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ARTICLES OF **GLASS**

Cover Morwenna Kearsley, photograph of a glass work by Maria Bang Espersen, North Lands Creative collection, 2022
Right Morwenna Kearsley, *Murano Shear*s, 2022

ARTICLES OF GLASS
a portfolio of images by
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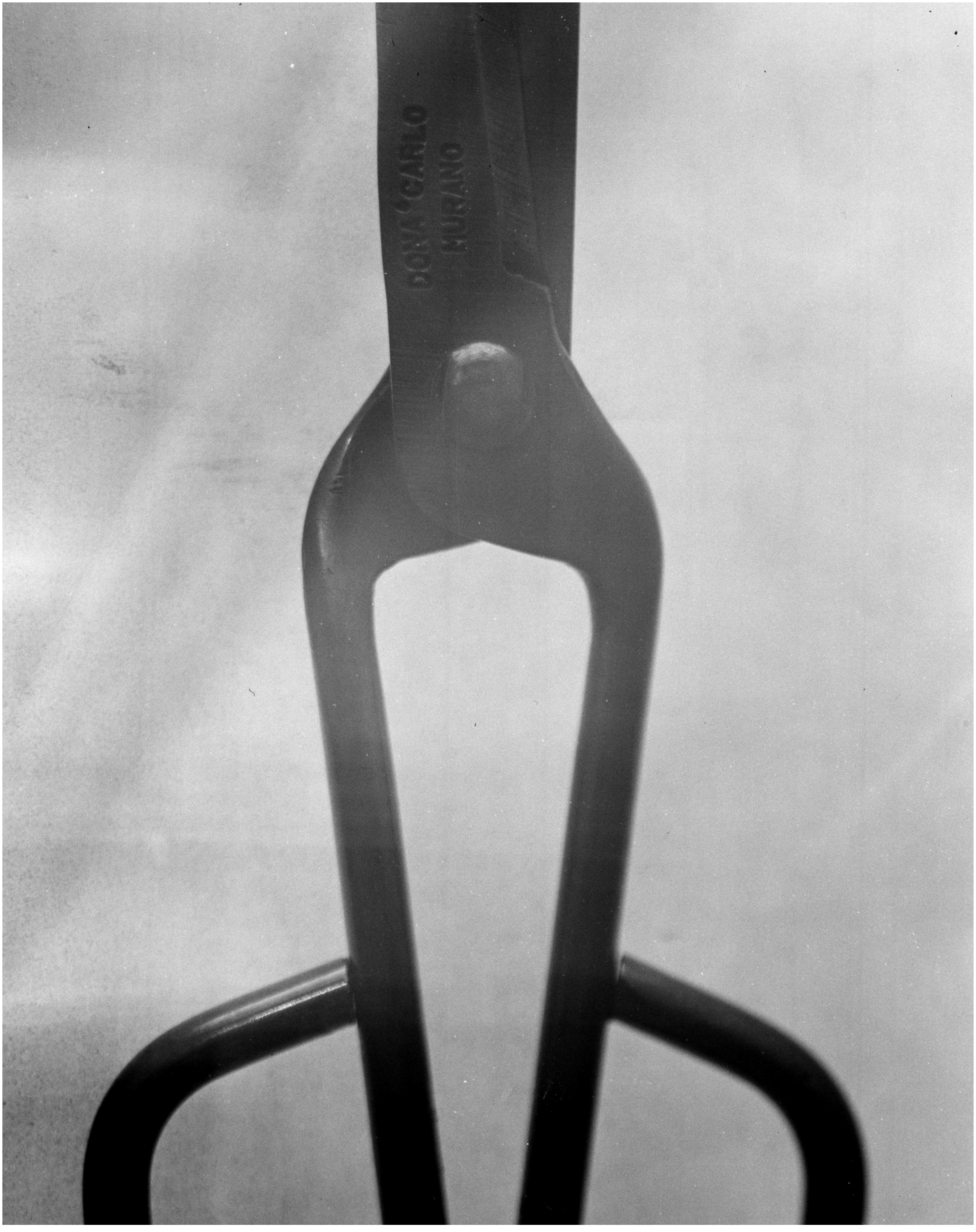
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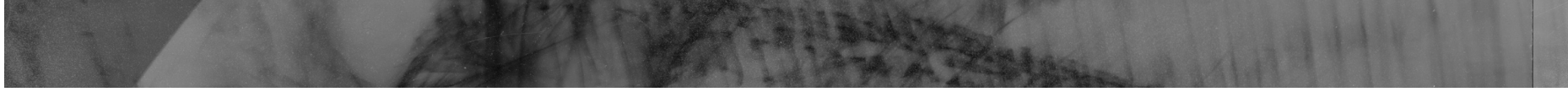

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Paul Stankard, North Lands Creative collection, 2022
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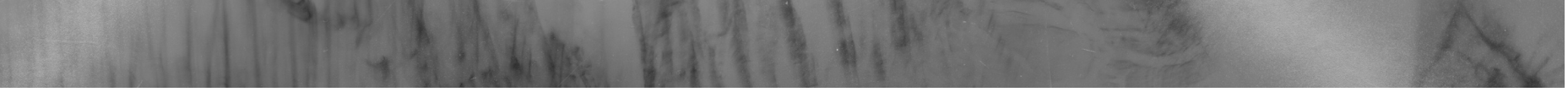

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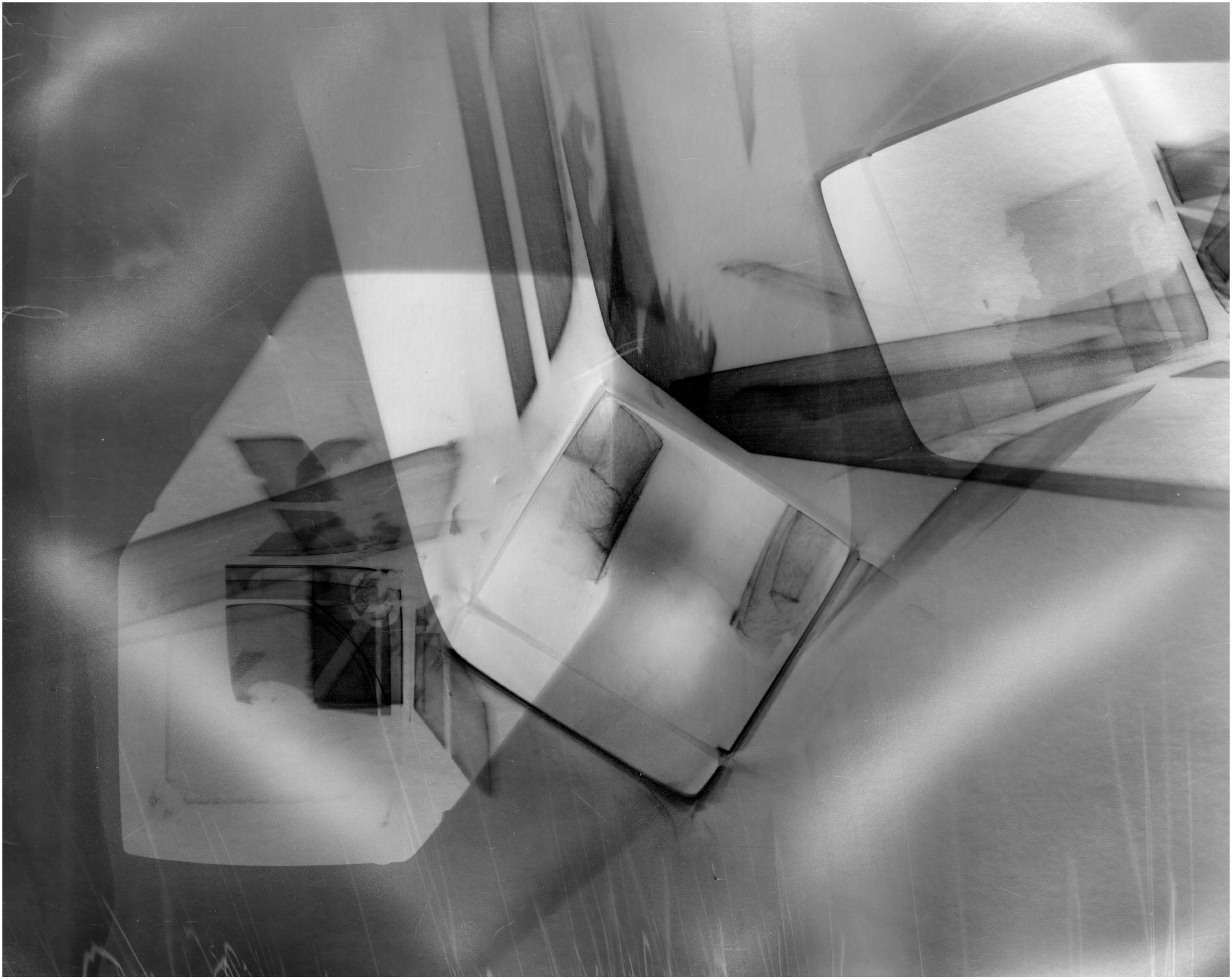
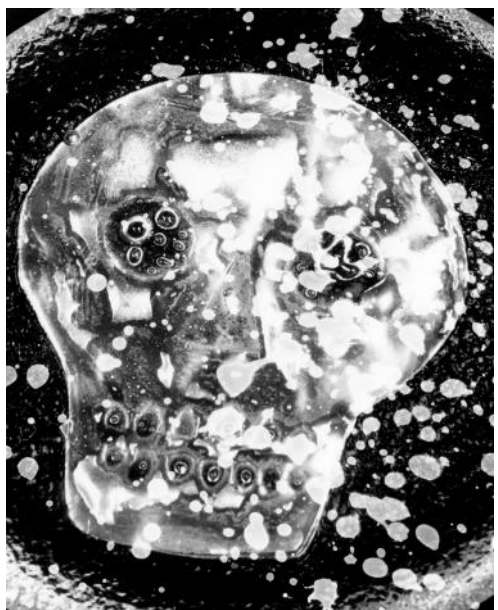
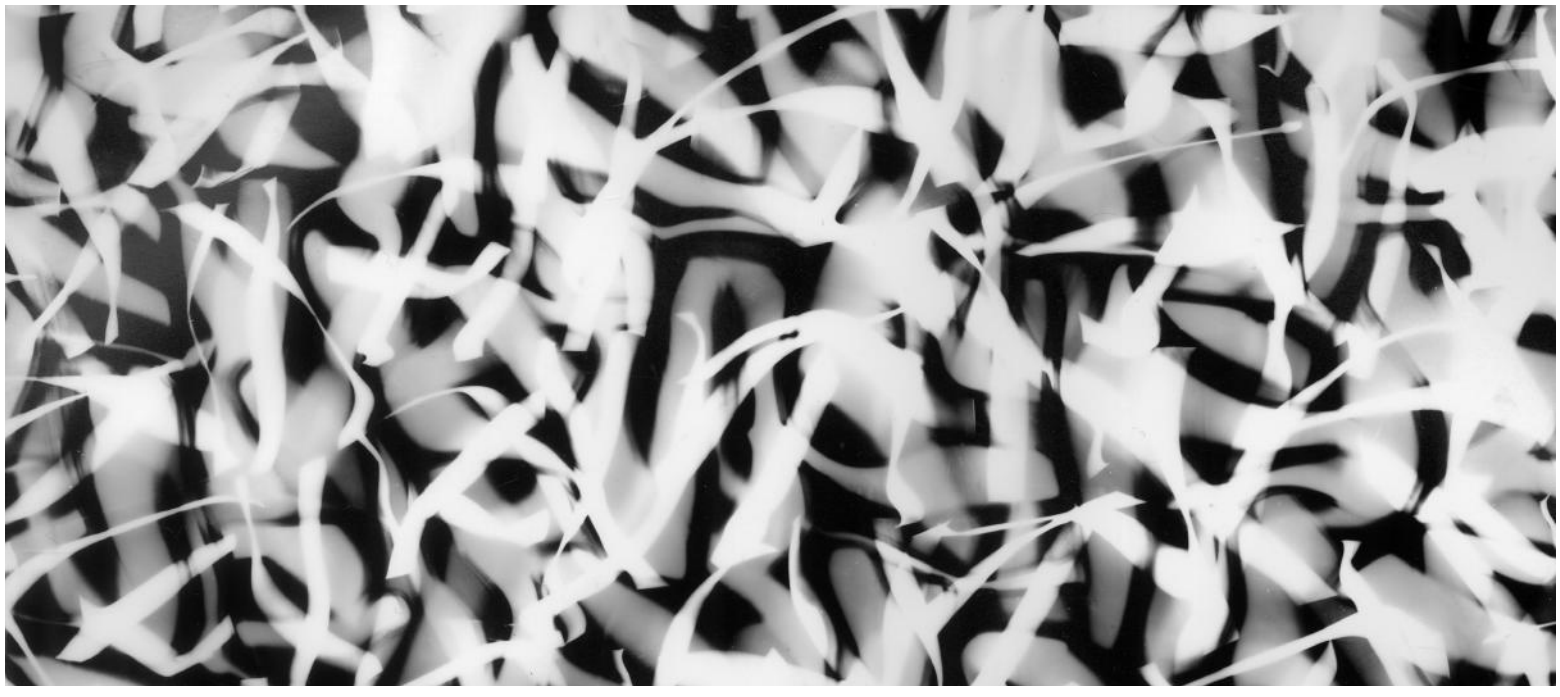


