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Collector Editions

Quarterly
Fall 1980

The World of
WEDGWOOD



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A Wedgwood cane ware vase or flower-holder in the form of four lengths of cut bamboo standing upon a grassy mound, produced in 1785.
 Photograph by Robert Golden.

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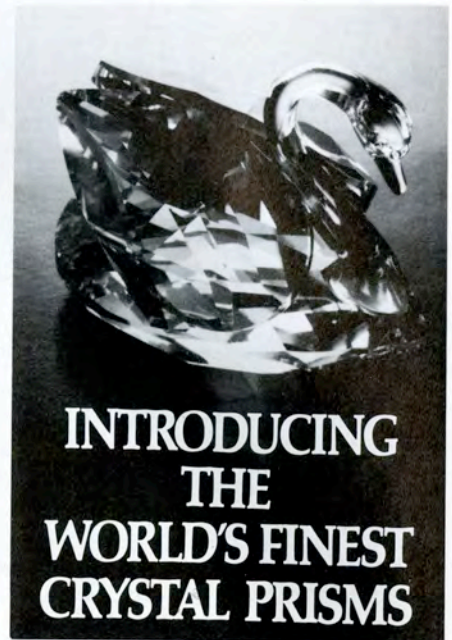
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Space does not permit discussion of the work of Monica Bäckström, Benny Motzfeldt, Ulla Forsell, Eric Höglund, or several others known to glass students and collectors. Prices ranged from \$65 to \$1600, and there were bargains at every price level. I would like to have owned the opal-tinted vase by Ann Wärff/Wilke for only \$65, or the large, thick, long-ringing crystal bowl by Jan Johansson (currently a freelance designer for Orrefors) with its superb flute cuts below a tier of lunette cuts. Apart from the lunettes, nothing new about the design, but that bowl is perfection. At \$1600 it was a steal.

Corning's Glass Mecca



Pâte de Verre head by Georges Despret (1862-1952). The Corning Museum of Glass.

THE NEW CORNING Museum of Glass let drop its veil of architectural mystery and opened to the public last June 1. If for some the exterior of the building seems to have retained its stainless steel-treated glass veil, the interior reveals that the new museum is indeed the world center for the display of glass and for publications on glass. Once up the ramp, through the confusing 'discotheque' lobby, and into the museum proper the logic of this treasure house of glass becomes self-evident. For the plan is built logically around a central library core, where one may ask to see the latest issue of *Collector Editions* or the most arcane bit of



The stainless steel and glass entrance lobby to the new Corning Museum of Glass building is dominated by a large glass sculpture made especially for the new museum by two of the world's great glass artists., Stanislav Libensky and Jaroslava Brychtova of Czechoslovakia. The symbolic sculpture has three parts: a meteor, a bird and a flower.

glass incunabula and be cheerfully served by helpful librarians.

Around this circular core curves the long main gallery, called the "time tunnel." The restfully dark, carpeted, and quiet gallery presents a selection of highlights from among the museum's 20,000 pieces of glass, arranged chronologically from the earliest Egyptian and Mesopotamian glasses of 1500 B.C. right up to the present. The gallery is punctuated by twelve columnar cases, each containing a "masterpiece", or at least a rare or a characteristic example from a different period. The inner wall of this gallery is lined with a padded bench where one may rest at any point in this historical procession of glasses and gaze across at the exhibits. These, by the way, are attractively arranged with comfortable intervals between groups of glasses of each type or period, which are suspended almost magically on paper-thin shelves magnetized to the backs of the cases. The eye is never crowded by too much glass. Visitors with minimal curiosity or little time to spare can give the columns the once over in a few minutes, the gallery itself in perhaps twenty.

The large remainder of the museum, that is the area between the long gallery and the curving exterior, consists of a series of oddly shaped bays or rooms, each containing glass of a different period and country. The glass is set dramatically in vertical displays lit from behind, and in horizontal cases against the curtained daylight of the curving outer walls. These rooms are basically study areas for those interested in particular kinds of glass. Here you can see it all, case after case of ancient Roman glass; Islamic cut glass; German forest glass and enamelled glass; Venetian *cristallo* and filigree glass; Bohemian engraved glass; English cut crystal; Chinese carved glass; African trade beads; French paperweights; American pressed glass and historical flasks; the Art Glass of Gallé and Daum, Tiffany and Carder; the Strauss Collection of 2400 drinking glasses of all periods; contemporary American and European glass; in short, encyclopedic collections of every type of glass from every century. Even if one knows nothing about glass, these beautifully conceived displays offer an instant education.

What can be seen is artfully

explained in context in a series of repeating films showing the various important historical techniques involved. We watch an ancient Egyptian flask being made over a core held on the end of a stick, and we see how the hot decoration is trailed on in rings and then combed into colored zig-zags. We visit a primitive glassblowing furnace in modern day Afghanistan in a recent film that could not be made today. We witness the incredible skill of a Venetian glassmaking team coping with the intricacies of a dragon stem goblet, making the impossible look easy. We watch a man operating a nineteenth century American pressing machine, flipping his pressed glass plate in the air as if it were a pancake, and catching it. These films tell a lot in five minutes, but if you want the pedigree of any piece of glass, all you have to do is punch out on one of the computer terminals the information given on the accession card. For greater detail, it's into the handy library.

If you plan to go to Corning plan to stay overnight. This collection of collections is unquestionably mecca for glass, and you cannot take it all in at one viewing.