

Latchezar Boyadjiev

Luminous cast-glass sculptures

When your heart and head are filled with music, and your artistic medium is glass, the two naturally blend to create an evocative symphony. Latchezar Boyadjiev studied music for many years before turning to his ultimate expressive instrument—the vibrant, reflective medium of cast-glass sculptures. Form, color, light, and detail are intertwined in his work, much as a melody floats throughout a favorite song.

The free-flowing lines and emotional energy of Boyadjiev's work reflect his belief in the importance of personal and creative freedom. Boyadjiev was born and raised in communist Bulgaria. After spending most of a decade studying music, and then being unable to attend music school, he began his art education in 1979 in Sofia at the Academy of Applied Arts. He then continued in Prague, Czechoslovakia, under the guidance of the renowned glass artist Stanislav Libensky. As much as he admired his colleagues, he was stifled by the deeply proscribed atmosphere of the country. To succeed as an artist, he would be forced to join the communist party and, as he explains, "I wasn't communist, nobody in my family was communist, and I had a lot of problems with the government."

Boyadjiev wanted to be free to follow his dreams in his own way. With great difficulty, he and his wife escaped to Italy and ended up in an overcrowded refugee camp in Latina. They were finally granted political asylum in the United States and arrived in the San Francisco Bay Area in September 1986. He was unknown and without an artistic network to draw on, but he had passion and was free at last. His first 10 years were spent cutting, grinding, polishing, and bonding optical glass and colored filters into abstract sculptures. But he longed to create work with more softness and more energy, and soon he began to move into glass casting. Over time his innovative pieces earned him increased attention and respect from collectors and colleagues, and his reputation has continued to grow. In 1997 he began traveling back to the Czech Republic to cast his designs there.

Counterpoint serves Boyadjiev the artist as it did Boyadjiev the musician. In his deceptively simple works, contrasts define and enhance: He uses variations in density and transparency, smooth sweeps of color and textured detail, to create perspective and interest, energy and fluidity. The language of the artist's work is the language of line, balance, and movement. Each piece contains the nucleus of a singular emotion—an emotion that flies beyond written language to evoke sensation.

Boyadjiev's process is as complex as the man himself, encompassing work in a range of materials and travel across two continents. Every sculpture initially takes form on paper as he sketches with charcoal, searching for and distilling his concept until it takes final shape. "It has to be the right combination of size, composition, balance, and energy," says the artist. He recreates on paper exactly how it will look, including its color density and texture. Nothing is left to chance.

Once he has his final drawing, he renders it in clay. On a small table in his studio, he



▲ **TORSO VI, GLASS, 36 X 25 X 5.**



DOSSIER REPRESENTATION

Sandra Ainsley Gallery, Toronto, Ontario; Davis & Cline Galleries, Ashland, OR; Habatat Galleries, Boca Raton, FL, and Royal Oak, MI; Hawk Galleries, Columbus, OH; Holsten Galleries, Stockbridge, MA; Pismo Gallery, Aspen, Beaver Creek, and Denver, CO; Thomas R. Riley Galleries, Cleveland, OH; Jane Sauer Gallery, Santa Fe, NM.

FINE ART CRAFT

sculpts a model with a palette knife. Boyadjiev then creates a plaster mold, a negative of his design. From this he casts another positive. Now he's ready to travel.

He flies to the Czech Republic where his career began, carrying his plaster positives as luggage. From Prague he drives north to the town of Turnov, where he first selects his colors. Czech Republic glass offers unique color choices achieved by adding chemicals

such as copper or gold to clear glass, and it is 45 percent lead, which brightens the hues and creates a softness that helps in the casting process. Sculptures are cast in up to six different colors for each design, with a new mold used for each color since the mold is destroyed in the extrication process.

At this point the pieces are left at the Turnov studio where his longtime colleagues, Tomas Malek and Tomas Flander-

ka, following Boyadjiev's careful instructions, complete the grinding and polishing that gives each piece its final luster. Their assistance with some of the technicalities of the work frees Boyadjiev to spend more time on the creative side. When finished, the sculptures are shipped back to the United States, ending their journey where their conception began.

Boyadjiev's sculptures range in size from table-top pieces to stand-alone pieces over 6 feet high. Their form is essentially abstract, frequently utilizing bold colors reflective of each piece's emotional expression. His award-winning work has been extensively exhibited nationally and internationally in museums, galleries, and private collections.

Soon Boyadjiev, whose life has been driven by a need for creative freedom and who dislikes boundaries, will perform his search for inspiration and artistic expression in a new 6,800-square-foot studio. He sums up his goals this way: "I want my work to be monumental in size as well as in design. I want it to become a part of modern architecture and the contemporary environment, to reflect the era in which we live." —ROSEMARY CARSTENS

Rosemary Carstens, editor of the award-winning webzine *FEAST*, is writing a book about Mexico City artist Annette Nancarrow, a contemporary of Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo.

▼ PASSION, GLASS, 36 X 24 X 6.



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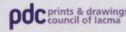
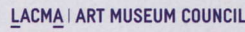
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