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A PASSION FOR BOOKS ABOUT GLASS

by
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One of the many booksellers' catalogs I used regularly to receive was from Carnegie Bookshop in New York (closed 1982), a few blocks from where I live. (As I write this, the owner, David Kirschenbaum's obituary has just appeared in The New York Times—he was 99. Kirschenbaum had sold such plums as George Washington's copy of *The Federalist*.) Carnegie Bookshop's catalogs of hundreds of miscellaneous titles made them tedious to search for glass; but the catalog I received one morning required me to look no further than Lot 1: Schmoranz, Gustave, *Old Oriental Gilt and Enamelled Glass Vessels Extant in Public and Private Collections. Reproduced in their Colouring and Described by G.S.* London and Vienna, G. Norman, 1899. Published with the Sanction of the Ministry of Education by the Imperial Handels-Museum of Vienna.

This was one of 95 copies printed in English, with 32 color plates, 12 photos, and 69 illustrations in the text, all by Schmoranz who, incidentally, also designed enamelled mosque lamps. The book measures 21 by 15 inches. Duncan's *Bibliography of Glass*, states that the London rare book dealer, Quaritch had 2 copies for sale in 1926. My local book dealer offered his copy for \$15, but there was a catch; the catalog mentioned water damage—which would account for the price.

At 10 a.m. I phoned the bookshop immediately. Someone had beat me to it and put the book on hold. This person would go to the bookshop later to examine the book.

"When?"

"About 1 p.m."

"I'll be there at 1:15 p.m."

The customer didn't want the book and I could see why. The massive cover was warped into the shape of a bass tuba and speckled with mold. I pried open the cover and was encouraged to discover that, though warped, the pages were not stuck together and only faintly watermarked on one or two 3 1/2 inch margins. The reproductions of Schmoranz's realistic water color illustrations were in pristine coloring. I carried the book home and laid it on the floor.

The first step seemed to require removal of the covers, and when I had hacked them off, the body of the book relaxed with an audible sigh of relief. I left the book undisturbed on the floor and discussed with Carl Ashby, an artist who has been my framer

for four decades, what to do next. I piled a stack of large, heavy books on Schmoranz and left it that way for a couple of weeks. Then I carried it to Carl's shop, who put the coverless book in his thermostatically controlled Heat Seal press. On removal days later the pages were completely flat. I have a Hassidic bookbinder deep in the Lower East Side of Manhattan, and he was able to bind the book between new covers for \$15. But that was long ago.

Schmoranz is a remarkable rare book. the black and white illustrations include profiles of vessels, armorial medallions, arabic inscriptions and other enamelled passages seen on mosque lamps, plates, beakers, a basin, and what Schmoranz called a Glass Lantern belonging to Alphonse de Rothschild of Paris. This superbly enamelled, rare Syrian piece is actually a candlestick, and is the same one acquired by The Corning Museum of Glass in 1990, that was probably



Figure 1: Glass Lantern or Mosque lamp appearing in Gustave Schmoranz's *Old Oriental Gilt and Enamelled Glass Vessels Extant in Public and Private Collections*, of 1899. Made for Sultan al-Masur Muhammad between 1361 and 1363.

made for Sultan al-Mansur Muhammad between 1361 and 1363 (Figure 1). It is illustrated on the cover of Vol. 35, 1991, of *Corning's Journal of Glass Studies*.

Some of the 13th and 14th-century gilded and enamelled mosque lamps shown on Schmoranz's 32 color plates measure 15 inches tall on the page, and reveal his great sensitivity to the variable qualities of the often translucent and bubbly glass vessels which were hung high above the worshippers and intended for acceptable illumination not acquisitive inspection. The book gives the history and techniques of decorating mosque lamps, and cites their ownership by princes and sultans, museums and private collectors at the time of publication. Schmoranz's uncertainty as to Egyptian or Syrian origin of some lamps remains partially unresolved today.

In mosques the lamps were suspended from the vaults in the arcades by means of long, finely worked silver or bronze chains passed through the three or six ear-shaped handles about the shoulder of the lamp. About halfway up, the chains joined to pass through an enamelled, pierced glass sphere about the size of an indoor baseball, on their way to the rafters. One afternoon several years ago at Sotheby's in New York I sat with Nancy Merrill and Jean Chrysler as they bid on one of these rare spheres for the Chrysler Museum.

