



A New Venture in the Architectural Glass Market

By Daniel Van Rossen

One market that has shown little sign of recession in recent years has been construction. Thanks to low finance cost, new home and office building construction continue at an all time high. Add to this a continued trend of investment in home improvement, business relocations, business mergers and new business start-ups and you have a robust architectural and interior design market place. For the glass crafts this is a market with good opportunities in a tough economy. The problem has been how to tap into this market and make contact with interior designers and architects. The Glass Artist Gallery, a new start-up business, may be the answer.

The Glass Artist Gallery, located in Bellevue, WA, launched their new venture in February with a 15,000 piece

promotional mailer directed to top interior designers and architects. The copy on the envelope of the mailer read, "At last – the nation's finest glass artists are now available to you from a single source...to provide one-of-a-kind glass for your one-of-a-kind project." This new business has positioned itself as a facilitator between the glass artist and interior designers, architects, art consultants, and the corporate world. The gallery provides a convenient single source of hand crafted architectural and functional art glass. One of the goals of the Gallery is to bridge the gap between the glass artist and the needs of interior designers and architects.

This new venture is the brainchild of accomplished glass artist Suzanne Guttman and her partner, marketing professional Jack Healy. The two spent a year and half interviewing glass artists, interior designers, architects and art consultants. This research led to the development of a detailed business plan. They also spent the last year gathering adequate financing to carry the venture for the next five years but they plan on being in the black in two. Guttman and Healy saw a desire in the "trade", interior designers and architects, for wanting to use unique glass items in their projects but having difficulties in finding the appropriate glass artist to work with. They also found glass artists were willing to create functional art and architectural glass but either did not know how contact the "trade" or could not afford the promotional effort that was required. The Glass Artist Gallery has positioned itself to bring the two groups together.

Glass Artists

GALLERY

Representing Glass Artists to the Design Trade



Vessels • Tiles • Windows/Panels



Lighting • Sinks • Furniture



To build its business the Glass Artist Gallery plans a multi channel and sustained marketing effort. At the time the Gallery sent out their mailer in February they also launched their web site (www.glassartistsgallery.com) and made available for sale their three ring binder catalog. The catalog is at the heart of their marketing plan. If you have ever been to an interior designer's studio you know they have bookshelves lined with these types of reference catalogs. Having unique product references close at hand, to draw ideas from and to show clients, is important for interior designers and architects. The Glass Artist Gallery understands these needs and has met them with this binder catalog. They plan on mailing quarterly updates to keep their catalog fresh with new ideas, new glass artists and as a reminder to use art glass pieces. They are also producing a regular e-news letter to show examples of how artistic architectural glass is being used and to introduce new artists. This allows for a continuing education process of interior designers and architects on how they might use artistic architectural glass in future projects. The Gallery is also looking to begin trade magazine advertising this summer, exhibiting at key tradeshow and continuing its publicity campaign. This effort is already showing results with orders for the Gallery's catalog and request for estimates for major installations.

Currently the Gallery represents over 50 of the country's top creators of functional and architectural art glass. Each artist represented by the gallery has been juried for admission. When considering a new artist the jury considers beauty and originality of the work and the artist's experience in dealing with the architectural and interior design community. The Gallery has a detailed contract

that covers every aspect of the working relationship and finances between the Gallery and the glass artist. For glass artists who wish to be considered by the Gallery they have a submission form available on line at the Glass Artist Gallery web site. There is a \$25 jury fee designed to discourage those who are not serious or not ready to work in this area. The Gallery will also be available to meet with glass artists at the G.A.S. Conference in Seattle. With the Gallery investing several thousand dollars in promotional materials in each artist they represent they have to be selective. But with a need to offer interior designers and architects a selection of the best talent they are looking to add more top glass artist doing architectural glasswork to their roster of artists.

What type of glass items does the Gallery currently represent – table lamps, sconces, chandeliers, light shades, sinks, tiles, door panels, glass doors, windows, counter tops, room dividers, door handles, draw pulls, wall panels, wall murals, wall art, tables, table tops, coffee tables, end tables, foot stools, fountains, sculptures, vessels, bowls and vases. All of these items are in soft glass. When asked, Mr. Heally was not aware of borosilicate glass but sounded interested in finding out more about hard glass and about boro glass artists.

For those glass artists looking for a chance to move away from pipes and carnival glass animals the area of architectural glass might be the answer. The Glass Artist Gallery just might be your venue to this new market.



GlassArtists
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Representing Glass Artists to the Design Trade



www.glassartistsgallery.com