FOREWORD

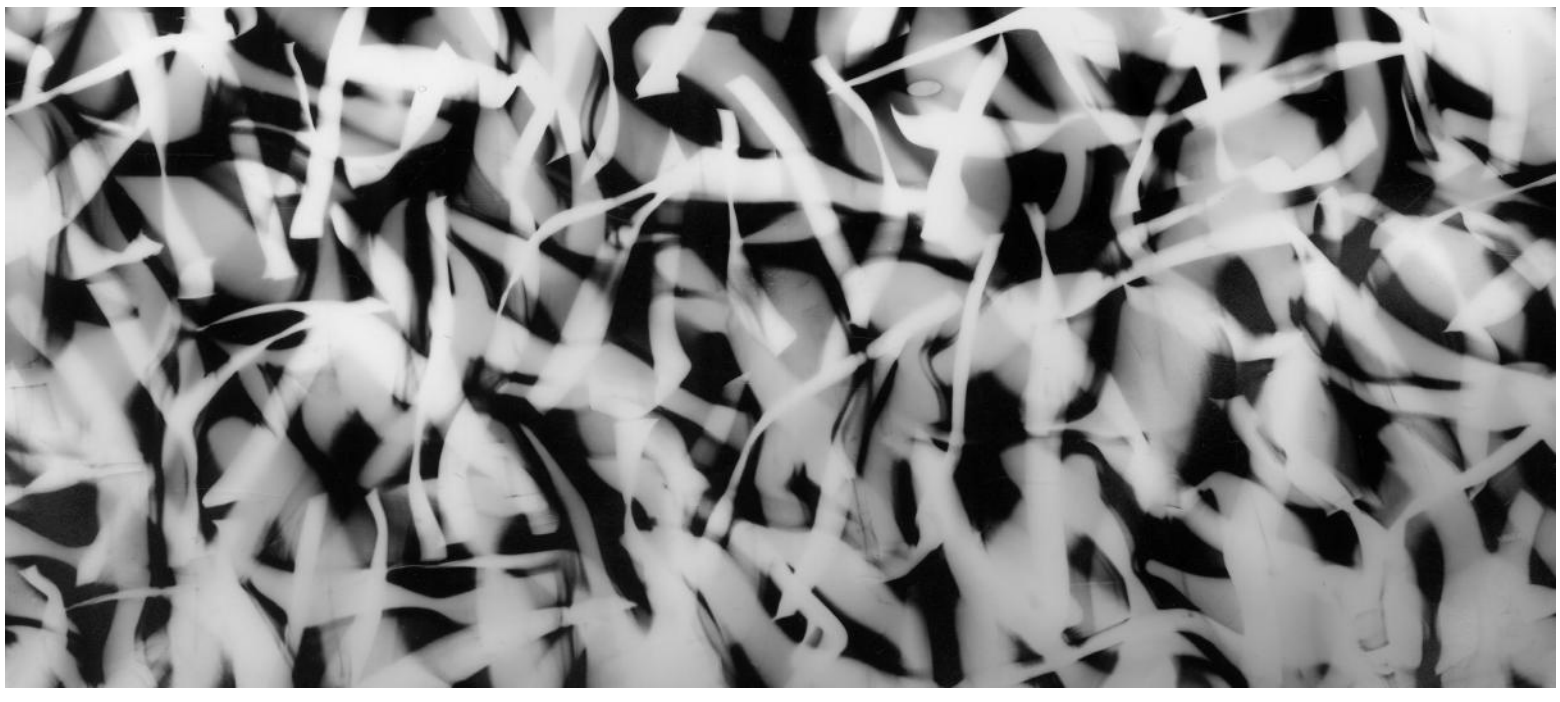
In 2022 I visited North Lands Creative, a glass studio in Caithness, as a photographer in residence. I wanted to think about possible overlaps between glass and analogue photography, both alchemical and practical. Over the course of a month, I watched technicians and artists plan and then bring into being all kinds of intricate, beautiful and beguiling objects. Together, they gathered and shaped the molten glass, enacting a choreography of actions, lodged in muscle memory and performed with a bodily knowledge that is accrued over many years. Similarly, I was making photographs of works in the collection at North Lands Creative, producing replicas of these glass objects using negatives and photographic paper. I also made a series of photograms, created by rolling glass objects over the photographic paper and using torch light in lieu of an enlarger. In this publication, I have brought together a selection of these photograms, with images of glass-blowing tools and interviews by artists and technicians that use glass in their work. These conversations helped me understand more about glass and its properties, as well as expanding my imagination about ways of working collaboratively. Gayle Price, a scientific glassblower at the University of Leicestershire tells me about how an advert in a local paper led her to her trade; Dr. Fiona Byrne, an artist based in Ireland, talks to me about knowledge and ways in which tools and materials are connected to this; Laura Aldridge, an artist based in Glasgow, discusses how she collaborates with a glass blower to create new works based on colour and texture; Sarah Rose, also an artist based in Glasgow, discusses her exhibition *Torpor* and proposes how we might step outside of relentless cycles of production.

Morwenna Kearsley





Interview: **Morwenna Kearsley** and **Gayle Price**



MK: Can you tell me a bit about how you started to work with glass?

GP: Believe it or not it was an advert in the Evening Times. When I left school I didn't really know what I wanted to do, funnily enough I was going to do photography. But, my Dad was saying I needed to get a job and I thought yes, that makes sense. So actually I was training to be a painter and decorator, a YTS skill seeker thing. But then, you know, life gets in the way and I couldn't get to my placement, so I just kind of bounced around. I did security for a while, became a door steward for a couple of years and then I did a bit of PR for one of the clubs that I worked for. But I was 19 and I wanted my evenings back, you know, I wanted to be able to see daylight rather than sleep through it. So, one day I was reading the paper and there was an ad for a satellite unit at Glasgow Uni that was jointly funded with Edinburgh Uni. They were relaunching the Scottish Universities Environmental Research Centre in East Kilbride and they needed a glass blower. They were doing a lot of vacuum lines, so they ran a lot of commercial samples and needed someone on site. They jointly funded the glass blowing apprenticeships. I did four years of an apprenticeship, all on the job training with Wullie McCormack at Glasgow Uni and after that they said, right – that's your workshop now. It was good, every day was different.

MK: Were you excited to be working with glass from the outset or did it take time to build up an appreciation for it?

GP: I didn't know much about glass at the start, I didn't know how it behaved or how to work with it. So, same as anyone else, you start off with something and you're just learning. I'm nearly thirty years in and I'm still learning, I think that's the best way to be. But I remember, you needed to develop really good coordination and good spatial awareness. I must have been a couple of months into the apprenticeship and I thought, oh god this is too hard, I'm too clumsy for this! But Wullie was such a good teacher, and I found a way. With the technique and the discipline itself, you find a way that works for you. I've always said my brains are in my hands! ⮌

"I've always said my brains are in my hands!"

MK: That's such an interesting way to put it, that your that your brains are in your hands. Most of my work is darkroom-based and I feel exactly the same way. Those movements that you make with your hands become muscle memory and are definitely a way of thinking. Can you tell me a bit more about the work you do now (at the University of Leicester)?