The lamps and spheres had begun to disappear from the mosques in the late 19th century. Schmoranz wrote: "Sometimes, as in the immense mosque of Sultan Hasan, iron hooks and rings were fixed in the vaults of the roof, to receive the chains. In that mosque the lamps were so numerous that the long bronze chains which are still hanging there present something of the appearance of falling rain." The book is an impressive exhibition of gilded and enamelled detail in glass.

The other very large book I acquired was Gustav Edmund Pazaurek's *Die Glasersammlung des Norböhmisches Gerwerbe-Museums in Reichenberg*, Leipzig in 1902, a portfolio of text and three color and 37 very sharp black and white photographic plates of finely engraved glasses. The book was in one of those Fourth Avenue bookshops that by the late 1970's had vanished. They had a sale on, every book priced at five dollars, and the place was utter chaos. Syd Solomon, the owner told me about it, said it was under the counter somewhere, "Look around." On my knees, I began tossing fist fulls of loose pages over my shoulder, prying up, burrowing under—it was like shoveling snow and ice. I counted the loose plates, which were all over the place—one was missing. I ploughed through the mass again and found it. Diagonally across the entire plate was the print of an automobile tire. At home I removed the print with a Pink Pearl eraser.

I had long had a passion for books on many subjects, but my craving for books on glass began innocently enough back in the late fifties, with one of those books on Anglo-Irish table glass by Bernard and Therle Hughes—some passable black and white illustrations and a lot of information interesting to dealers and the English. I bought two or three books on paperweights because I collected them and wanted to learn more.

Research for a book on glass paperweights brought me to the 1851 Crystal Palace, which required reading about the building itself and the objects exhibited in the first World's Fair. Acquiring books, which were then quite cheap, led me into the byways and backwaters of glass research. Of course there was the wonderful New York Public Library; but I could save travel time and waiting for my numbers to appear on the big screen by reading books at home, interleaving them with my own notes. And then there was another thing.

I discovered that I had a kind of sixth-sense for ferreting out the unusual books such as *Wealden Glass*, by S.E. Winbolt, or Sheila Ruggles Brise's *Sealed Glass Bottles*. When standing trancefully before the shelves of E. Weyhe's goldmine bookshop on Lexington Avenue (now closed), staring at a row of titles, a little bell would sound and I would reach in

THE WORLD'S FAIR;

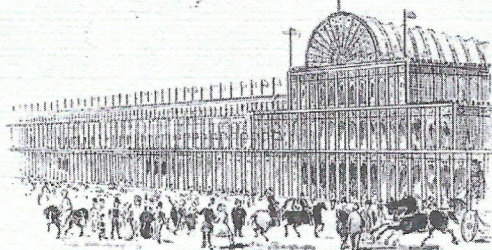
OR

CHILDRENS' PRIZE GIFT BOOK

OF THE

GREAT EXHIBITION

OF 1851.



LONDON.

THOMAS DEAN & SON, THE MARSHFIELD-STREET, AND

ACKERMANN BROTHERS, 95, STRAND.

Figure 2: Engraved frontpiece from the children's guide book published by Ackermann Brothers, London, for the Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1851.

for a rare glass item I had never heard of. This happened frequently at the Bookshop of James Kane (long since closed), whose backer/assistant and former schoolteacher Viola Neiman conspired to keep me in touch with hidden treasures. Sometimes the book would have slipped behind the row.

At Dauber and Pine (also gone) on the other hand, a book on glass was a needle in a haystack—what a haystack. Dauber and Pine had two levels. On the Fifth Avenue level it was a small shop displaying novels, mysteries, and some art books, the tight space presided over by grandfatherly Mr. Pine. An iron spiral staircase led down to a room the size of a tennis court that resembled an amateurishly excavated archaeological site. Shelves sagged, books coated in dust that had spilled onto the floor lay molding, the air seasoned with spray from snapping steampipes in the adjoining boiler room. Murray Dauber haunted the place, dressed like Ichabod Crane, moody, unpredictable. Questions were always answered with, “I dunno. Look around, look around.” I had been casing Dauber and Pine for perhaps ten years before Murray finally let me climb through the dusty avalanche of books and periodicals on the floor of the innermost stacks. Winter or summer the temperature there was about 90 degrees and I really should have worn a mask.

