



Clear Winners

Objects of glass come out of the dusty curio cabinet and into the forefront of contemporary design.

by Sarah Medford

IT'S RECEIVED WISDOM in the art and design worlds that new materials move thinking forward. So why is glass, which has been around since the time of the ancient Egyptians, suddenly so hot? Not since the craft-mad 1990s—hello, frilly chandeliers by Seattle's master glassblower Dale Chihuly—has the medium been quite so in vogue. But here we are again: At exhibitions worldwide, glass has been a material of choice for creative thinkers as varied as Roni Horn, whose icy 10,000-pound cube, *Pink Tons*, has traveled to museums in London,

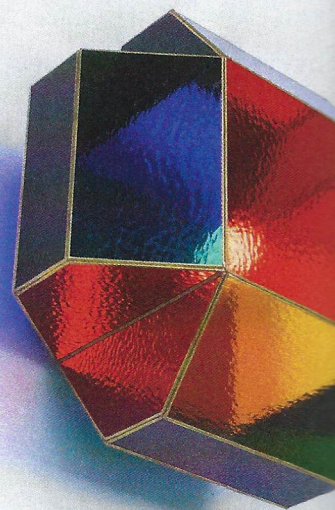
New York City, and Boston; and Misha Kahn, whose cartoon-like puzzle mirrors have been dazzling visitors to New York's Friedman Benda gallery this winter.

So many facets of the substance have been getting attention that even if only a fraction of the work has made its way into the homes of new collectors, the message is crystal clear: Glass is demanding a fresh look.

One of the standouts at December's Design Miami fair was R & Company's installation of filigreed pendant lights, a collaboration between artists Jeff



From far left: *A Loose Line*, a mirror by Misha Kahn, at the Friedman Benda gallery; *Raven*, a vase by Casey McMains from Todd Merrill Studio; a jewel-like wall lamp by Fabien Cappelletto from Ago Projects.



Zimmerman and James Mongrain. The spheres, each roughly 20 inches in diameter and noticeably slumped, were blown from caned glass, made using an age-old Venetian technique that infused the works with webs of milky-white glass threads evoking helices and spirals.

Zimmerman's goal, a timely one, was to highlight both the intelligence and fragility of nature. "If you look closely at any natural element, there are always intelligent design and patterns at work," he says. "I try to make the invisible visible."

Since the start of the Studio Craft movement in the 1960s, glass collectors have identified either as purists, celebrating the technical and aesthetic achievements of Venini and other established makers, or as appreciators of so-called art glass—the Chihuly set. In 2020, it's the latter group that's seeing a resurgence. As the market for collectible design has grown, allowing artists to push their work ever further in the conceptual direction, glass has become a preferred medium.