Exposition (SOFA). Just before she departed for Chicago, the Wi-Fi at her house stopped working for some reason. Even with the difficulties she had to go through to send us high-res images for the printing of this article, Christina still followed through with her earnest and gracious pace. She worked through these difficulties as if there was no rush; that there is no reason for having impatience. Everything happens for a reason that can be solved by simply slowing down and giving it some time. Just like the stories she has been sharing with us throughout the interview!

Looking back to when I was in elementary and middle school, it used to be very popular to have a pen-pal that lived very far away. Everyday when I got home I had “Check the mailbox” at the top of my to-do list. If I was lucky enough to find a letter glowing in my mailbox, it would totally make my day. I loved how much time mailing things from one place to another took. And still to this day, writing down my feelings and thoughts on paper always makes me feel more secure and comfortable with my communication.

Through working with Christina on the Artist Dialogues for Shanghai Museum of Glass during these past couple months, I have felt like I was in a time machine going back to the good old days. It had me recalling the sepia-toned afternoons in my childhood. The reception office by the apartment entrance gate, the old gentleman who sat with a newspaper in his hands at all times, and the mailboxes that were placed in line quietly waiting for the postman. I always craned my neck looking for the postman to show up. Nothing amazed and excited me more than hearing his bicycle ringing from the other side of the street. All of a sudden, everything became so vivid that I felt I am really lucky to have the opportunity to work on this project.

While reading Christina’s stories, there is something in them that goes beyond life, and thinking deeply about diseases, accidents, caducity, and so much more. Life is full of unexpected bumps and happiness. Behind the delicacy and fragility, there is a turning point to the fearlessness and persistence on the other side of it. These are just some of the many things I have read through Christina’s stories and her fascinating glass works which resonate and reflect on the beauty and complexity of life.

Text: Meng Du

Photos Courtesy of Ivan Mares / Julie Zhu

Translate: Meteor Liang

Text: Julie Zhu

JULIE ZHU

CHAPTER 2: EMOTION

IVAN MARES

CONVERSATIONS WITH IVAN MARES

“Pure feelings, untainted by incentives and purpose, are some of the most beautiful things in life.”

“Pure feelings, untainted by incentives and purpose, are some of the most beautiful things in life. In the Czech Republic, besides my landlord Tomas and his family, I met a man named Ivan Mares, who warmed me with his lovely friendship. He was almost twenty years my senior. But compared to his reputation in art, I am just a student in primary school. However, I didn’t feel this difference when we were together. Sometimes, he was just like an uncle living next door, and sometimes, he was a friend to play with. Our conversations certainly revolved around glass. But most of the time, we also talked about nature and life, plants, animals, and especially cooking. We talked about this a lot more than we talked about art. We went to the glass factory to buy materials, we took walks in the woods, we picked up mushrooms to cook, and we killed the parasites in the hair of cat. We went to restaurants. When the days were clear, we climbed mountains, seeing all these things from the top...serenity and peacefulness were all we had. Sometimes I thought we had shared one mind. But in the end, we didn’t really know each other. We were seeing into each other’s eyes from the opposite banks of the river of language, but all we could see is just a silhouette.

But still, I was lucky. I have seen the life and the road a master has chosen. I even walked into a corner of his mind. This all reminded me what choice I should make at a right time. Here I wrote down some of our conversations. They are really interesting memories.”

Text: Julie Zhu

MASTER’S LITTLE HOBBIES

Mater’s life was full of interesting hobbies.

The master’s house was in a small secluded village with beautiful scenery (let’s just call it KY). Cultural elites and artists such as writers, composers, and actors set their villas there for art creation and vacation. There was even a calendar designed for introductions to local cultural celebrities. The master’s house is blessed with a large garden that is close to a forest and rich in wild reserved plants. There is even a small pond in the garden, proper enough for nearby foxes and otters’ residences. Sometimes the fishes attract wild cats and unknown birds to stay. The house itself used to be a cellar of around one hundred years’ history. It is said that Jaroslav Hašek, author of The Good Soldier Schweik, once enjoyed the wines and became a little drunk there. The interior design is simple and concise, cozy and clean, although it is not that orderly in some people’s eyes. The flowers on the table are an example—don’t think they are specially prepared for visitors: they are for the master himself.

I’ve learnt a lot from the master:

Whether it’s to identify a deer’s habitat or drinking place,
Or some mushrooms,
Or the muddy area by boars in the forest;
And his reserved home cuisine,
The local glasswares’ design history,
The best local coldworking technician and his own handling process,
How to recognize the direction in a forest,
All kinds of cheese as well as their matching recipes with toast and jam.