One day on the floor I found the first 640 pages detached from the 1911 Government Printing Office *Report on Condition of Women and Child Wage Earners in the United States, Vol. III: Glass Industry*. I’ll wager there is more information in this book about every

aspect of glassmaking and glassworkers than is suspected by any glass researcher. It puts me in mind of a little book I found, *Employments of Women* by Miss Virginia Penny, 1863, of which I published the chapter on glass in *The Glass Club Bulletin* 113, my first issue as Bulletin editor.

As my areas of interest in glass broadened, I changed from someone interested in acquiring a specific book to someone putting together a glass library. If I saw a book and could afford it, even if it was about glass in which I had little compelling interest, I bought it. I got on the mailing lists of foreign and domestic booksellers, and the minute a catalog arrived in the mail I dropped everything and scanned it from cover to cover. When traveling I made it a point to visit booksellers in the area. Within twenty years I owned most of the 19th-century books on glass in English, French, and some in Italian (I can get the gist of a paragraph in Italian: French was never a problem; my German consists of a few words of the sort that appear in captions for illustrations). I began to consider myself in competition with other collectors, glass scholars, even with the library of The Corning Museum of Glass—which last comparison was ridiculous.

During the Corning glass seminars there used to be an interval between two talks when Rakow librarians Norma Jenkins and Virginia Wright would put up for sale deaccessioned duplicate titles, announced only at the end of the first of the two talks. Some were books damaged in the great Corning flood, but all were desirable. I used to find out when this sale

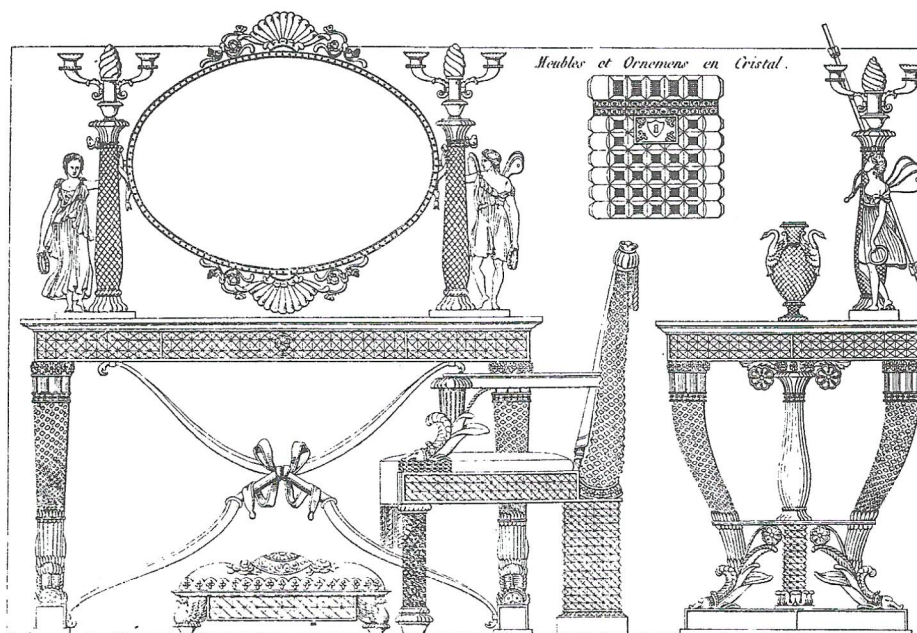


Figure 3: Julia de Fontenelle's page pul

would take place, and dash to the library to put aside any books I wanted. Like all windfalls that possibility was eventually rescinded. But then, of course, there was Jim Iraggi's Book Exchange on West Market Street.

I remember visiting Jim's shop when all he carried were novels, children's books, and a bit of local history. When I asked him one day why, in a town bristling with glassworkers and retired glassworkers he didn't acquire interesting glass libraries, he shrugged that there didn't seem to be any around. Not too long after that Jim changed his mind and the rest is Book Exchange History. Today at seminar time one has to peek over the shoulders of seminarians to see if they are about to acquire the book you want. Jim and I have always had a good relationship, and book dealers in general are nearly always friendly, keeping an eye out for one's needs.