GP: Every day is different! I'll get the standard repair requests, so it makes financial sense to have me on staff to do things like repair a condenser. My repair might only cost two pounds, because I'm buying a wee screw thread or something, but to buy a new one would be much more than that. Over the space of twelve months last year, the glass blowing service saved the university something like ninety thousand pounds. Or, I might have someone come to me and say, we're looking at a new way to make a catalyst, for example, and because it's a new way of working they can't just buy something off the shelf. So they need a bit of equipment that can do a specific job and between me and them we'll discuss it and work together to build this thing. It's really nice whenever folk say, I'm not sure you can do this, and I say – nae bother! It's great when you give them the piece of glass I've made and they go away to use it and it either works perfectly or they come back and we modify it. It's the feeling of constantly evolving that I like, how we get there in the end.

MK: Is there a basic shape that you tend to start from?

GP: I buy in basic things like glass tubing or glass rods and then its about how you stick them together, to produce something new or just something really useful. There are certain things, scientific equipment, that I'm having to make all the time and have to be identical every time.

MK: Is there a difference between the objects you produce for scientists and collaborating with artists?

GP: The thing I like about working with artists is that you have that little bit of freedom. They might ask me to do stuff I haven't done before, which is interesting and I'll have a go at it. Sometimes, it can be a bit weird too. I remember when I was working with Freya Jenkins – she came into the workshop and explained her project and had a very definite idea of what she wanted. When I was working with Jilly McFarland and Ruth Singer, they were asking me to work in different ways. To put a fold in the glass, for example, which I thought would give it a horrible finish, but they were like – we want a horrible finish!

MK: Do you use drawing a lot, especially with artists, to get a better idea of the final object?

GP: With artists, I like to get them in, so they can see what I can do. A lot of folk know what they want in theory, but in practice they go, oh I see! So it's just about giving them that little bit of knowledge so they can crystalise what they want. And if it's something I can't do here, I'll refer them to an artistic glass blower. So as far as drawings are concerned, when it's the scientific stuff, drawings are brilliant because people just fill out the form with their drawing on it and with the budget code – most importantly! Then I've got the specific instructions, because they are not there with me when I'm making it.
It doesn't need to be particularly detailed as I generally know what it is they need but with artists, who knows – I've had someone ask me for a glass stag's heart before!

MK: Hahaha that's a great example! Were you able to make it?

GP: It was Wullie that ended up making it. That was Glasgow School of Art, we used to get some smashing stuff in from them, they were brilliant.

"Sometimes, it can be a bit weird too."

MK: What kind of glass do you most commoly use in your job?

GP: Borro silllica. It's the most frequently used glass for laboratory equipments, you'd probably know it as Pyrex. It's got really good resistance to thermal shock, good resistance to chemical attack and it's relatively chemically inert. The most common type is soda lime which is basically pretty much 99% of the glass that you see around you. It's your windscreens, it's your glasses, it's your pint tumblers, it's your windows and all that. It's cheap and cheerful, it melts at a low temperature but optically, it's pretty grim, from a scientific standpoint. It does get used for laboratories glassware because it is very cheap, so they tend to use it for multiple things, like measuring cylinders and pipettes and things like that. The best stuff is quartz glass and it's 99% silica, so it's really, really pure. It's what used for telescope lenses and microscopes, there's no crap in there to obscure it. It's really good stuff but it melts at a ridiculously high temperature and because its so pure, its quite brittle too so it's only used for limited applications. ⮌

MK: And in terms of tools, what are your most commonly used ones?

GP: Well yeah, you do get specific glass blowing tools. I have fairly heavy duty tweezers that are quite long, that I use on the lathe. But a lot of the tools, I make myself. The main ones I make are from carbon – reamers, flats, paddles and things like that. Carbon is heatproof and the glass doesn't stick to it. You can get a lot of sort of specialised tools but a lot of the time you don't really need them unless you're doing something really specific. I prefer carbon but my predecessor preferred to use brass. I think because brass is metallic it leaves residue on the glass, so whenever you heat it up you can see there's bits of brass in it, which could cause pinholes and then a leak. You want your glass to be as clean as possible really and carbon is the best thing for that.

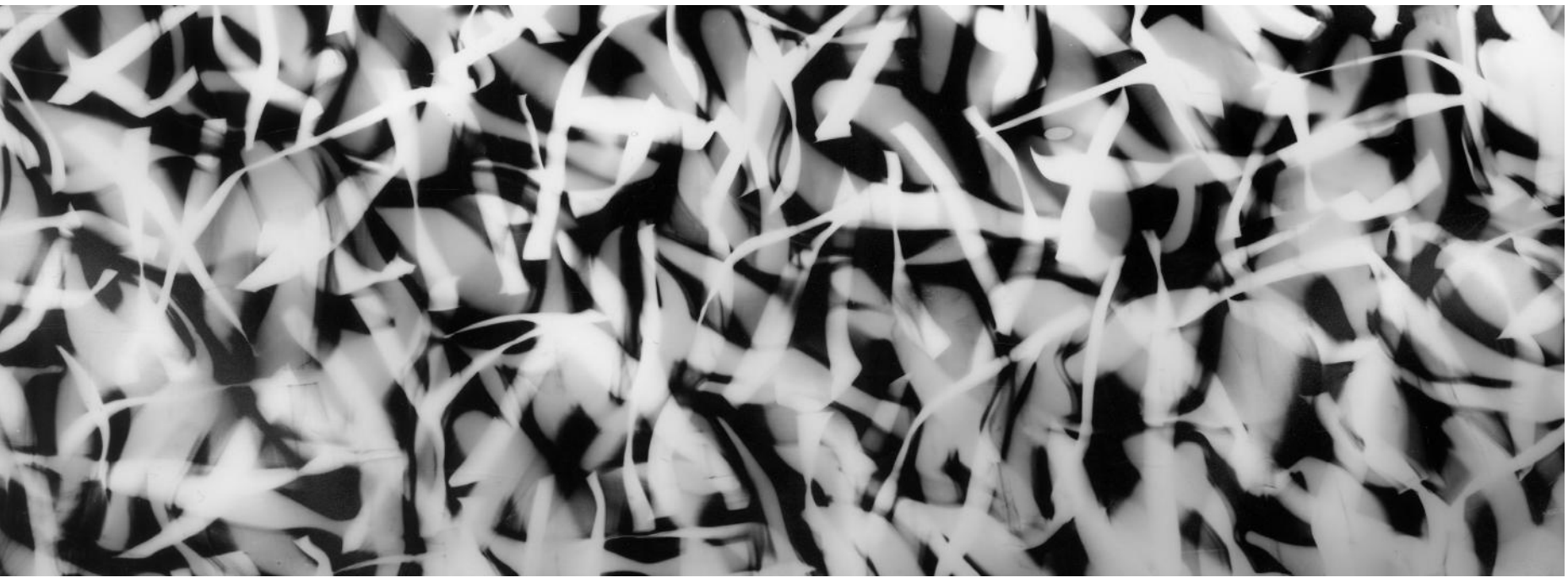
MK: You've compared working with glass to sculpting with light, which is also how I think about working with photography, particularly analogue photography. Could you talk a little more about working with a material like that, one you can't see?

GP: I think the biggest challenge is that glass will get stressed, but you can't actually see the stress in the glass unless you put it under a polarizing filter. So, you need to be aware of how much it can take before you put it through the furnace to anneal it, to take the stress out of it. If you look at it through a polarizing filter it lights up, you can see where the stress is, it lights up pink and blue and if it's really stressed you get these big white bits. But obviously, if you're not familiar enough with your material you won't know how bad that is, so you need to have an awareness of how to mitigate that as best as you can. Whenever I started, my boss, he'd be showing me and going – look at the wall thickness of the glass there and I'd be like, I'll take your word for it! But then as time goes on, you notice the way that the light bends and refracts and you get to know little colour changes, and when you know what you're looking for you can go – right that's too thin or that's too thick whatever, or that's not been heated enough because it's crystallised so its gone a bit foggy. So, its familiarity. It's not something you can just read a book about and go – right, I know what I'm doing. And, you know, you have to fail. You have to go past the correct point and have something fall apart or crack for you to know how much it can take, so it's just experience.

"But a lot of the tools, I make myself."

MK: How would you describe glass?

GP: It depends what I'm working on at the time... sometimes it's just a bunch of four letter words! Honestly, glass is one of those things that is as important to the modern age as things like language and healthcare. We've only really been making things with glass, from a scientific point of view, since the sixteen hundreds. It's still in its infancy, given the length of time people have been making other things from glass. You try and think about a substitute for it, before plastics – things like blowing glass bulbs for pharmacy or vaccines, telescopes, microscopes, where plastic wouldn't work and you think, if it weren't for glass, where would we be? Would we know about the stars, about astronomy, what stage would medicine be at, and hygiene? When they started to put in glass windows into homes in the UK, people were getting light into their houses and suddenly you could see dirt! Suddenly its not all candlelight and people start thinking – ok I need to wash the floor! These wee things which all add up to where we are now, as a society and as a civilisation. You don't really see glass, because its everywhere. It's just a fantastically versatile and essential part of society. You wonder what the world would look like without it. ◻