The master’s life is full of fun. One evening, I brought him a pack of tea—nice taste indeed. He was very pleased to receive it, and suggested to drink it at the balcony. Then he moved the sofa and the table outside, so as to enjoy the tea more comfortably.

Five minutes later, it suddenly started to rain.

— ‘Oh it’s raining! Let’s go back to the room,’ he said. ‘Oh this furniture—I’ll move it in.’
Ten minutes later, the rain stopped.
— ‘Let’s go outside. I’ll move them out,’ he said.
— ‘Ah...would it be too much trouble? I mean, we can enjoy the tea in the room,’ I said.
— ‘No no no, the air is good outside. I’ll move them out.’

After the rain, the air was so fresh and sweet around the forest edge—it was so beautiful. But ten minutes later, it started to rain again.

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BUD (PART)
by Ivan Mares



— ‘Wait a moment. I’ll move them in,’ he said...
Ten minutes later the rain stopped...
— ‘Wait a moment. I’ll move them out,’ he said...

We lived in a northern region—mountains, and the weather was quite whimsical indeed. The conclusion to this story was that I said I will send him an outdoor furniture set so that at least he doesn’t need to become a porter. (Editor’s Note: Here Julie just made a joke originating from the slogan of a Chinese mineral water brand, but in fact she respects the master very much indeed.)

MASTER AND THE EARTHLY LIFE

He hated emptiness.
So he concealed such emotions
carefully, even when he was playing
a polite monkey.

Some advice for communicating with the master is: Don’t call him because he won’t answer—no reason for it. Many times he would receive a phone call while we chatted, and I watched him directly turn it off. This ‘treatment’ applied to me as well when I disturbed his agenda—the master actually treats everybody equally with regards to phone calls, and I can receive his short messages for compensation. If you are lucky enough then you can expect his reply, but don’t expect too much as he sometimes puts the phone on a fridge, or besides a computer—basically outside of his activity scope. This made me feel that the reason he bought a cell phone was just to abandon it. And finally, in 2014, the master got a Samsung smartphone. He jumped and said, ‘Julia, Julia, we can enjoy free communication now because there is translating software!’ ‘Ah...okay then...Ivan, it was so good...’

Don’t invite the master to opening events as he doesn’t want to go—he hates situations with crowded people. When sometimes it becomes the inevitable he would feel very pained and then react like this:

— ‘Hi, Ivan, how’s your summer holiday?’
— ‘Disaster! There are 25 collectors coming – 25! I have to buy 25 goblets!’
— ‘Wow, that’s great! Congratulations! And where are they from?’
— ‘From New York! They rented a bus and you know it will keep out the sunshine around the door!’
— ‘Hey, you are the master! It’s a good thing! They want to come!’
— ‘But this makes me feel as if I were a monkey in a zoo!’
— ‘Do you want me to buy you a banana?’

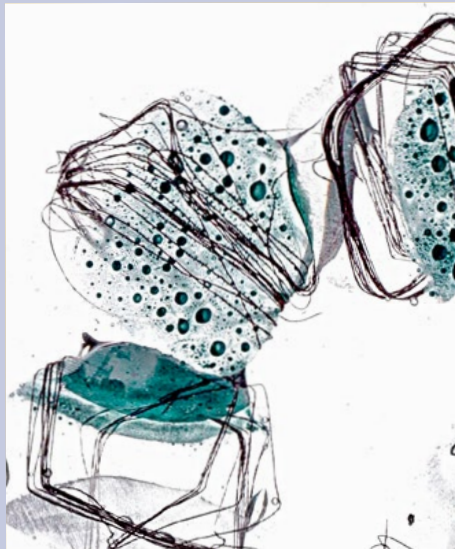
The next time they meet, the master asked the other with a deadpan face, ‘Where is the banana you bought?’

Later the master told me that after the 25 collectors had gathered at his house, the organizer announced that one of his masterpieces had been collected by a museum

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SOLIDIFICATION OF
A SWEET ACCIDENT
(PART) / 2016
by Julie Zhu



in New York recently. Then all the guests proposed a toast for celebration using the 25 goblets, and the master said with a sweet smile, 'It was really an unforgettable moment.'

The master enjoys a multifaceted life: chats in boisterous Prague cafés, intellectual life in salons, and remote countryside silence share shifts on the timetable. Sometimes he travels to other cities like London, Amsterdam, Paris, Copenhagen, and New York—he is not a secluded person and can even be cheerful. One thing is clear—he hates empty social life with its flattery and uninvited ceremonies, not like the above that he actually quite enjoyed. He has to carefully hide such emotion (hatred) however, acting like a polite monkey.