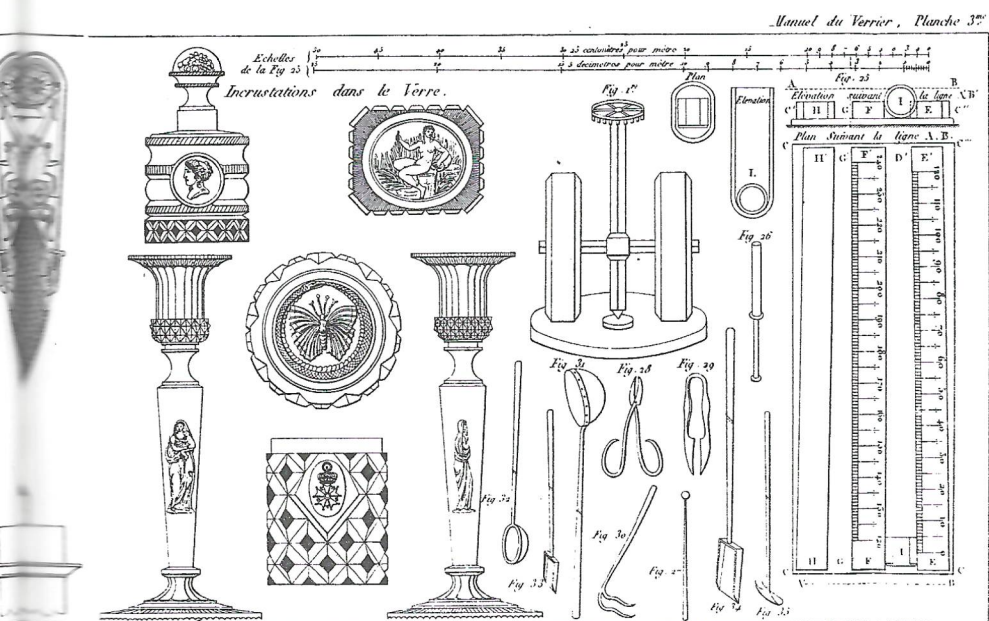
I had only one unpleasant and long drawn out experience with a rare book dealer and that was over Neri, who published the first general treatise on glassmaking, *L'Arte Vetraria*, in 1612. I had ordered the book from a catalog that neglected to mention that the book lacked its original covers and had been rebound (and recently) in full, untooled leather. Due probably to the change in humidity between cold, damp England and New York City steam heat the covers began to warp. Clamps would not flatten them completely. And so I wrote to the dealer, who advised me to return the book in exchange for a better copy. I did and waited for the replacement—and waited, and waited. Thus began a long correspondence, for he had not refunded the cost of the book. After four or five

years the dealer wrote that he now had a much better copy and would send it to me. He had thought to include a bill for the better copy. When this 'better' copy arrived, I saw immediately that it was the original copy he had sold me, though the price was now nearly double.

Now the important point about this is that I had kept a file of all our correspondence over the years, and I wrote once more to explain that he had attempted to resell me my original copy, already paid for, and that I therefore need pay nothing for the book. That finally settled the matter, and this time I was able to flatten out the covers. Ownership of that bookshop has changed and they carry no more books on decorative arts and glass.

Records concerning books are important to keep. Whenever I bought a book about glass, the thing I did before anything else was to record it on a file card: title, author, city, publisher and date of publication, number of pages, illustrations and any other significant information, such as the price I paid. I kept the file cards in a couple of old wooden library card catalog trays, filed alphabetically according to country of publication, author and subject. In addition to books, I recorded museum catalogs and catalogs of private collections, of exhibitions, material giving historical backgrounds, almanacs and city directories, anything to do with glass. When the file cards outgrew the library trays I put them in shoe boxes. Duncan's *Bibliography of Glass* was the basic source for recording information on books published before 1960.

Over nearly four decades my library of books grew to cover virtually every aspect of glass: the chemistry



and technology, glass from ancient Egypt through the contemporary studio movement, glass of every country from Scandinavia and Russia to China and Japan. My library was far from complete, of course—only the Rakow Library at Corning, libraries of a few great cities of the world, and perhaps the library of the Victoria and Albert Museum can approach completeness about glass. But there were giddy moments when I deceived myself that I was in competition with the Rakow. A visit to the Rakow always defused that, though once or twice I did acquire something that Norma Jenkins and Virginia Wright had not heard of.