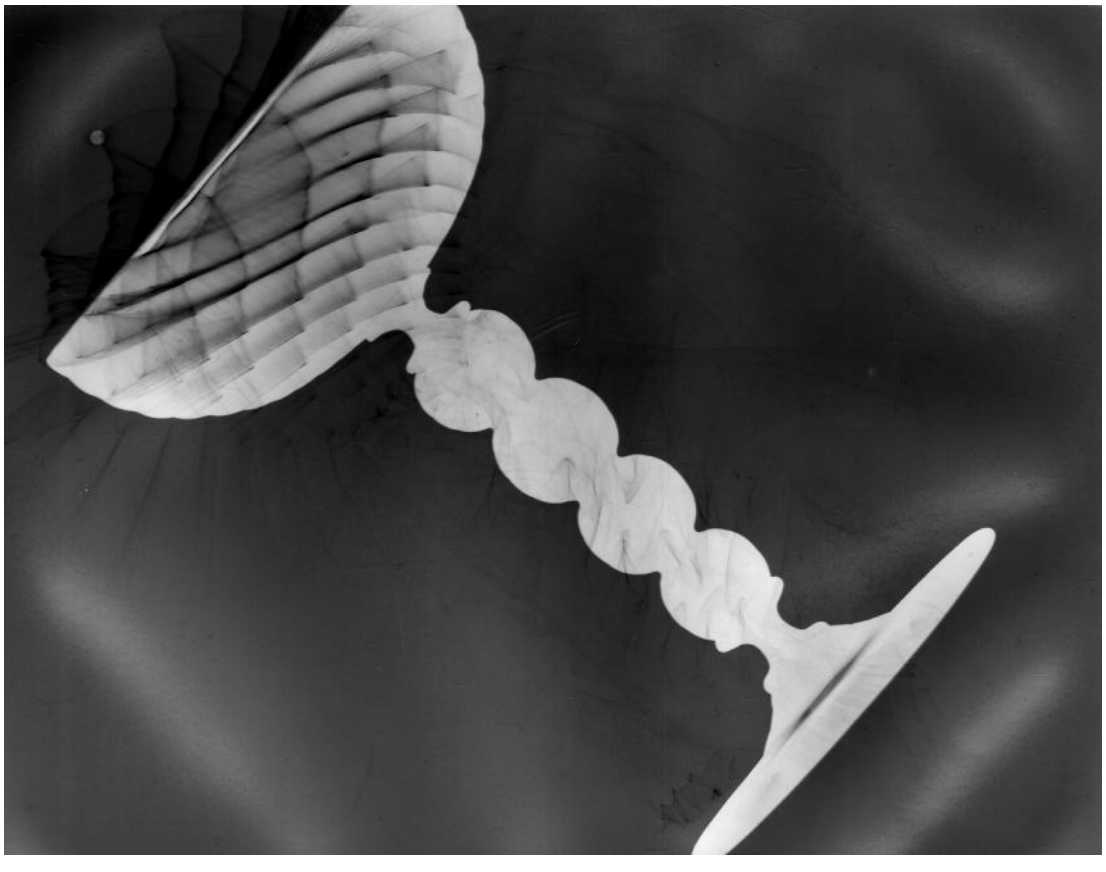


TRANSPARENT, LUSTROUS, HARD & BRITTLE

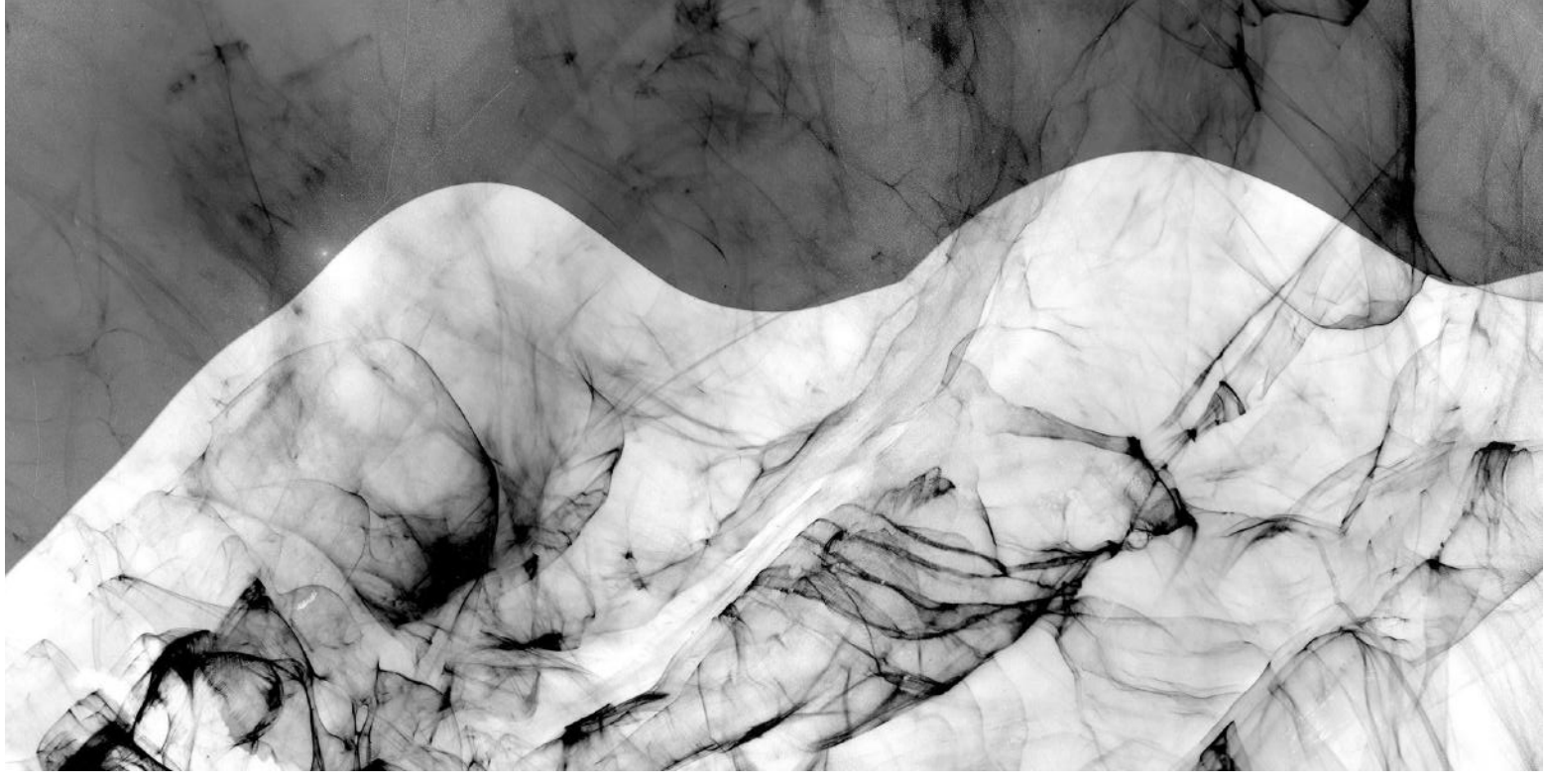
Morwenna Kearsley

When you take a picture on a large-format camera, you throw a dark cloth over your head and view the prospective image via a ground glass screen at the back. The subject, squeezed through the eye of the camera lens, appears to you upside down and back to front on the glass. This disorientation is a gentle reminder that what you are participating in is an act of translation. Like Alice, once you look through glass, the world as you once knew it is transformed. The photograph, not unlike glass, is often simultaneously invisible (due to its ubiquity) and highly noticeable (it is a container of sorts). Glass is not only needed for many photographic applications, it's also the subject of some early 19th century photographs. William Henry Fox Talbot, the English inventor of the calotype process which facilitated the duplication of a single image, made a photograph ⮌

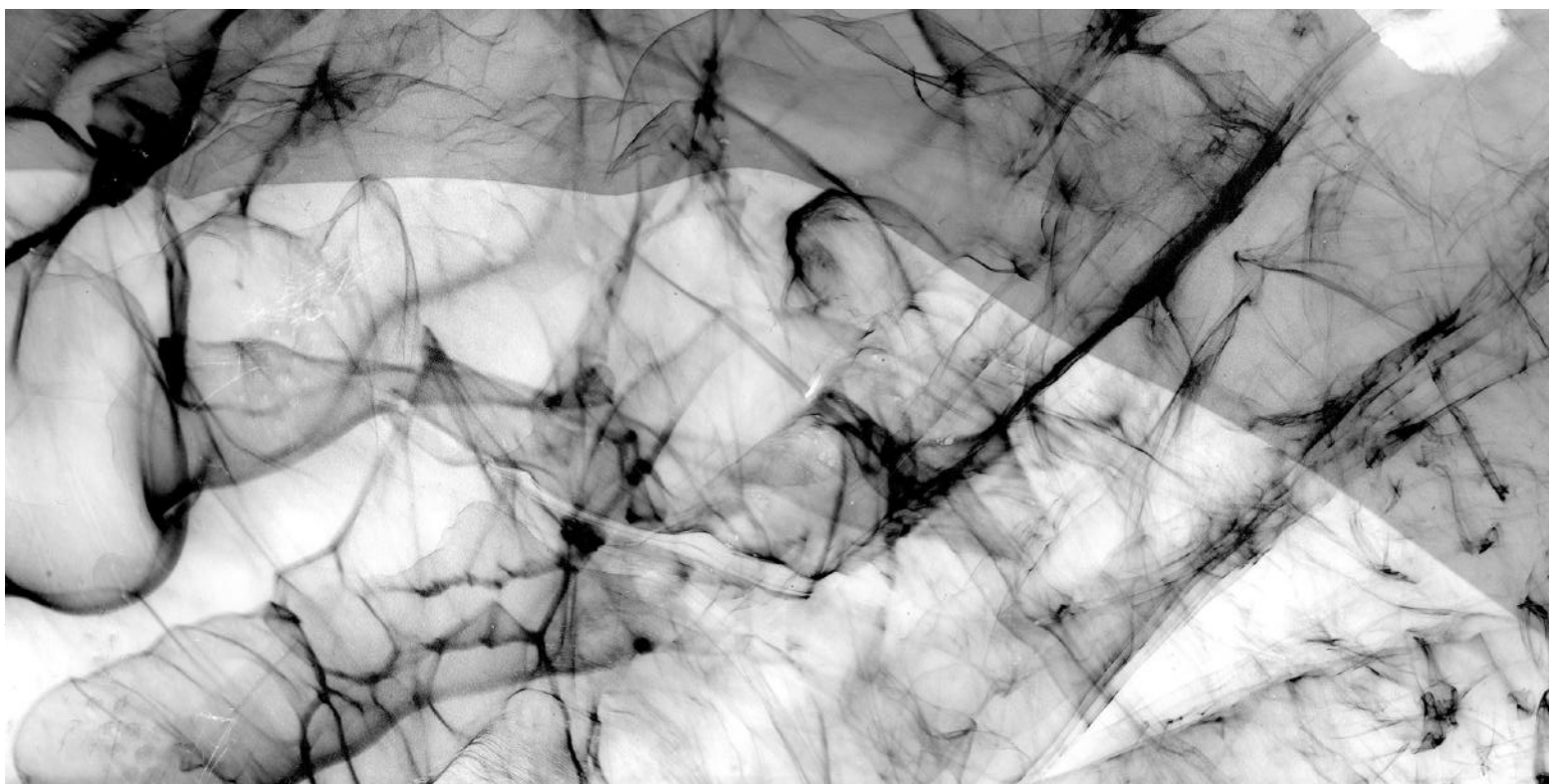
Previous page Morwenna Kearsley, photograph of a goblet, North Lands Creative collection, 2022
Opposite Morwenna Kearsley, photograph of a glass work by Dante Marioni (detail), North Lands Creative collection, 2022
Right Morwenna Kearsley, *Uncommon Tools*, 2022
Left Morwenna Kearsley, photogram detail
Below Morwenna Kearsley, photogram of a goblet, North Lands Creative collection, 2022