MASTER AND COLLECTORS

He likes people like him: simple,
plain, and cultivated.

Ivan Mares' artworks are largely collected by museums, or acquired by top collectors. How to define top collectors? These are investors that have signed contracts with artists, claiming the ownership after the artworks are displayed in public space for five years, whether it's a museum or a gallery.

- 'I don't like them to be collected by individuals because I don't want my sculpture to be collected together with a TV set.'
- 'What if they're auctioned off for a high price and they really like your work?'
- 'No, unless they are like the lady in Hamburg – she finally changed her own swimming pool into an art exhibition hall as compensation.'
- 'Oh, that was fantastic!'
- 'I'm still not satisfied. Artworks should be enjoyed in a public area. This is their social attribute. Some private collectors just put them in their own house, and after a while they would never notice them. This makes the artwork worthless.'

Two years ago one of the master's pieces was acquired by an airport in Chicago. But, after a while there came a hitch.

- 'I told them not to put it near the window and they refused. As a result, they made it 'enjoy' the air conditioner as well as the sunshine. It's definitely not good.'
- 'How to fix it? Do you want a refund?'
- 'They want to fix it themselves, but this time I rejected. And then they said they could pay me \$20,000 to fix it myself.'
- 'Then do you want to go to America to fix it yourself?'
- 'I made them move it back.'
- '600-700 kilograms from Chicago back here?! How much could it be? Adding the transportation insurance and tax it must be more than \$20,000. And as far as I know there are kilns in America that are large enough to fix it. Why not go there?'
- 'I don't like making my works somewhere else. My kilns are my familiarity. Besides, there would be a higher probability that I wouldn't do it perfectly [using other kilns]. Let them move it back. This is the only solution if I myself work on it.'

In the master's own house there are only several art pieces. If you see three in the meantime, you must be very lucky. This is simply because he is not that productive—four or five per year, and they are always reserved by collectors very early (mostly at

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YELLOW SPINDLE
(PART)
by Ivan Mares

“In the master’s own house there are only a few art pieces. If you see three at once, you must be very lucky.”



least one year ahead), transported away once they are finished. That’s why it’s hard to see those masterpieces in common exhibitions. This is a seller’s market, and the collectors don’t have a say. For example: if somebody’s request is rejected, it is simply because the master thinks he or she has boasted, saying he or she has the largest gallery in Europe. There was one time when an Italian wanted to order a piece and was afraid to be rejected. He asked a friend of the master for persuasion and then showed the \$20,000 cash on the table for deposit, to express his sincerity.

— ‘Have you accepted it ? ’

— ‘I should consider it. The one he has ordered is very difficult, and I don’t know if I have time to finish it or not.’

The master is very emotional, but it’s not that difficult to be fancied. When the aforementioned lady from Hamburg visited the master’s house, she brought some presents of good taste including a plant photography collection from the 1930s with her, and he was quite glad about it—he likes people like him: simple, plain, and cultivated.

MASTER’S GREAT WORK

Who could possibly think that a master like him also needs encouragement? After all, we are all weak sometime in some points!

I felt that between 2013 and 2014 Ivan Mares had experienced a short frustrating period towards his creative career. The works always failed: sometimes it collapsed in the kiln, sometimes angles were broken through cold processing, or just something happened that couldn’t be reasoned, like it fell apart while packing, wasting several months’ hard work. He then dismissed his assistant and said he needed to think about what had happened.

One day the master became very unhappy and said, ‘Some people owned everything, and some people, nothing...’

— ‘Are you saying about...yourself ?’

— ‘Yeah...I just feel I’m the latter...’

I felt very upset and deeply understood the frustration within his heart. But I didn’t know how to comfort him.

— ‘Don’t say that...at least...you have your cat...’

— ‘Yeah...my cat...’

I suddenly realized I was so stupid to comfort him in this way.

— ‘Perhaps I could never make those large things...it’s too laborious. Perhaps I’m too old and I can’t be that energetic.’

— ‘Please don’t say that...you know you are always my idol. Several years ago I made a wish on my birthday, wishing one day I could become someone like you. Maybe I couldn’t achieve such great works, but I always wish I could have a peaceful and determined inner mind...’

I almost cried out of tears. The master stared at me, saying nothing. But I read from his eyes that he had been encouraged—who could possibly think that a master like him also needs encouragement? But, we are all weak sometimes in certain ways.