Among my big heavies were Brongniart and Riocreux's beautiful catalog of the Ceramic Museum of the Royal Porcelain Factory at Sevres, with its 80 meticulously handcolored plates of ceramics, glass and stained glass. And the specially bound catalog by Alexander Nesbitt of the great Slade Collection of glass in the British Museum. My copy was presented to Robert Slade, Esq., by the then Keeper (curator) at the BM, Augustus W. Franks. And I should mention that the catalogue raisonné of Laliq glass by Félix Marcilhac weighs 13 pounds.

But I also had numerous small treasures, such as *The World's Fair or Children's Prize Gift Book of the Great Exhibition of 1851*, with its color frontispiece of the interior of the Crystal Palace and its many delightful engravings (Figure 2). In 1974, in England we rented a car and drove to the home of Sir Hugh Chance (of Chance Brothers glass dynasty) in Worcestershire. Sir Hugh had been most helpful to me in supplying family documentation for a piece I had written for the *Journal of Glass Studies*. Sir Hugh showed me some of the books in his library, among them his favorite, Julia de Fontenelle's the 5 1/2-inch *Manuel Complet du Fabricant de Verre et Cristal*, 1829, the first of the series of Roret manuals. Some years later I acquired a copy from a Paris bookseller. At the back of the book are several pullout illustrations, including the one of glass furniture (Figure 3) of which the left half only is usually illustrated in modern books [Also see "Notes from the Baltic," Figure 2, page 10, Bulletin 124, November, 1978].

A rare book find most useful to me was the bound, priced catalog of the Debruge-Duménil sale of 1849. Lots 1366 and 1367 are described under Mosaic Glass, flowered or millefiori vases. They are little handled millefiori flagons (burettes) in which was put wine or water for the celebration of the mass. Eventually they wound up in the Slade Collection of the British Museum and are illustrated and described by Hugh Tait in his fine book *The Golden Age of Venetian Glass*, Figures 164 and 165. One of my

luckiest finds was a copy of Apsley Pellatt's famous book of 1849, *Curiosities of Glass Making*. On the flyleaf was penned "Presented to Mons. Mons. [?] Bontemps with the regards of the Author, Apsley Pellatt." Then on the title page was written "George Albert Green Gateshead-on-Tyne December 1865 from G.J.G." (probably the London seller of engraved glass). Again, on page 77 mention of Mr. James Green in the text is underlined and on the margin written "My Uncle." A book rich in family histories.

Speaking of Bontemps, a few years ago I acquired George Bontemps' great study of 1869, *Guide du Verrier*, a must for anyone wanting to learn the historic glassworking procedures. The New York bookseller James Cummins had it for sale together with Eugène Péligot's *Le Verre, son Histoire Sa Fabrication*, of 1877. The two books came from the library of William Leighton [Jr.], of Hobbs Brockunier & Co., to whom they had been sent by none other than glassmaker Thomas Gaffield of Boston, together with a 45-page index handwritten by Gaffield for the Bontemps book and a chatty letter that reads in part: "I don't know as you take kindly to collecting books on anything but Shakespeare. But if you care to keep up a glass library, I will tell you of a book lately published by a gentleman connected with the St. Gobain Plate Glass Works in France." Gaffield also cites the Henrivaux book: "You may be pleased with it, although it may contain some blunders...Have not had time to read it yet. It cost me in paper \$9.30/100. Little Brown imported it for me...Love and good wishes to you and yours. Yours truly, T.W. Gaffield."

It is good to read of book lovers corresponding. And it was good to collect and correspond about books on glass, but there was absolutely no more room in our apartment for books—they were everywhere, in closets stacked two rows deep and laid crosswise above. Even on a ladder I couldn't get to some of them. And then my teaching schedule changed and an opportunity appeared.

I had been teaching the history of glass for a decade at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum, and now I had the opportunity to teach at the about-to-open Bard (College) Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, here in Manhattan. Furthermore, they were building up a decorative arts library and they wanted my books on glass. It was an opportunity I couldn't refuse, a once-in-a-lifetime chance to dispose of the books all at once to a single institution where they would be available both to me and to students.

