

ART ■ ZEALOUS

Simon Abrahms: Bringing A Glass Gallery To The Lower East Side

September 14, 2016 by Kristina Lopez



Historically, glass hasn't gotten its due as a medium of fine art. Simon Abrahms is on the path to change that. We first met Simon in Miami during Basel when his delicate glass pieces caught our eye. His booth was filled with stunning works from famed glassblowing scientist Kiva Ford and other talented glass artists like Chris Ahalt and Micah Evans. Simon started representing glass artists in 2010 and now will open his first brick-and-mortar space, Chesterfield Gallery, on the Lower East Side. We caught up with Abrahms to discuss his plans for his new space and what we can expect from his first show.

Art Zealous: What was your first job?

Simon Abrahms: When I was seventeen, I had a job working for my friend's dad in a warehouse for a company that distributed most of what somebody would need for a construction site. Nuts, bolts, screws, fasteners, power tools, things like that. It wasn't exactly a great creative outlet, but it was an important lesson in what working for someone else is like and certainly helped solidify my feelings about wanting to work for myself.

AZ: How did Chesterfield Gallery come to be?

SA: Here's the short version: In 2009 I decided to learn how to blow glass, so I reached out to a local artist in Connecticut whose work I'd admired and collected on a small scale for a few years. He was kind enough to agree to teach me, and I quickly realized that there was an entire community of artists who didn't have proper representation. At first, I had to buy work and then resell it, so it was difficult to expand at a rapid rate, but if you're buying good work at a fair price, you can start to gain some momentum. In 2011, I saw that if I didn't pursue it as a full-time career immediately, I would miss the opportunity as more people became interested in glass, so I decided to leave the University of Connecticut School of Business to start the business officially, and our first location was at my home on Chesterfield Lane, hence the name.

Since then, I've expanded to representing work from many of the world's best artists working in the medium of glass from the U.S., Canada, Japan, and Italy and I'm in the process of organizing some incredibly exciting interdisciplinary projects with painters, photographers, graphic artists, and others, to expand what can be done in glass.



Robert Mickelsen, "Parasol", Courtesy of gallery

AZ: Beverage of choice?

SA: Pisco sours and New York City tap water.

AZ: Who should people follow on social media?

SA: Some of the artists we work closest with that have incredibly interesting content on Instagram are Kiva Ford (@KivaFordGlass), Micah Evans (@MicahGlass), and Chris Ahalt (@Cha_Glass) for glass sculpture, Naturel (@Naturel) for great paintings, murals, and graphic design, and The Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art (@TheWadsworth) in Hartford, CT for the perfect dose of classical art.

AZ: Advice for young people in the arts?

SA: If you think you have a good idea, go for it. If you have no clue, ask somebody who does. Local museums are great resources for learning how to get involved. All you have to do is show up in person or go to a website.

AZ: Favorite art moment of 2016

SA: My favorite art moment of 2016 so far was my trip to Murano, a glassblowing island off of Venice, Italy. Exceptional art, incredible history, amazing architecture, and breathtaking views.

AZ: Do you think glass as a fine art medium will have its moment?

SA: I think glass is about to have a moment. For its entire existence, the medium has been categorized as a decorative art and at first, that was legitimate. In the past, it was almost entirely technique and aesthetic driven. Now there are artists pushing the boundaries of glass into incredible sculpture and installation works that tell a story. Pieces and bodies of work that address relevant cultural issues and tie into important historical discussions the way that the best art of any era does. I moved the gallery to New York to further those conversations and give glass the voice it deserves on the contemporary art stage and look forward to others joining me.



Kiva Ford, "Snow Leopard Bottle". Courtesy of gallery

AZ: What artists do you work with?

SA: Kiva Ford, Chris Ahalt, Micah Evans, and Christopher Windsor are four that are at the core of the program. Sidney Hutter, Carmen Lozar, Grant Garmezzy, Jupiter Nielsen, and Yoshinori Kondo are a handful of others we represent and are excited to showcase as part of our debut exhibition at our new location in the Lower East Side on September 17th.

AZ: What can we expect to see from your first show?

SA: Our inaugural exhibition, Simon Says, is an introduction to some of the work that I feel shows the cutting edge of what's being made in the glass and where the medium is going. It features several exceptional American sculptors and one important outlier in Yoshinori Kondo, who shows what is possible in detail-oriented small scale work.



Matt Eskuche, "29 Hours of Television", Courtesy of gallery

AZ: Why the Lower East Side for your first gallery?

SA: The Lower East Side is what's next. I've seen the neighborhood evolve over the past six and a half years. I've spent time here regularly, and it's ready to flourish. It's the right combination of younger galleries with fresh ideas and established galleries that are moving from Chelsea, the Upper East Side, and out of town to create the perfect cross section of what will be relevant for at least the next decade. It's also much more accessible in terms of the ability to see more at once since most of the galleries are street level. Better than having to go up to the sixth floor of some warehouse building. There are also a ton of phenomenal restaurants and bars right here, which is a major plus.

AZ: Tell us one thing that would surprise people about the world of glass

SA: The number of flameworkers (a specific type of glassblowing) is estimated to have tripled in the U.S. from 2010 to 2015. This is a great indicator of growth in what's to come with the next generation of artists.



Kiva Ford, "My Compliments to the Chef", Courtesy of gallery

AZ: What do you have coming down the pipeline after your first show?

SA: We have an exciting combination of exhibitions at the gallery and art fairs in Chicago and Miami, as well as some we're considering in San Francisco, Switzerland, Italy, and Asia. Some will focus on glass, but many are interdisciplinary projects that have never been approached the way we're doing it, so stay tuned to our website and Instagram for updates.

AZ: How can we follow you?

SA: Instagram: @TheChesterfieldGallery, Facebook: Chesterfield Gallery, Snapchat: @ChesterfieldNYC

Simon Says opens Saturday, September 17th at 7:00pm, and will be on view at Chesterfield Gallery, 109 Norfolk Street, New York.