Several days later we talked again about the work’s size:

— ‘You know now the quality of the material has become much worse than before. I’ve discussed this with other artists and all found that it happened mostly on large works—the probability to failure has increased a lot compared to that around 10 years ago,

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even though the same technique had been conducted. We all think it's because of the glass material itself.'

- 'Then what size do you plan to make in the future?'
- 'Medium to small, perhaps.'
- 'How do you define medium and small?'
- '300-400 kilograms for medium, and 200-300 kilograms to small.'
- '.....'

Then after a winter, we met again. This time I found him ruddy and full of spirit—oh, here was the return of the king, but I didn't know why.

- 'Come here! I'll show you the new works!'
- 'You said you wouldn't do large, but this one must be 500-600 kilograms.'
- 'Yup! I thought I might still make a large one.'— 'Why? You said it would be very laborious.'
- 'Then why do you like to make small ones?'
- 'Because it's so cool, especially when you have watched the whole process—more handling, interaction, freedom, and less limitation. Besides, it's very important that one feels happy when making artistic creation! Then tell me why you fancy the large ones?'
- 'You answer was very interesting, and I haven't thought in that way. One may encounter many problems when making large ones, but I like to solve problems. Besides, large ones look more like sculpture.'
- 'The attitude you showed last time made me think you want to change into something easier.'
- 'I think of myself like a dog, never giving up the food. Although sometimes I do feel exhausted, next time I'll be fully recovered.'
- 'You are someone who likes to achieve something exciting and see it to the end. Is that right?'
- 'In fact, I did think I wouldn't do those large ones, but actually I still keep it the way I like, whether it's finally successful or not. Maybe this is exactly my style.'

Then one summer evening, we made an appointment for dinner. I drove to his house, sat a while, and then found he paced back and forth quickly between the dining room and the basement where the studio was located.

- 'Hey, what are you doing? Do you still want to have dinner? If so, then let's go early.'
- 'I'm thinking whether I should turn the electricity off...' (Many kiln based artists like to turn the electricity off when it reaches the highest temperature, or even open the kiln door for a steep cool, so as to add transparency. But this is hard to handle especially for large works.)

- 'Let me think...I should wait.'

The master became very anxious and paced back and forth again. 'On or off? On or off? On or off?' And this struggling state lasted for twenty minutes.

- 'Julia, do you think I should turn it on or off?'
- 'Are you sure you are asking me for advice?' I gave him a coin, 'I think you should let God decide it.'
- 'Then I'll turn it off...?'
- 'Okay. Please turn it off...I feel hungry...'
- 'Yup, let's go immediately...I'll really turn it off...but won't there be problems? On...or off...?'
- 'Please turn it off!!' I couldn't stand it any more, pushing him to finally make a decision in this way.

Near the end of dinner, the master became increasingly anxious, nodding while staring at me as I talked, but in a quite mechanic way—absolutely not in the present. I guessed he was struggling with that question again, so I suggested he go back and see how it went. He paid the bill at once, cycled in a super fast speed across the dark forest trail, and went directly down to the basement. There was a temperature control system beside the big kiln. He pressed what looked like a secret button and printed out a long list of data which he said was used to test the temperature of different locations within the kiln, just like an ECG curve. After reading for a while he said it was satisfactory. Then he brought a ladder, asking if I wanted to see what's in the kiln. Of course, it was because he wanted to see it himself. Normally people wouldn't see it, but how could I refuse such a 'treatment'? Then I climbed up the ladder about two and a half meters and the master slowly cracked opened the kiln door. A heat wave hit my face and I felt burnt at once. Inside the kiln it was bright red, making it hard to see anything.

- 'Are you okay?'
- 'Okay...' I said without careful consideration.
- 'Let me see it!' He climbed up the ladder and saw it himself saying, 'Hm! I think it's okay.'

He struggled for another 20 minutes, and finally decided to turn the electricity back on to increase the temperature before sleeping. From this experience, he changed my misconception that he was always confident about every project—there were still times that he struggled and felt uncertain. To cite his own words: Glass is a very tempting material, but it is at the same time very terrible.'

“To cite his own words: ‘Glass is a very tempting material, but it is at the same time very terrible.’”

HAYSTACK
by Ivan Mares



MASTER'S LITTLE FRIEND

He felt the soul of his dog had come back, or God had sent him another friend.