There were of course, some procedural hurdles; there had to be an independent appraisal of the books and some way to catalog and deliver them. And this was where my old card-filing system became the key.

My wife had the idea of fixing the book cards onto 8 1/2 x 11" sheets of paper, which turned out to accommodate from 5 to 8 cards on a page, according to the amount of typed information on each card. We then photocopied the sheets. The entire catalog of books came to nearly 400 pages.

Extricating the books from their lairs was the most traumatic operation. Fortunately again, we had help from Bard. Irene and I rolled up the living room rugs, and I packed several cartons of books. Then the heavy team from the Bard Library came in and one day did the rest. I counted 64 cartons of books—the living-room looked like the Temple of Dendur. It took a day to move them out. Now they are installed at Bard, in two long stacks, floor to ceiling. I had never seen them all together before; it's very impressive.

Somewhere in *The Strange Life of Objects* Maurice Rheims wrote that the life of a collection, of no matter what, from the first object acquired to the collector's decision to sell, averages fifteen years. I collected books on glass for over thirty-five years and enjoyed every minute of it: the recommendation of a colleague, the obscure reference buried in a footnote, the possibility lurking in a catalog in the mail, and especially the trance-like moment of standing before a row of titles in a rewarding old haunt, knowing you have the endurance to discover the hidden prize. The settling silence, the sweet, dust-seasoned aroma of warmed pine and chaste paper, the conspiracy of impacted book spines, the faded but familiar titles we confront in the sagging book barn have always been for me rapture. I would not trade those moments for all the rice in China.

Before going to bed some people watch television, others read the Bible or mysteries. I read about glass, which remains mysterious to me. ■

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK
(continued from page 2).

Issue 172 marks my editorial debut. Eason Eige, the former editor, and Francis Allen, President, have been most patient and understanding in making a transition that could have been a nightmare a smooth process. For those who have written, suggested topics and submitted early drafts, I am sincerely grateful. My ambition is to bring informative glass writing to club members. Probing research, contemplation and considerations about upcoming features is underway and with your help the *Bulletin's* future will be secure. If you have comments, your feedback is always welcome.

Bonnie Bledsoe-Fuchs, Editor ■

BALDRIGE NATIONAL QUALITY AWARD
(continued from page 5)

assuring stability and positioning them for the photo-opportunities afforded to the press. "When your product is at center stage for a presidential ceremony, you do not risk the chance of slipping or tumbling unexpectedly. Our reputation is at stake."

Malcolm Baldrige served as Secretary of Commerce under President Reagan, and initiated the concept of a quality award when U.S. industry needed to re-capture markets lost to foreign competitors. About the same time Tom Peters had published *In Search of Excellence* in 1982, arousing the public interest in excellence as a dimension of jobs and productivity. Following the lead of Japan who gives recognition to their quality pace-setters, the U.S. Congress, encouraged by the Department of Commerce, took the issue under consideration. Baldrige's untimely and tragic death prompted Reagan to memorialize his name on the award. The Baldrige criteria and the judging process were instituted in 1988, in the last year of Reagan's term of office.

"We prefer to speak of awards or presentation pieces, rather than use the term 'trophy'" explains Ms. Peacock. The terminology, she explained, helps to elevate the order of achievement. Steuben presentation pieces are commissioned by corporations, associations and, not unexpectedly, by the White House as gifts of state. When asked if the Baldrige Award might someday be as famous as Oscar or the Stanley Cup, Joel Smith replied, "Very likely. The choice of glass for the presentation is a watershed in the trend away from the intrinsically valuable metals toward an appreciation of time and talent. That these pieces will be displayed in the offices, boardrooms and public areas of America's best companies and are used to promote their dedication to quality also fosters glass as a medium of excellence." ■

Acknowledgements to the many contributors for this feature go to:

Meleny Peacock, Director Public Relations and Joel Smith, Product Designer for Steuben; Edward Fuchs, Director, and a former Baldrige Judge and Susan Stuntebeck, Senior Examiner for the Baldrige Judging Process, both of AT&T's Bell Laboratories; and Anne Rogoff, National Institute of Standards and Technology. Each has offered cooperation and enthusiastic support for documenting the role glass plays in this award.