

Katherine Coleman – Feb 2014

1. What is your professional background?

I am a freelance glass engraver and designer. See my website www.katharinecoleman.co.uk. I have been working full time as an engraver, supporting myself by selling my work since 1996. I work mainly for work to be sold by dealers and galleries, only doing the occasional commission. I learned glass engraving from an Adult Education College course (Peter Dreiser at Morley College, Lambeth, London 1984-6). I have never been to art college. My previous career (to 1983) was in South American historical geography as a researcher and lecturer, having obtained an MA from Cambridge in 1970.

2. Please could you describe your art techniques and style.

See my website. I have my work blown to my design and then cut, polish and engrave the glass. My inspiration varies widely from natural history to the modern urban landscape.

3. Why did you choose glass? What is it that you love about the medium?

Glass is a beautiful material to cut and polish. I particularly like the optical effects that can be obtained in transparent glass. I also love the many techniques of glass engraving, the ancient techniques of copper wheel and stone wheel cutting and the latest developments in diamond wheel and synthetic polishing materials.

4. When did you join CGS?

I joined CGS when it was founded and my number is 115, so I was an early member!

5. Why did you join? What attracted you to the organisation?

I joined CGS to meet other glass artists and to learn more about glass making techniques and art from other members. Not having had any art or glass education other than what I had picked up from Morley College and from having my glass blown for me, I very much wanted to learn from other practitioners. I was already a member of the Guild of Glass Engravers and found that most of the membership of the GGE were not particularly interested in contemporary glass and its potential. CGS offered so much more.

6. What do you get from your membership? (For your business/ personal development? Effect on artistic practise? Enjoyment? Etc)

I enjoy the publications and the website, where I am still learning so much about other glass artists, how talented so many of them are. I also enjoy attending the biennial conferences where the talks are always excellent and on subjects about which I am lamentably ignorant; also these give one the opportunity to meet other members. While CGS may not have influenced my artistic practice, it has introduced many interesting possibilities and enabled me to admire and appreciate so much more of what is going on in contemporary glass. I also use the noticeboard for advertising the occasional courses that I teach and I follow notices about equipment and other exhibitions with great interest. I am always surprised to meet established glass artists who are not members – to me, being a member is essential to my practice and interests.

7. What do you like most about being a member?

Meeting other members and learning about their work.

8. Why would you recommend others join the organisation?

Everyone can learn about something with CGS – they can meet other practitioners, whether beginners or established artists. It is good for students and the latter to meet and cross over ideas regularly – both benefit enormously from talking together, if not working together occasionally. I do consider CGS membership to be good value for money as I use the facilities open to members. If more established artists joined, I feel that the wealth of knowledge and talent on tap would be even greater. So yes, of course I would recommend EVERYONE join.

9. Why do you think patronage of the arts is important?

While I now manage to make a living from selling my work, there is valuable work being done by other committed artists that is not so commercial or saleable and for this very reason, patronage of the arts is vital. Much of the best work takes so much time to make that the prices achieved by the artist for their work is only a fraction of the real cost of making it. There is, after all, a real ‘glass ceiling’ on prices for work in studio glass. Throughout history, such work requires the ardent support of generous patrons.

10. Anything else you would like to add?

Fostering good will and enthusiasm for one’s particular craft is the duty of all those who have benefited from generous teachers and friends along the path of their career. Giving a little back is part of this – which is why CGS has the potential of being the vector for such a movement.

Thanks for your help