

STUDIO GLASS
Anna and Joe Mendel Collection
An exceptional gift to the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts

Montreal, March 16, 2010 – An exceptional gift of a hundred contemporary glass works offered to the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts by Montreal collectors Anna and Joe Mendel will be presented from April 8, 2010, to January 30, 2011. *Studio Glass: Anna and Joe Mendel Collection* follows the first selection, *The Body in Glass*, which visitors to the Museum were invited to discover in the fall of 2008. With this major gift of works, the Museum becomes the only Canadian institution to offer a comprehensive survey of international art glass. Admission to the exhibition is free, as it is for the Museum's entire permanent collection.

Anna and Joe Mendel are passionate about the intrinsic qualities and expressive potential of contemporary art glass, which they have been collecting for the past twenty years. Their collection includes the various styles of the Studio Glass Movement since the 1980s. Studio Glass began in the United States in 1962, when Harvey K. Littleton launched the idea of building studio kilns to enable artists to express themselves, free of the limitations of industrial glassworks. His idea came to fruition in the 1980s. In the Anna and Joe Mendel Collection, glass sculpture predominates. The Mendels favour a wide range of artistic approaches that include figuration as much as abstraction, with the artists' virtuosity also factoring into their choices. The collection contains works by the most famous contemporary glass artists and the major international schools, such as those of the United States and the Czech Republic. Canadian creativity is also well represented, due to the collectors' discerning acquisitions and close relationships with several artists.

Works by some seventy artists reveal glass transformed in the mould, blown, thermoformed or bound through symbiosis to a variety of materials. *Studio Glass* presents glass works by American pioneers such as Harvey K. Littleton, Dominick Labino and Marvin Lipofsky. The work of Stanislav Libenský and Jaroslava Brychtová, the famous Czech couple renowned for monolithic and monochrome sculptures in moulded glass, also appears in the collection, as does that of the generation of artists they trained, including Jaromir Rybák and Aleš Vašíček. Howard Ben Tré and Michael Glancy blend the fusional arts to create sculptural works that play with the transparency of glass and the opacity of metal. Lucio Bubacco, Ginny Ruffner, Paul Stankard and Maude Bussièrès have reinvented traditional techniques, such as work with the blowpipe. Jay Musler's astounding figurative approach breeds metaphors illustrating his social and environmental concerns, while Dan Dailey's original style is marked by his interest in drawing and humour.

In addition to collecting, Anna and Joe Mendel are very active in the world of art glass in both the United States and Canada. They have sat on the Board of Directors of the Art Alliance for Contemporary Glass and established the Houdé-Mendel Bursary, awarded annually to a graduate of the College Studies Diploma (DEC) at Espace Verre in Montreal. The bursary provides free use of the Houdé-Mendel kiln for a year. The Mendels are now sharing their generosity and enthusiasm with the Museum by pledging their support of a series of ten annual lectures on contemporary art glass. The first, in 2008, was given by glass artist Dan Dailey. It was followed in 2009 by a lecture given by Laura Donefer and Susan Edgerley. This year's guest speaker will be Clifford Rainey, who will discuss his artistic process and his forty-year career on May 29 at

2.30 p.m. His presentation will be followed by a talk given by Tina Oldknow, curator at the Corning Museum of Glass, who will survey the creation of contemporary glass around the world.

On April 7, at 4 p.m., Anna Mendel will speak about her love for art glass and discuss the experience she and her husband have had as collectors and promoters of this art form.

The Anna and Joe Mendel Collection is unique in Canada. The Mendels are now sharing their passion for contemporary art glass with visitors to the Museum thanks to this exceptional gift of a hundred works, which has enriched the Museum's Department of Decorative Arts. These pieces enhance the Liliane and David M. Stewart Collection, which features glass objects created by both industry and artists and includes a major corpus of Canadian works from the Louise and Laurette d'Amours Bequest.

Starting in 2011, once the new Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion of Canadian Art has opened and the Collection of Decorative Arts has been reinstalled in the Liliane and David M. Stewart Pavilion, the Mendel Collection will be presented regularly, in rotation, in a space reserved for glass. This presentation will enable visitors to become more familiar with the history of art glass, from Antiquity to today.

Diane Charbonneau, Curator of Contemporary Decorative Arts at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, is in charge of the presentation of *Studio Glass: Anna and Joe Mendel Collection*.

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Photos of several of these necklaces can be found on the Museum's website at mmfa.gc.ca/media.

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