Sometimes the master became very 'childish'. He would show me interesting videos about animals, and we would burst out laughing like two children, watching it repeatedly and then talking about our own respective animals. How my parrot had laid eggs, incubated them, and fed the young; how his cat caught a bird and fought against wild cats; whether that otter would come or not; whether the wild boar family would appear again outside the door. These were not lighthearted chats. These were really very serious topics. Several years ago when I was in Beijing, I suddenly received short messages (he didn't like to write emails as sending short messages cost less time). However, these messages were not short at all but cut into three pieces, which must have cost 3 RMB in total. The master reported a sad piece of news to me—his cat broke its leg in a fight. But it's okay, not a big problem. When I visited them after the New Year, the cat had already been able to limp. Now, it was fully recovered, and regained its position as the king of the garden.

— 'How old is your dog?' the master asked me.

— 'He's almost 15 years old. When he first visited my house, he was only 3 months - the same size as how his tail looks now.'

— 'My dog died when he was 14 years old. At that time he had been disabled, so I had him euthanized.' When the master said these things aloud, he was driving the car across a beautiful road in a forest. It was autumn, and the leaves had turned golden yellow or dark red, some bright as sunshine, and some resplendent as fire. I kept silent, listening to the music.

— 'The last time I took him to the hospital, I drove the car along this same road. My dog watched me quietly, staring at me. He knew.'

I kept silent, looking at the scenery outside with the music and listening to what he said.

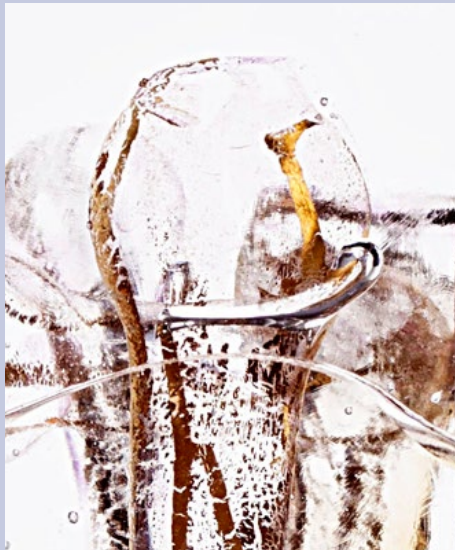
— 'I felt very tired when driving back. My mind was empty. After arriving home all I could do was to sit on the chair, doing nothing at all. And just in that evening, when it was dark, the door suddenly opened. A cat walked in.'

— 'Is that this cat?'

— 'Yup! I gave it some milk, and it drank, and since then it has been living here. Do you know that I often felt it was my dog—my dog lives in my cat!'

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“Sometimes the master became very ‘childish’. For example he would show me interesting videos about animals, and we two burst out laugh like two children, watching it repeatedly and then talking about our own respective animals. ”



This is so poetic! I know what the master means is that he felt his dog's soul was back, or God had sent him another partner. This partner liked to sleep in the studio (because it would be very warm), or curled up on one art piece, licking his fur whilst examining the whole artistic process. Sometimes those purring noises could warm your heart.

- ‘This winter must be very cold!’
- ‘How do you know?’
- ‘By petting the cat! If it wears such soft and furry clothes, it must be a very cold winter!’

AN INTERESTING RESPONSE TO THE GLASSARTAG

Master used pure and simple English to express his inner world!

In 2015, the triennial IGS (International Glass Symposium) was held again in Nový Bor. The small city was again filled with all kinds of professionals within glass—celebrities and cultural elites. In such a grand ceremony, our Glassartag Wang arrived and was granted a face to face interview with the master. He carefully prepared several questions in a notebook and a recorder. I became a little bit worried since the master must make many jokes on these questions according to his personality, and those ‘wonderful’ answers became inevitable. In order to be free from the embarrassment, I invited the master for a meal beforehand, translated these questions to him, so as to make it ‘rehearsed’. But the whole experience became a totally disaster.

- ‘Why do you like to make big works?’
- ‘Because I don’t like small ones.’
- ‘.....’
- ‘Then where does your inspiration come from?’
- ‘I haven’t thought about this, and I haven’t asked you the same question: Where are you from?’
- ‘Could you please kindly answer this question tomorrow?’
- ‘Okay.’ The master laughed and was quite proud of his smartness.
- ‘When you were young...’
- ‘Hm? So you mean I’m not young anymore?’
- ‘No no no. I think you are just like 40 years old.’ (Actually the master was born in 1956 and just turned 60 years old this year.)
- ‘Wrong! I’m already 42 years old!’
- ‘Okay then... golden age...’
- ‘Yes, of course, and a golden and mature age for a young artist!’
- ‘Wow, fantastic! So do you have some advice for younger artists?’— ‘No—I myself am asking advice, too! Could you give me some?’
- ‘Master, please, just give some like you give to your students...’
- ‘I don’t have students!’
- ‘I said, give some like...’
- ‘Okay! Then it would be: don’t worry be happy!’
- ‘...’