in 1844 which he titled *Articles of Glass*. Goblets and decanters are lined up on three shelves, one above the other, their lustrous surfaces illuminated by the light. I think about Talbot, looking at this image as it appeared upside down on his ground glass screen, from underneath the black cloth. This new technology which allowed for such uncanny draftsmanship must have dramatically changed his relationship to the material world, as it continues to do. 178 years later, I took contemporary articles of glass from within the collection at North Lands Creative, also stored on shelves and made by artists from all over the world. I placed each object in front of my camera, using light and glass and silver to make a picture on a modern negative, a direct descendant of Talbot's process. Looking at them upside down on the back of my camera, or holding a negative up to the light, I feel that same mixture of awe and curiosity that I always have when I see an image come into being. It must be something shared with glass-makers, as they open the door to the annealer to see for the first time what was once molten, now solid. A transformation not just in material form but something metaphysical too, which connects us to ideas that have been explored and repeated over centuries, countries and cultures. □



Interview: **Morwenna Kearsley** and Dr. Fiona Byrne



MK: You and I met at North Lands Creative in Caithness in 2022. We were both doing residencies there although mine was photography-related, and you were there making a new series of sculptural works. How did you get into working with glass?

FB: I went to art college and thought I'd do fashion or painting. I wasn't exposed to craft so when I saw the glass studio I thought – well, when am I ever going to get the chance to do this again and I was young and clearly had no foresight into career prospects! I had no idea how niche it actually was! So, we did a first year where you try everything and I really liked making and doing things in 3D and that was the feedback I was getting – that I should be making things in 3D. I didn't want to do sculpture as that was really video-based at that time... or cardboard and piles of stuff on the ground... they weren't teaching you a specific skill, it wasn't like bronze casting or stone carving. It was very conceptual, which is fine but I was eager to learn tangible skills, so I went into what was called CGM – glass, metal, ceramics. You did a year working with each and then you specialised, and I picked glass.

MK: How would you describe your relationship to glass?

FB: It's an ongoing relationship, an on off relationship! I completely gave up on it at one point and sold all my glass tools! It's very intense – working in a studio full time is amazing and I've done that twice for three years or so at a time but it's full on and the community is very small. It's like a really intense family so I'm always trying to figure out how I can work in that space and feel part of it but not get overwhelmed. It's a bit like a kitchen – it's really hot, it can be stressful, and the stakes are high because glass is an expensive medium to work in... but it's also great and that's what I love and hate about it.
The material itself is absolutely magic and infuriating! Trying to persuade it to do what you want it to do is not the easiest! I would say I know a lot about glass compared to a normal human but not in comparison to a real glass nerd. My skill level technically is nothing compared to people who have gone through a French glass school, or the German school in Zwiesel – they do technique, and they just focus on glass blowing, whereas we studied lots of techniques in less detail. ↩

"I had no idea how niche it actually was!"

In America, they are on another level in terms of their facilities and access. We don't have an open access space in Ireland. I always feel like a bit of an imposter when I say I'm a glass blower because I know there are people who are in the studio every day, practising, producing.

> *"... if they are making a goblet as opposed to big sculptural pieces they are going to have really different tools..."*

MK: Do you feel like that has pushed you into a more complicated relationship with the material?

FB: Well, it's interesting. I'm working with two women at the moment, and we all come from slightly different directions and have different relationships to the material. One is more of a visual artist working with glass and the other has always worked in glass production and has only recently started making her own work, she uses her illustrations to make beautiful engravings on to glass. And then there's me, who has art college training but is probably leaning more into the making. So, there's all these different ways to come at it and we've been talking about that – what's "glass art" versus "art" versus "sculpture" and where do we fit into the world? I guess my way of dealing with that is not to try and find the label or the bit of the art world that I fit into but rather try to define it on my terms, what I do and why I'm doing it. I've come back to my practice after a bit of a break so I'm a bit more conscious of what I've been doing now I've come back to making. My way of making is very slow and I don't want or need to make a lot to say the things I want to say.

MK: You've written about making as an extension of the embodied mind, an externalisation of the act of knowing. So, I wondered if you could talk about how the tool functions in relation to your body and knowing the material?

FB: I think glass has this parallel to photography, which is where I think you got sucked in. By that I mean you can't touch the thing you are making, most of the time, in the hot glass studio anyway. And in the cold glass studio you don't shape it with your hands, you shape it with a wheel or a saw or a piece of sandpaper. There's always a tool involved, that could be a spoon if I'm making pâte-de-verre or a block made from any random bit of wood I can find. It's always that bridge or connector between you and the material. And it has to be the right thing for whatever it is you want to do to the material but it also has to be the right thing for your body. At college, we had a lot of old tools from an old factory and they were for big men and difficult for me to use (not that I knew any different at the time!). So that's one of the reasons people are protective of their own tools, not only are they very specific to whatever kind of work they make – if they are making a goblet as opposed to big sculptural pieces they are going to have really different tools and they will have bought the version of that tool that they really like the weight of and the feel of. People like particular tool-makers and particular styles. When I was in Berlin recently, I bought a pair of jacks from a Japanese maker, they are just so beautiful to work with, even if I feel they are too nice for my skill level! We often have to make tools to do a specific job, like if you want to drill a hole in a piece of hot glass you might just get a normal drill and insert a piece of sharp metal, or find something in the studio that will help you do what you want to do – it's always a bit of a MacGyver scenario. It's exactly the same with casting too – it's the idea of building up an environment that allows you to do the things you want to do. ↵

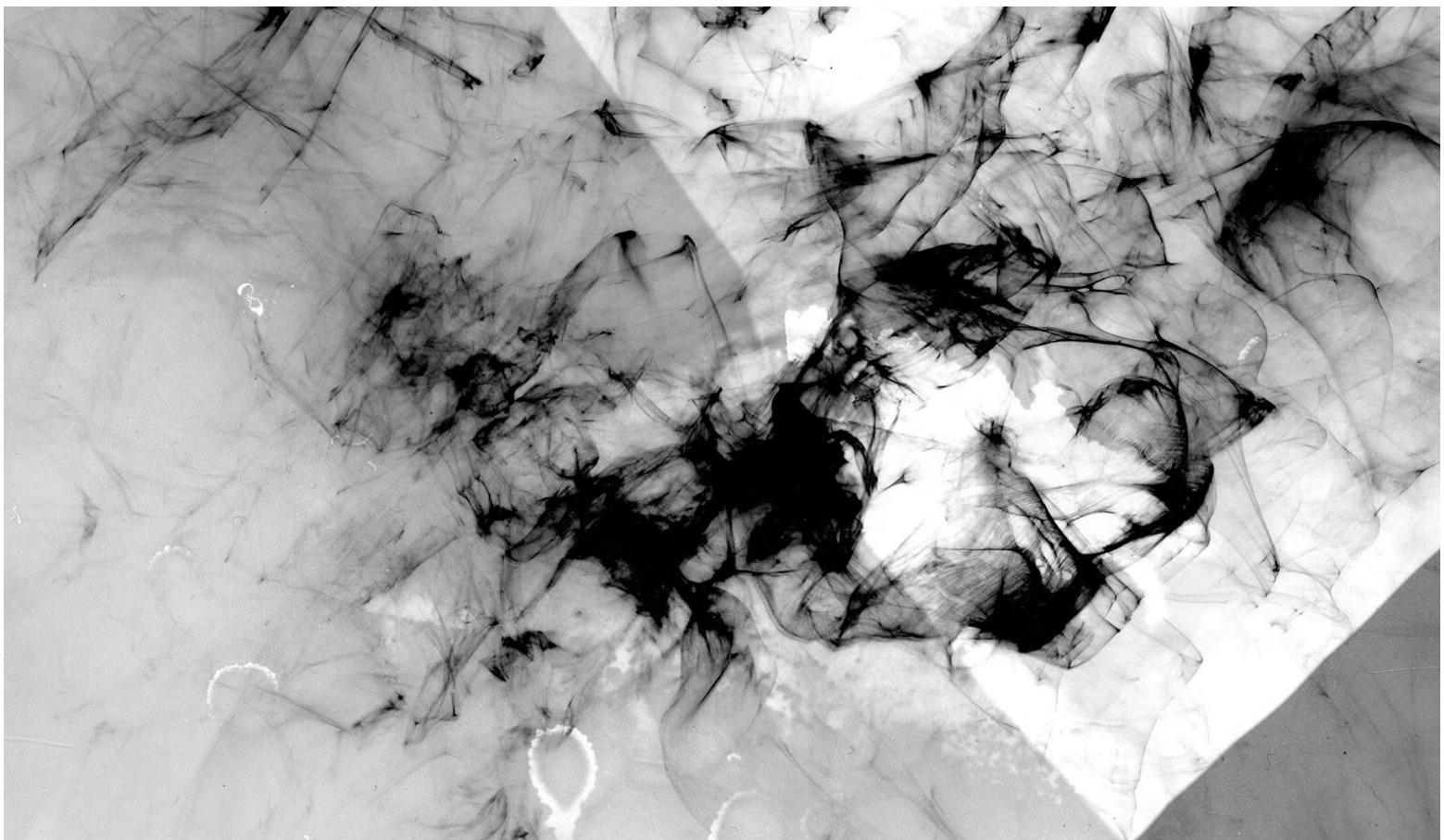
“... drawing is an added layer that helps you communicate.”

MK: Yes, it’s the same for me. There’s always particular cameras or bits of equipment that I modify or use differently. I often draw out my idea for a picture before I make it and then figure out what tools or methods I need to use to bring that image into being, although it’s never the same as the drawing. Could you talk a bit more about drawing in relation to your practice?

