

In the context of the International Year of Glass we interviewed John Moran, a very friendly and kind hot glass sculptor who have recently won the Blown Away season three against nine other experienced glassblowers.

About John Moran:

John Moran was born in 1979 in Philadelphia. He now resides and works in Ghent, Belgium. He defines himself as a politically and socially engaged hot glass sculptor and mixed media artist. John is the co-founder and director of Gent Glas, a public glass studio dedicated to building a dynamic professional learning community of Belgian glass makers and international contemporary artists, designers, and craftspeople.

The parallelism between consumerism, religion, and politics with social injustice, popular culture, and secular views is depicted in John's work. His pieces shed light on social awareness in

a profound and unique manner, subtly uncovering quotidian injustices.



Pictures credits: @blownawayseries, @marblemediaofficial, and @davidleyes

Interview with John Moran

What does glass mean to you and how did you end up working with glass?

(JM) For me one of the most important things about glass is the community. When I first discovered glass, I was drawn to the teamwork aspect and communal aspect of the glass studio. We would all work together, share ideas and responsibilities, and then hang out together in the evenings. It is a very tight knit community.

Did you start sculpting and end up incorporating glass in your work, or it was the other way around?

(JM) I started as a painter, but I have always been interested in building three-dimensional things. I never considered myself a sculptor until I started working with glass, but it made perfect sense. My painting and three-dimensional capabilities came together perfectly once I discovered glass.

What does the UN IYOG (United Nations International Year of Glass) mean to you? How about the glass field in general? Have you heard about it before the show?

(JM) The UN IYOG is a huge recognition for this material we have been using for thousands of years, and more importantly is a huge recognition to the incredible international community who has been working towards building a better understanding and more sustainability within our production. The UN IYOG is huge news in the glass community, so we were excited to hear it become part of the competition.

Where do you see the future of glass in art, technology, and science?

(JM) I think for the past few decades there have been strides to link the three, especially in the artistic glass community. People like Eddie Bernard and Philip Vinson have been searching for ways to make the art of glass more sustainable from a production point of view using technological advancements and ingenuity. I think the future lies in sustainability and accessibility.

We saw that you carry the nickname 'sleepy', can you tell a little bit about the story behind this nickname?

(JM) During the first year of my glass education, I was working night shift at UPS alongside of my classwork. My shift was from midnight until 8 am. My glass classes began at 8:30 am. Needless to say, I often napped or was visibly exhausted during these first classes. I was lucky enough though that instead of failing me out of the class for lack of participation, Che Rhodes, decided to spend some outside hours with me in order to keep me up to speed. It was a defining moment in my life. Another one of Che's contributions to my life was giving me the nickname 'Sleepy'. I took the class with Che in 1998... I thought over the years this nickname would fade or be forgotten... yet here we are in 2022 and about half of the glass world still refers to me by this name.

Can you explain to us more about the piece you delivered in episode 3 (IYOG22)? What message do you want to tell? Also, do you mind sending us a picture of that amazing piece?

(JM) The piece delivered in episode 3 was meant to refer to the glass of our smart phone. I wanted to refer to the idea of getting lost in the vanity of the black mirror, but still have this flipside of connectivity. The piece references a Victorian mirror – an era which parallels ours in some ways – especially in the division of science and (religious) morality, but it is scaled and detailed to match an iPhone. The screen (mirror) is black and reflective. The two hands are holding the mirror like they would a phone – but the hands are of different skin tones to represent the connectivity we also experience with this technology. As with most of my work, a purely celebrational piece would not have felt genuine.

What changed in your life after winning the competition?

(JM) Honestly, I am still figuring that out. Aside from social media, the biggest change has been the amount of work I have been able to produce and send to people. The outreach of support is amazing and I am looking forward to the future!

Want to know more about John Moran's work?

Visit his social media profile at Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/johnsleepymoran/>
<https://www.backdoorart.com/>



John Moran at work and his piece delivered in episode 3 of Blown Away season three.
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