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After this I suggested to Glassartag Wang that he should remove the advice question because it was impolite.

I thought I should teach this ‘child’ (the master) a lesson, so the next day I deliberately prepared some dumplings with two fillings inside and put them into a lunchbox before we met.

— ‘If you follow my advice, then you can eat dumplings. If not, then dry toast!’
— ‘This reminds me of my dog—he can do whatever ordered if he is given some meat!’

At the beginning of the interview, the master couldn’t stop his curiosity and asked many questions. I had to remind him to stop and give some time to Glassartag Wang. The formal interview lasted about half an hour and the master answered in a very sincere and moving way – without the mischief. The master used pure and simple English to express his inner world. Here I’ve recalled some of the interesting conversations:

— ‘Where does your inspiration come from?’ asked Wang.
— ‘My inspiration comes from here—my home, my garden, this forest, and all in all, nature. In spring, birds sing happily. In summer, I stand at the balcony, watching the fireflies and moths dance around me. In autumn, the deer rustle in the forest, fighting against one another in pursuance of true love. And, in the late autumn, I can hear the voices from the antlers hitting one another. In winter, the snow covers everything and the village becomes very quiet. Occasionally some wild deer ramble around for food. And in March of the next year, the earliest flower blossoms out of the snow quilt in the garden. Oh...a new spring! This is my life, and my inspiration. I love nature, and I often sleep at the balcony, staring at the sky, and then am woken up by birds singing at the dawn...this is my world, and my garden is the center of my world.’
We were all moved by the master’s answer. The master has the soul of a poet and the infectious power of a musician.

— ‘Your teacher Libensky’s works have a tendency of cubism, and your works seem to put more weight on emotion and natural elements. Is that true?’
— ‘Yeah, true. Because I don’t like abstract style. I like those with more emotion, more stories, and can arouse more interactions between people. But sometimes it’s hard to make a choice—I mean, it needs time. For example, when I worked on the piece “Chief,” at first, I felt there was something wrong with it. I considered it for a very long time, hesitating about how to handle it. It was not until I added an eye that this piece became lively, talking to me. And it was not until this time that I could confidently say that this is what I wanted.’

— ‘When did you start to make works of such size?’
— ‘From when I graduated. At that time all people’s works were very small. And I wanted a challenge, so I made one of 40 centimeters. As a result my teacher Libensky said to me: Little Ivan, it’s too difficult for you to manipulate such a big one...’
— ‘But 40 centimeters is not that big actually—as far as I know Libensky’s sculpture is about one meter!’
— ‘But you have to consider at that time (around 35 years ago), the technique and technology were very different from what is now. Before that even Libensky couldn’t do such big pieces. So 40 centimeters was already very big.’
— ‘Wait, you’re saying that it was you who first started to try big glass sculptures, and then your teacher Libensky followed?’
— ‘Yeah. That’s it. After this, they found another place and made many trials, but it wasn’t allowed to be visited by students, and his secret technique was not revealed to us...but they had a factory and an assistant. In the meantime, I kept trying my own. I didn’t have an assistant but I succeeded! Of course, there are many risks and problems in making large glass sculptures, but I liked it, and I like challenge.’

After hearing this, I remember I once translated an article from NEW GLASS magazine in America. It was an article introducing Ivan Mare. The author was Professor Sylva Petrova, a curator, researcher, promoter, and writer within the glass art field who resides in London and the Czech Republic.

In that article it says, ‘Among Libensky’s many students, there were several that were excellent in talent. In their international art careers, they followed and reflected Libensky’s art principles, and received honor for Libensky. There was only one that became the competitor. This one consistently challenged the limitations set on the modern glass art, and even surpassed Libensky and his wife’s art achievements—this one is Ivan Mares. In 1994, when Libensky and Brychtova coordinated their lifetime portfolios in Corning Museum of Glass, I was quite intrigued by those eternal works within the hall. Suddenly, Professor Libensky stood beside them, and compared their works with Ivan Mares’. To my surprise, he was quite doubtful of Ivan’s experiments and his development, feeling 38 was still a very young age to make these trials. Libensky admitted that it’s only when he and his wife Brychtova were quite experienced that they started to make these risky elements. I understood that the Professor had treated Ivan Mares differently from his other students, the latter of which was quite humble. This difference was very important for my understanding of Ivan’s art career, because it’s through this that I realized Ivan Mares’ masterpiece isn’t only the top art creation by a young and talented artist, but also Ivan Mares has the potential to succeed his teacher’s career, and be a leader in Czech glass art, to be resplendent in the 21st century through the innovation of technology and art expression skill.’ Under

