NEW APPROACHES TO CREATIVE INTERPRETATION OF INTERNATIONAL BLOWN GLASS SYMPOSIUMS IN LVIV PARTICIPANTS

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The young generation of artists with intention to follow the pioneers of the international studio glass movement, supporting the revolutionary spirit of the phenomenon, goes often to controversial solutions, where basic features of a traditional work of art – form, colour, technology, decorativeness and aesthetics play the least role or are absent at all. Analysing the work of contemporary artists, a change of the direction of the world glass art development is clearly observed as well. The decorative approach to the compositional solution in the 1980’s – 1990’s transmitted smoothly into figurative loading, appearance of installation at the turn of the Millennium. The latest trends, however, demonstrate an active function of conceptual and multimedia solutions on the verge of absence of technique and often basic material as well, or project with expressive social context in the creative work of the next generation of the participants in the studio movement. The basic issue arisen: whether it is time to summarize a half-century era of the international studio movement and diagnose its gradual ending.

The International Blown Glass Symposiums in Lviv became a peculiar catalyst in appearance at contemporary art world arena of a term of ‘Ukrainian author’s glass’ and ‘Ukrainian design of art glass’. The history of International Blown Glass Symposiums in Lviv began in 1989 due to the initiative of one of the founders of the international studio movement at post-socialistic space Andriy Bokotey. The symposiums took place in Lviv every three years and the last 11th in 2019 had been supported by the state Ukrainian Cultural Foundation. The artists, symposium members have the opportunity to work near furnaces with a crew of highly qualified glass blowers. On the results of the work, an exhibition is held, and they exposed the works as an offer for the city. Over 250 artists from 32 countries have already participated in the symposiums. The unique collection of compositions includes over 450 units; it is stored in the funds of Andrey Sheptytsky National Museum in Lviv and Glass Museum in Lviv and is the reflection of modern state of the world glass art.

Nowadays, from the perspective of over a quarter century history of symposium holding in Lviv, it can be firmly stated that exactly this event became a window into the world for post-Soviet Ukrainian glass art. The vast majority of artists
participating in the International Blown Glass Symposia in Lviv belongs to the list of pioneers of the international studio glass movement. Their artistic activity has undoubtedly exert on the development of the Ukrainian school of glass art, design and the performance of glass-making enterprises.

The first installations encountered by the Ukrainian audience of glass art connoisseurs can be considered the creative experiments of Czech virtuoso glass blower, world-famous designer, honorary doctor of Lviv National Academy of Arts Jiří Šuhájek at the 2nd International Blown Glass Symposium in Lviv. Without achieving the expected result in the performance of the author's composition "Woman", the artist, who was never ashamed of the audience's attention, began to chaotically pour hot glass from a pipe onto wooden branches. In the following days, a metal construction was made for the author, and the tireless J. Šuhájek created disorganized expressive chaos for the next few days, attracting the attention of cameras and numerous spectators. Unfortunately, after the work demonstration at the final exhibition at Andrey Sheptytsky National Museum in Lviv in October 1992, the installation ceased to exist literally on the scrapheap, as its transportation and storage was not possible. In the following years, such a fate befell several other authours' works, which for objective reasons could not be preserved, except in the form of photographic fixation for the archive.

In the symposiums of recent years, since the new millennium, there have been sporadic experimental attempts towards conceptual realizations. In 2019, to perform the work entitled The Work of Newcomers, Latvian artist Anna Varnase invited the young people, who have no attitude to glass and have never hold a glass blowing pipe. With a little help from glass blowers, “amateur glass artists” made an object with their own hands, which further was displayed at the exhibition. The entire process of performing was recorded on video, and the visitors of the exposition had with the help of a program, pre-installed on a mobile device, to view a video clip of execution of every object by pointing their camera on a graphic code, placed closely.

On the one hand, the work of the author of the composition is limited to the idea and organization, but not practical performance of a glass object. On the other hand, the issue making the discussions for decades is illustrated - the works of most artists are performed in material by glass blowers, but not the artists by themselves. Torn from the concept of the work, deformed objects of transparent glass have no aesthetic, artistic or other value, except just emotional connection of the artists, “new glass artists”. The only persuasive innovation that is behind the critics is such an interaction popular for the last time, to which contemporary museum connoisseurs and curators of art-projects appeal.

However, the next conceptual composition of the Symposium 2019, provided with the content and form as well, is the work by Japanese artist, permanent participant in the symposiums in Lviv Kazushi Nakada Symvolika "L". The series of blown glass, close to realistic objects – a rocket, phone tube, piggy bank, train cars, a man figure, winged heart, rook chess piece, book and others are the visualization of slogans, which respondents described as the most important things in their life for the present moment (emotions, the underground, communication, books, culture, future, family, money, priorities, war and freedom). The composition is supplemented with a video material with interview, which K. Nakada took in the
streets of Lviv. Such questionnaires the artist realizes in other countries, and in his previous creative work, K. Nakada addresses to realization of similar multiform projects of social character not the first time.

Once again, the participants in 11th International Blown Glass Symposium in Lviv, American artists Angus Powers and James Ronner amused the spectators with their extraordinary and creative charisma. This time, the author’s conception was situated in performative plane: Ronner performed a work near the furnace in inflated red costume, and then he walked in it along the streets of the city. The process was fixed with a camera, and a video material added his exhibited work.

Nowadays we can absolutely state about the establishment of a new direction in artistic glassmaking that is situated on the border of traditional understanding of art object made of glass and conceptual art practices. Simultaneously, it is necessary to realize that appealing to installation, video art, performance or other activities, the authors position their artistic results in the field of glass art.

The “revolution” of the studio movement at the end of the XX century is considered to be a key event in the history of culture and art. Will the gradual displacement of technological innovations, figurative fillings, formal search and as a result the material itself be present at the next stage? Or should the striving for conceptualization and continuous imitation of fashion trends be seen as another round aimed at reorienting the values put in the idea of bringing glass art to a figurative level of artistic perception? Only several years ago, we continued to consider that the studio movement had become a new phenomenon in the world decorative art. Undoubtedly, the next decade of scientific studies will be devoted to entirely new phenomenon of artistic glassmaking that is out of the frames of classical understanding of the principles of studio and will be formed as an independent concept of art discourse in the near future.