FB: Yes, I do use drawing a lot. There are some people who have a lot of regular access to facilities, that don’t use drawing and can do that thinking directly with the material, which is beautiful. But I can’t, so I do a lot of drawing! If I’m going into a studio, I have a limited amount of time, so I need to know what I want to make and how long it’s likely to take and how I’m going to actually make the piece. I can draw it out step by step and show it to someone for advice or to talk it through to whoever is helping me. It’s hard to explain these things with words. On the tv show Blown Away you always see them drawing away on the floor with chalk, one reason being you don’t want loads of paper around near fire, but it’s not just a tv thing, it’s a real thing glass blowers do. Most people working in 3D are visual, so drawing is an added layer that helps you communicate. Because everyone needs to know where they need to be and what they are doing, as people are working together. It’s another way of thinking, I guess.

MK: Could you talk a little more about the ideas and motivations behind your work?

FB: Sure, I tend to do a lot of research into a topic or idea to get started, it could be a type of shell or a concept like misguided exceptionalism. But, generally looking at ideas around knowledge, how we build up an understanding of the world, and the role of materials, making and objects within that. This is tied very closely to body and place for me. The embodied knowledge used to turn materials into things, and the places that those materials come from. There is also a history of forms in craft that are very tied to place too. So for instance in one body of work I was looking at an Irish marine biologist from the 18/1900s and exploring how the physicality of making could bring her story to life in places where the historical records presented gaps. Another project I worked on was during a residency in a town, Farnham, in the UK. Here I did a workshop with local makers, we created knowledge and language together through mark-making on paper and clay. I took this, with the experiences and research I had done in the town for a month, and created a series of works about making as an ecosystem. So the common threads are always there even if the 'ways in' are often quite different. I guess my main goal is really to get people to consider the world around them as intelligent, and that our knowledge is a collaboration. Trying to spark some empathy or a new appreciation for our limited resources, with that invitation to move more consciously through the world. Even as that becomes increasingly hard to do. ◘



a portfolio by **Morwenna Kearsley**

UNCOMMON TOOLS

In the July 1955 issue of Fortune magazine, the American photographer Walker Evans published the photoessay titled *Beauties of the Common Tool*. His deceptively simple, elegant photographs present a range of hand tools, describing them with pin-sharp focus and a neutral grey backdrop. His photographs and the accompanying text exalt the perfect simplicity of the hand tool, which "lure the eye to follow its curves and angles, and invites the hand to test its balance." This connection to the hand and to the function of the tool, described through form, connect it to forms of haptic knowledge. Many glass-blowing tools speak to their purpose in a similar way: the twist of the diamond shears predicts its effect on molten glass; the flat tweezers will inevitably squeeze; the taglia will shape and sculpt. But there are others, to be found in a glass-blowers tool box, that are unique and fashioned for a particular job that only the maker and the tool are privy to. I decided to photograph a series of glass blowing tools, borrowing in small ways from Walker Evans' original series. Put together into a typological grid, these common and uncommon tools form a grammar of sorts. Or resemble artefacts uncovered from an archeological dig. The tool becomes a proxy for the hand, an extension of bodily knowledge. □