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GO AND FLY
by Ivan Mares

**“We were all moved
by the master’s answer.
The master has the
soul of a poet and the
infectious power of a
musician.”**



the guidance of this understanding, I consistently kept a close eye on Ivan Mares’s potential and his mission and responsibility for the next fourteen years. Now, I’m more certain about the importance of his great works in the modern glass art field.

ONE MAN’S BATTLE

People always pay their highest respect to those who walk into adversities bare-handed and come out as a standing hero.

It is quite a surprise that most of Ivan Mares’ large works were done independently. Even though sometimes helpers do exist, they only help move the material, adjust the plaster—physical works. He does all other parts of the creative thinking and practice. Most of the time, he just sits alone in the studio and works. His only company is his cat and a radio with about 30 years of history. Normally he can finish an art piece in about three months, but has to face many unknown tribulations. Nobody is able to share in his happiness of success, neither is he or she able to comfort him when he fails. I even don’t know whether the master cares about his emotions in this way. When the greats stand at the peak, they are not themselves, but their own history and future.

The master once told me an interesting thing: one year he was invited to a symposium in New York, and the guest list was full of famous artists. Since he was very busy, he didn’t have time to prepare the material for the speech, but just brought some pictures of the works, as well as some illustrations and photos of the fabricating process. On the plane, he borrowed a pen and a piece of paper (and of course a glass of wine) from a flight attendant, writing down the speech. The next day, the first speaker was Dale Chihuly.

— ‘Chihuly has prepared a documentary! Can you imagine—a symphony as the background, factories of smoky chimneys, fog when the glass worked with the grinding tools, the blowing workers’ manipulation process acted in slow motion, the team who organizes his large installation...and his mansion—how he sat in a large bathtub and ‘enjoyed’ the cigar...’

— ‘I can imagine...Dale Chihuly wore his one-eyed glasses, got the cigar, and sat in that bathtub.’ — ‘No, it should be that small pond with the stone steps. And the camera went from the back, not front-facing, but cigar’s stiff smell swirling up, and then the camera slowly passed other displays in the hall... everything combined together....it’s like a Colombian drug lord’s mansion!’

— ‘You are hilarious! But at that time I was very nervous, and felt quite pressured,

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ON THE EDGE
(PART)
by Ivan Mares

**“People always
pay the highest
respect to those
who walk into
adversities bare-
handed and come
out as a hero.”**



because I was the second to give a speech, and all I had was just a small paper card and several photos. And I suddenly realized I used a pencil, not a pen! The most horrible thing was my poor English—I can’t suffer it in public...The good thing was the American presenter was an immigrant from the Czech Republic, and she did the translation for me. After I showed my working process and those images, to my surprise, this little speech gained an enduring and thunderous applause. And the next day all those exhibits were sold out.’

Is this a surprise? I don’t think so, and this suits American culture, just like in a Hollywood blockbuster—people always pay the highest respects to those who walk into adversities bare-handed and come out as a hero.

THE GIFT

“Let’s finish it together!
It’s going to be the best gift
I ever gave to you, and also,
you to me.”

Since 2010 when Ivan Mares and I first met each other, we have exchanged many gifts as listed (see next page):

Of all my gifts, the master’s favorite was the ginkgo sapling. He was very moved by the gift and took such great care of it that went far beyond my imagination. He even sent photos to inform me how it had grown. This autumn, before I returned to China, I said farewell to him because I knew the next time we met it would be after a cold winter.

- ‘I am just going to send you something,’ he said.
- ‘You can send me your picture album.’
- ‘But I don’t have a picture album.’
- ‘I know you don’t have one, but I’m always wanting to make one for you. I’ll pay for it.’
- ‘Why the picture album? Why do you pay? I can pay!’
- ‘If you paid then I’d have no negotiation power to push you, like it took you two weeks to reply to an email. If I didn’t push you, I would die! Think about it. You have so many good works, such gorgeous technique. If you didn’t capture them and sell it, then these would all disappear (I didn’t say words like “when you die” out loud because I know it’s not polite). Every time I think of this, it’s painful. Maybe you don’t care about it since you are already so famous, and you don’t need a brochure for promotion, but the thing is this would be a loss for glass art, a loss for culture – the master’s masterpieces are part of human’s great culture, and should be inherited by generations after generations. So, let’s make an album, and of good quality, and translate it into Chinese, English, and Czech, so that the majority of the people in the world can understand it. And we don’t have to print a lot – we can donate them to museums and universities.’

