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The Aura of Flora: *Pâte de Verre* Vessels

Leigh Craven

(Photography by Clements Photography & Design)

The technique of *pâte de verre* is most closely associated with the art nouveau movement of the 1890s and 1900s, and with artists such as Almeric Walter (1870–1959) and Gabriel Argy-Rousseau (1885–1953). The complex and illusive technique lacks mass-production qualities, and therefore never gained the popularity of glass blowing. Many of the secrets of the technique have been lost in history, which prompted me to investigate the elaborate process.

The process begins by building a clay model of a form that I hope to create in glass. I encase this clay model in a thick plaster shell. The original clay model is then removed from the interior of the plaster, leaving behind a usable plaster mold. The mold is carefully packed with various colored glass powders and frits. These colors are thoughtfully

visualized and placed, as the colors do not reach their actual hue or saturation until the firing process is complete. Once the mold is packed with glass it is then fired in a kiln. The firing/fusing schedule takes more than thirty hours to complete. The schedule slowly heats the glass to allow the frits to move, fuse, and reach desired color saturation and

translucency. If the firing completes successfully, the plaster mold is then broken and chipped away to reveal a glass vessel.

The created works were inspired by nature, more specifically, botanicals. I did not attempt to mimic; rather I strived to embody the aura of flora. The pieces are extremely thin and fragile. These attributes enhance the delicate nature of the vessels and stem from the elements that inspired them. The softness of their jewel-like glow complements their rough, organic edges.



Leigh Craven is Assistant Professor in the Art Department. She wishes to acknowledge the support of a CARS Faculty Librarian Research Grant without which the research and creation of these works would not have been possible.



Untitled, 8" x 4", pâte de verre, cast glass



Untitled, 6" x 3 1/2", pâte de verre



Untitled, 9" x 5 1/2," pâte de verre



Untitled, 8" x 6 ½," pâte de verre, cast glass



Untitled, 5" x 4," pâte de verre



Untitled, 9 ½" x 7," pâte de verre



Untitled, 5" x 3," pâte de verre, ceramics, gouache



Untitled, 5" x 4," pâte de verre



Untitled, 4" x 3," pâte de verre