No. 1 Callipers

No. 2 Brush

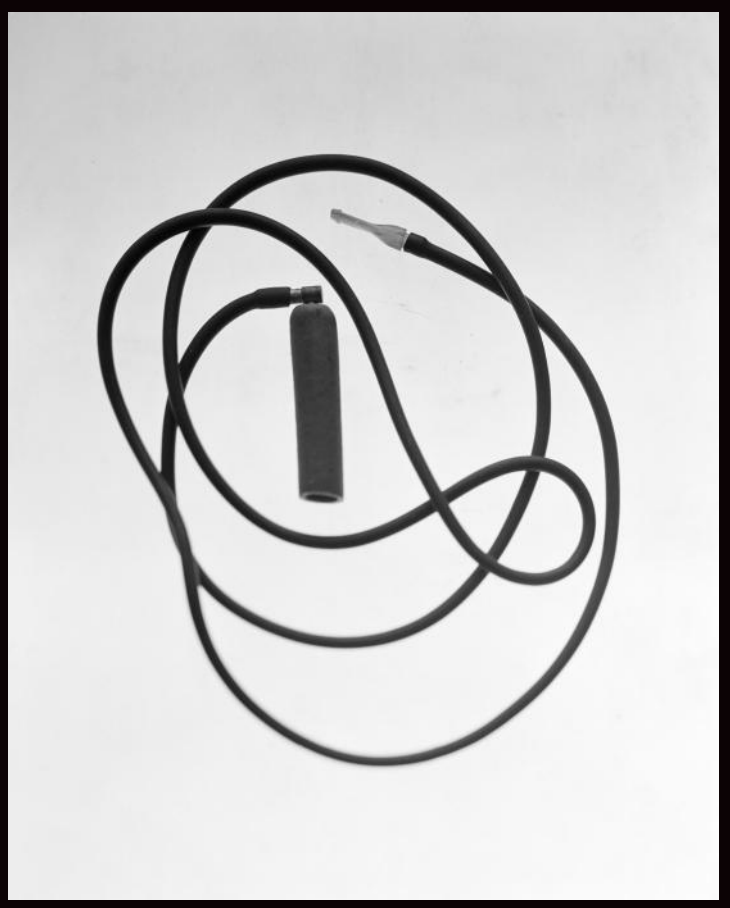
No. 3 Diamond Shears

No. 7 Paddle

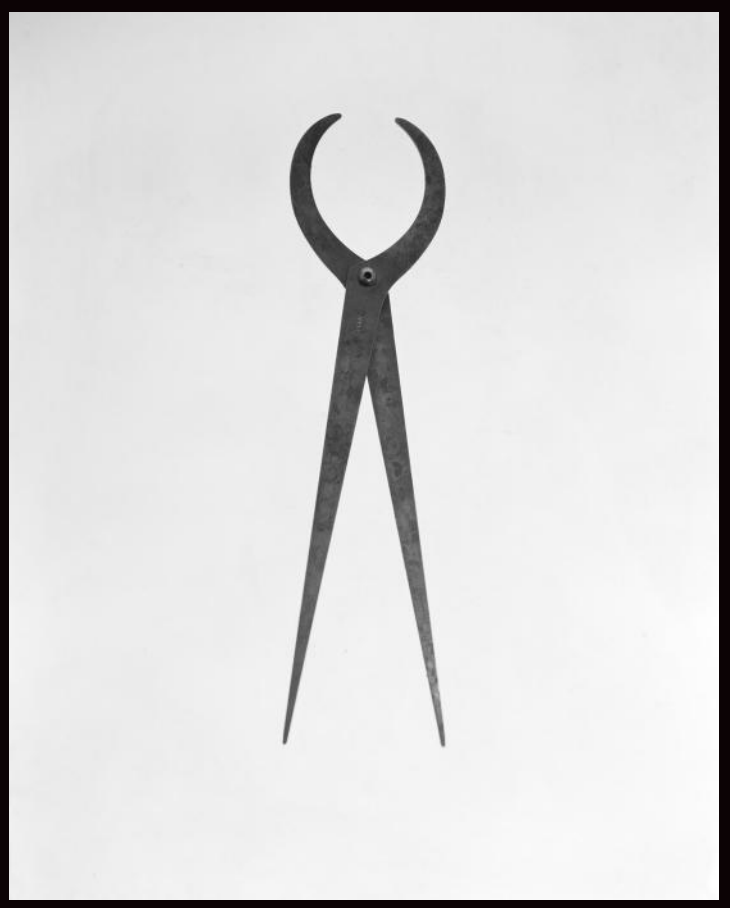
No. 8 Straight Shears

No. 9 Flat Tweezers

No. 4 Blow Hose



No. 5 Pi Callipers

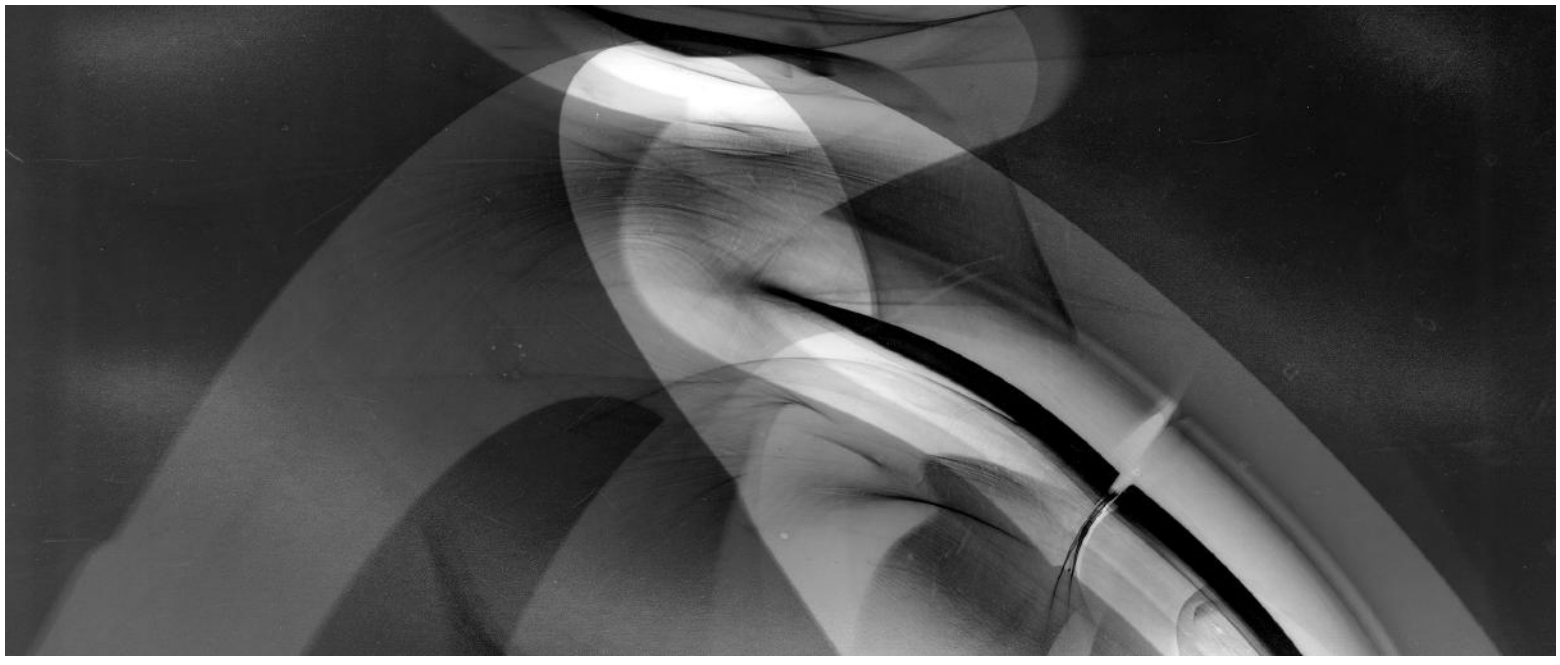


No. 6 Taglia

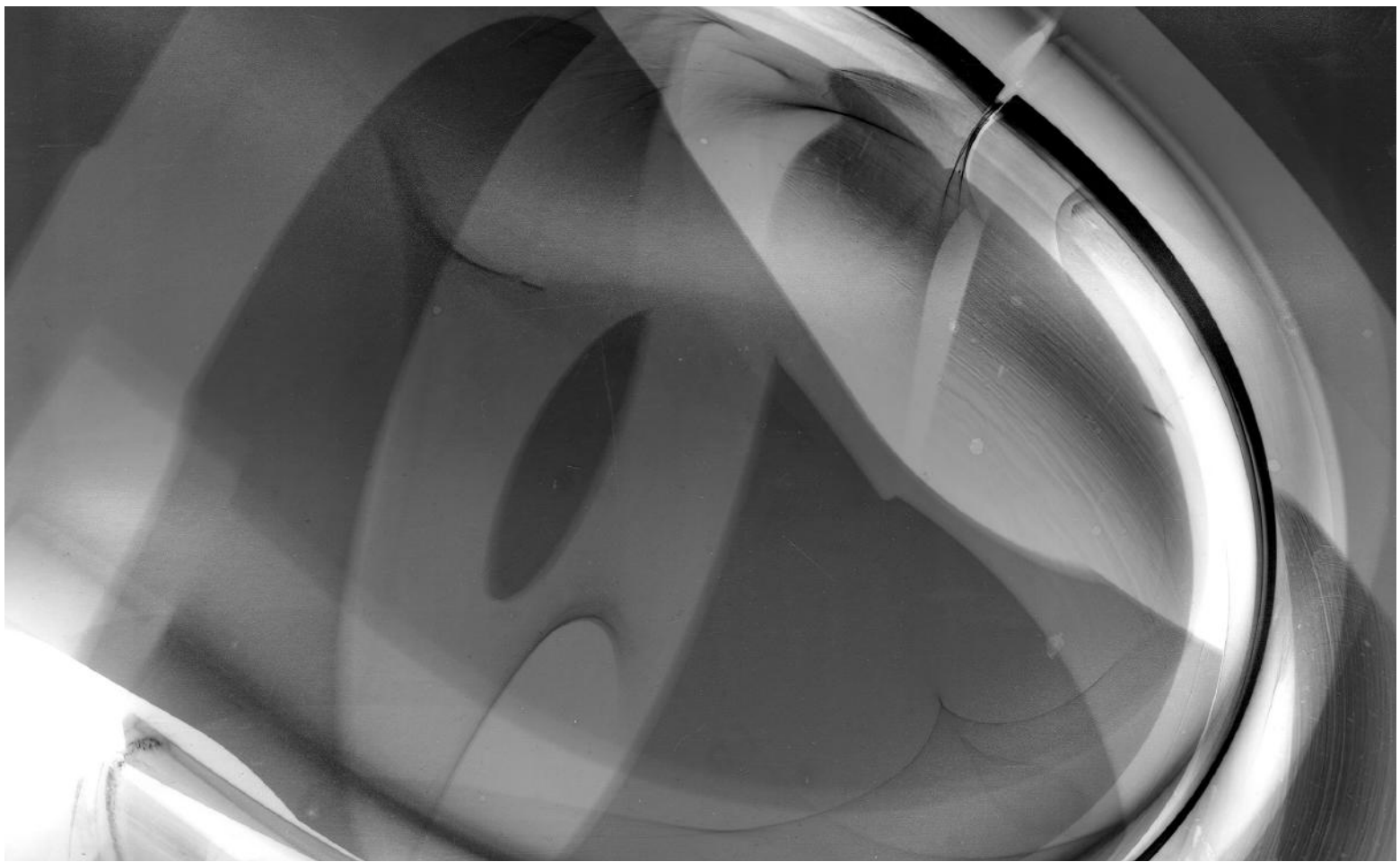
No. 10 Cup Shears

No. 11 Handmade Tool

No. 12 Small Brush



Interview: **Morwenna Kearsley** and **Laura Aldridge**



MK: You bring together lots of different types of materials, textures and colours in your work. I wanted to know a little bit about how you first started incorporating glass into your exhibitions?

LA: I first started working with glass around 2016 or 2017. For me, it usually goes one of two ways: sometimes I have an idea and then figure out which material will bring it to life, and other times the material itself sparks the idea. Back then, I wanted to make these large pieces based on the evil eye, which is often white and blue. I experimented with loads of materials, but nothing had the same qualities as glass. It's a bit like the difference between digital and analogue photographs – there's something about how glass holds light that makes it so compelling.

The thing was, I had zero experience with glass. I tried everything else with some level of transparency - resins, plastics, you name it – but it became clear really quickly that it had to be glass. The next step was finding someone who would not only understand what I was trying to do, but also be willing to try it. I had one test piece made that didn't feel right, and then I found Stewart Hearn, who I still collaborate with now. He really got it.

When I work with other people, I don't like to be super prescriptive, I'm not saying, "I want this exact thing." It's more about leaving space in the process. I've learned that sometimes I don't fully know what I want until I see it physically, so having that openness is important.

MK: How does it work between you and the person blowing the glass? Do you use drawings?

LA: It's always a conversation for me – I use a lot of drawing too. You can usually tell quite quickly if you're able to work with someone, just by how they respond to your request. When I first started working with Stewart, he was really open and thought the idea sounded interesting, and that's how our working relationship began. We've worked together ever since, most recently on my show at Jupiter Artland (*Lawnmower*, 2024). That process was mostly phone calls and emails, going back and forth: I'd describe what I had in mind, and he'd say whether he thought it was possible. ⮌

"... there's something about how glass holds light..."

Stewart has an incredible wealth of knowledge, and I've learned a lot from him. At the same time, I've also been learning by working with glass myself. Recently, I've been experimenting with slump glass, which I now realise is a much simpler process than glassblowing. It's helped me understand the material's limits, so I know from the start how far I can push it. I like having those limitations – they shape the work in a way. I'm not interested in forcing materials to do the impossible; I prefer when the material itself helps guide the decisions.

Sometimes Stewart doesn't have the exact colour from my drawings, but he'll say, "I've got a load of this leftover, could we use it instead?" That's part of the conversation too. Recycling and using what's already there matters to me, so we often try to match my ideas and colours to what's available. I don't like waste, and I don't want to make anyone's life more difficult than it has to be. That's why our communication – drawings, colour samples, images, back and forth – is so important.

I also think Stewart enjoys these projects, because they give him the chance to do something outside his usual work. I always encourage him to be playful, to extend or enlarge things if he thinks it'll work better. Sometimes the pieces that come back are exactly like my drawings, and other times they take a sidestep. Either way, it's exciting - I never quite know what I'm going to find when I open the box.

MK: You were talking earlier about how glass reacts with light and it strikes me as a central concern for everyone working with glass. In terms of how the material holds light or refracts light or lets lights through. How does it change your work, when you add a glass element to it and therefore, light?

LA: For me, it's also about thinking of light as a material. Glass isn't really glass without light – light should be on the materials list, because the two are inseparable. What I love is that glass is always in flux: it looks different depending on the time of day and the quality of the light. That really appeals to me, because while glass seems like a fixed object, it actually has this fluidity. You can almost endlessly melt it down and re-form it, in a way you can't with something like ceramics.

In my own work, I never think of a piece as "finished." I always see it as something that could be reconfigured. Glass carries an energy that isn't static. I'm looking at a piece in my studio right now and I can literally see the light shifting across it – it changes in front of me, and that's exciting to watch.

"What I love is that glass is always in flux..."

MK: You recently did a show in New York and I was really drawn to those elements where you're bringing together slumped glass and wood and natural dye. Can you talk more about it?

LA: Slumping is basically when you layer sheets of glass and they fuse together in the kiln. I'm only just starting to learn about it. It can do really unpredictable things – but of course, the more you work with it, the more you can anticipate how it behaves. What I like is that it feels a bit like collage or screenprinting: you can overlay shapes and colours. Colour runs through all of my work, so this feels like a new way to use it. It's still early days,I'm just playing with it.

There's a glass artist in Glasgow called Tessa MacKenzie with a studio where I can book a little table, and I go in to experiment. It's great because I get to use her off-cuts and scraps, so it feels very low-pressure, just testing things out. For the New York show, I decided to use slumped glass because I wanted a material that felt completely different. The other works were ceramics combined with fabric, and I'd also added wedges made from wood. Then I thought: what material could sit in conversation with the wood? Introducing glass, something that brings light and transparency to the solidity and opacity of wood just made sense to me.

MK: They have so much energy on the wall! Is there a vocabulary of shapes that you tend to start with when you are thinking about producing new glass works?

LA: I usually start from ovals and circles, but it would be interesting to explore other starting points. I feel like I've only just begun to scratch the surface of what's possible with glass. When I give Stewart a drawing, I half expect him to say, "you can't do that," but he always finds a way. Sometimes a pattern or detail I've drawn isn't technically possible, so he'll interpret it and make something slightly different – a kind of sidestep from my original idea. I like that, because rigidity and accuracy don't really interest me. It suits the way I work to have someone who's problem-solving alongside me. ↩

MK: You have so much experience in working with ceramics. My understanding of using glazes, although you do tests, is that there's always an element of surprise. The colours will look very different after firing. Is that similar to the glass slumping process?