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My Side:

Tea & Tea Set
Books on Chinese
calligraphy from stone
inscriptions
Silk Scarf
Embroidery teacup mat
1998 French wine
A small ginkgo sapling
(seldom seen in the Czech
Republic)

Master Side:

A small pink crystal from the river
A fossil shell
A raven's feather, picked up from a
lake in Copenhagen which was later
used in his work
An Apple logo cut from paper
(probably cut by himself, to poke
fun at me being controlled by my
smartphone)
A portrait of him when he was young
A red ivy leaf, for our farewell in
autumn

The master kept silent for a while and said:

- ‘Sounds nice, but the thing is I’m still not that satisfied with those works. Those better than the best still haven’t been created yet!’
- ‘Hm...(I hadn’t thought about this.) A brochure is just for summarizing the past. It’s not for making conclusions, and those commentaries are not epitaphs, either. You are now still experiencing your golden age, and in ten years we can make another one! ’
- ‘Hm...in ten years I can make another forty pieces. That should be fine.’

After seeing he was changing his mind, I started another strategy.

- ‘You said you want to send me a gift. And this is the best gift and the souvenir because it’s done by both of us, together. It is not just for me, but for your family, your daughter, and your grandsons and granddaughters as gifts in the future. Think about it, if one day you were not here, your daughter would show this album to her child and say, “See, dear, this is your grandfather. He is one of the greatest glass art masters in the world!”’
- The master stared at me and said, ‘Yeah...you are right. Then let’s finish it together! It’s going to be the best gift I ever gave to you, and also, you to me.’

END OF CHAPTER 2

Conclusion



Mr. Ivan Mares is about to turn 44 years old. This article is dedicated to him for his birthday. It is my sincere hope that in the succeeding ten years he can fabricate forty great pieces, that he remains as energetic and childlike (kicking stones while he walks) as always, that he can win another fight against himself, and finally enjoy a cigar and a glass of white wine. I hope that our friendship lasts forever, without the interference of those vulgar interests, and is as fresh as the forest air after rain and as the warmth of sunshine on an autumn’s day.

YOU ARE MY FRIEND

DU MENG

was born and raised in Beijing, China. In 2004, she attended the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing and graduated from the Graphic Design program in 2008. Two years later she moved to Rochester, New York as an MFA candidate within the glass program of the School for American Crafts at Rochester Institute of Technology. In 2013, Meng Du completed her MFA study from RIT and has since remained a part of its artist in residence program and as a member of their adjunct faculty. Her work has been exhibited in China, Japan, Europe, and the United States.

CHRISTINA BOTHWELL

creates fantastic and strangely compelling figurative sculptures, which range from fascinating to disturbing. She studied painting under Will Barnett at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, but gradually moved to working three-dimensionally using ceramics and cast glass as well as antique toys, taxidermy animals, or small furniture parts. Bothwell's pieces are often a union between her own mythology and lucid dreams. They allow us to enter into a fertile subconscious and reveal a vulnerability we may recognize as our own.

JULIE ZHU

was born in Beijing, and graduated from Department of Sculpture and the Department of Arts and Crafts at the Academy of Arts & Design, Tsinghua University. Between 2010-2016, she visited the Czech Republic over 20 times, learning glass art and crafting techniques. She made her own glass artwork in the Czech Republic, which were featured 10 times in German-speaking regions. Those works have also been exhibited in countries such as the US, South Korea, and Italy. In China, Julie Zhu is a very active contemporary glass artist, not just in terms of exhibiting, but also utilizing the material for art and design in public areas.

IVAN MARES

Among many of Libensky's students, there are several excellent artists who have followed and reflected Libensky's art principles, and who has brought honor to Libensky himself. Only one of them who has later become a competitor, consistently challenging the limitations set by glass and its modern manifestation. He has even surpassed Libensky and his wife Brychtova's art achievements. He is Ivan Mares. Ivan Mares' masterpieces is not only a talented artist with several top artworks, but also has the potential to succeed his teacher's career, and lead Czech glass art to be resplendent in the 21st century through the innovation of technology and expression.

FROM
FAR
AWAY



PHOTO: Christina Bothwell



上海玻璃博物馆