LA: With slumping, the colours usually stay pretty close to what I expect after they've been through the kiln. It's the shapes that tend to shift, because of the way I'm layering the glass. I'm still learning, but what I've realised is that if the layers aren't perfectly even, they start to pull themselves out of shape in the kiln. A glassmaker might be more precise – cutting patterns or carefully controlling the placement but I actually like the unpredictability. It throws up unexpected results, and I enjoy the surprises. Sometimes it doesn't work, and that's fine too – for me, that's part of the process.

MK: It's the same for me, that's why I use analogue photography. Although you can use it in a very exact and scientific way, there's an opportunity to let the material add something to the work that you didn't necessarily intend.

LA: If you set out to make something look "energetic," it probably won't – it's hard to fake that. But if you genuinely let the material direct the work, the energy comes through in a very different way. Of course, there are merits to both approaches, and I'm not saying one is better than the other. It's just that this looser, more responsive way of working is what feels right for me.

MK: When you are making, particularly the ceramic and glass works, there are these periods where you can't see it - when the workers in the kiln or when it's cooling down. The object is changing from one state to another. I wondered if you had any thoughts on that, on that period of transformation that you are not able to see.

LA: For me, it's often about what I can't see when the works are still in the studio, before they're exhibited. I don't think I ever fully see them until they're on the wall, separated from that studio environment. If I can't see the work clearly myself, I'll ask someone I trust to come in and look with me – I've got ongoing conversations with people about my work that are really important. When you spend so much time with something, it can be hard to recognise what you've actually made. You end up questioning it, leaving it, coming back to it. Sometimes you even go full circle and return to your original starting point. And often the pieces that look like they should be quick to produce are the ones that take the longest.

> *"... I've got ongoing conversations with people about my work that are really important."*

MK: Looking forward, what might you do next with glass?

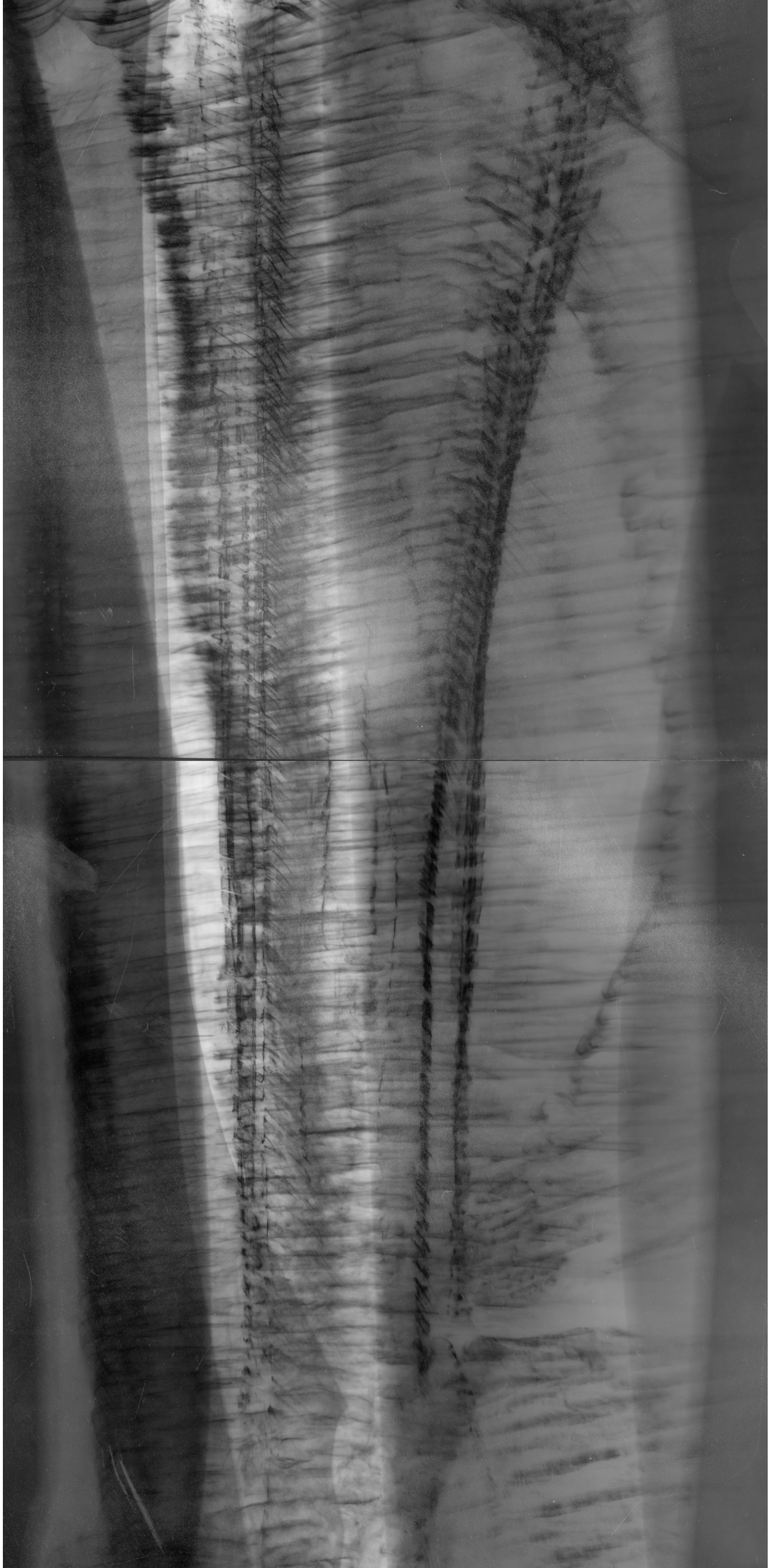
LA: You can actually use ceramic kilns for glass if you run the right program, so I'd like to start working with glass more directly in my own studio. Part of that is about getting to grips with the production side – having a bit more control and freedom with the material. At the same time, I want to keep working with Stewart, because the more I understand about the process, the more possibilities open up. And I'm also starting to think about scale – what it would mean to take things bigger.

MK: I'd love to see the results of that! My final question for you is, how would you describe glass?

LA: What I love about glass, but also about ceramics and fabric, is that they're materials we all encounter every day. You wear fabric, you blow your nose on it, you eat from ceramics, you shit in ceramics – they're so ordinary and ubiquitous that you barely think about them. When I run workshops, kids are often surprised to realise that the mug they drink tea from is made of the same material as a toilet. It's the same with glass: you look through it every day, you drink from it, it's everywhere. And because of that closeness, that everyday familiarity, I think these materials are full of potential. ◻

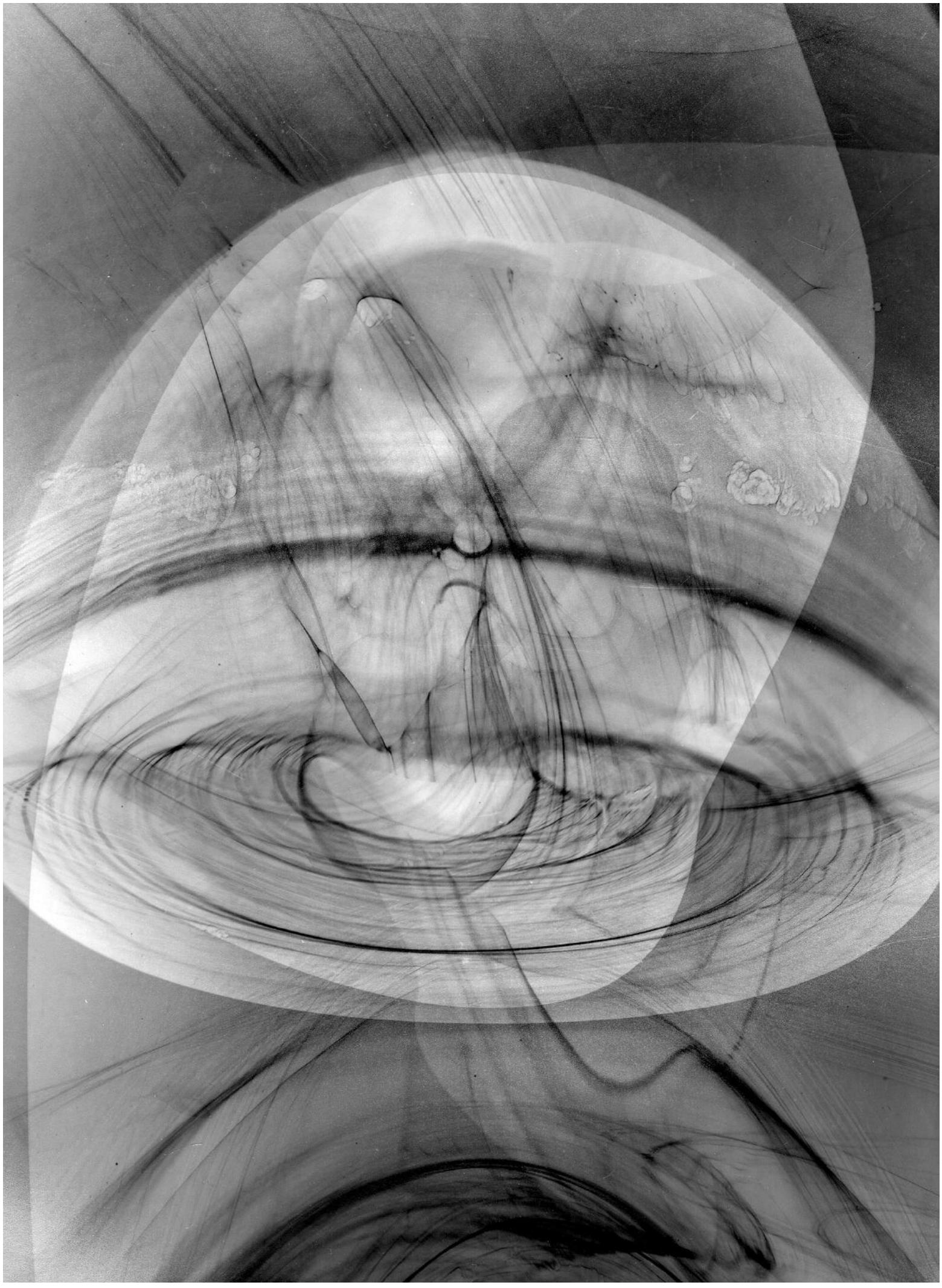
a portfolio by **Morwenna Kearsley**

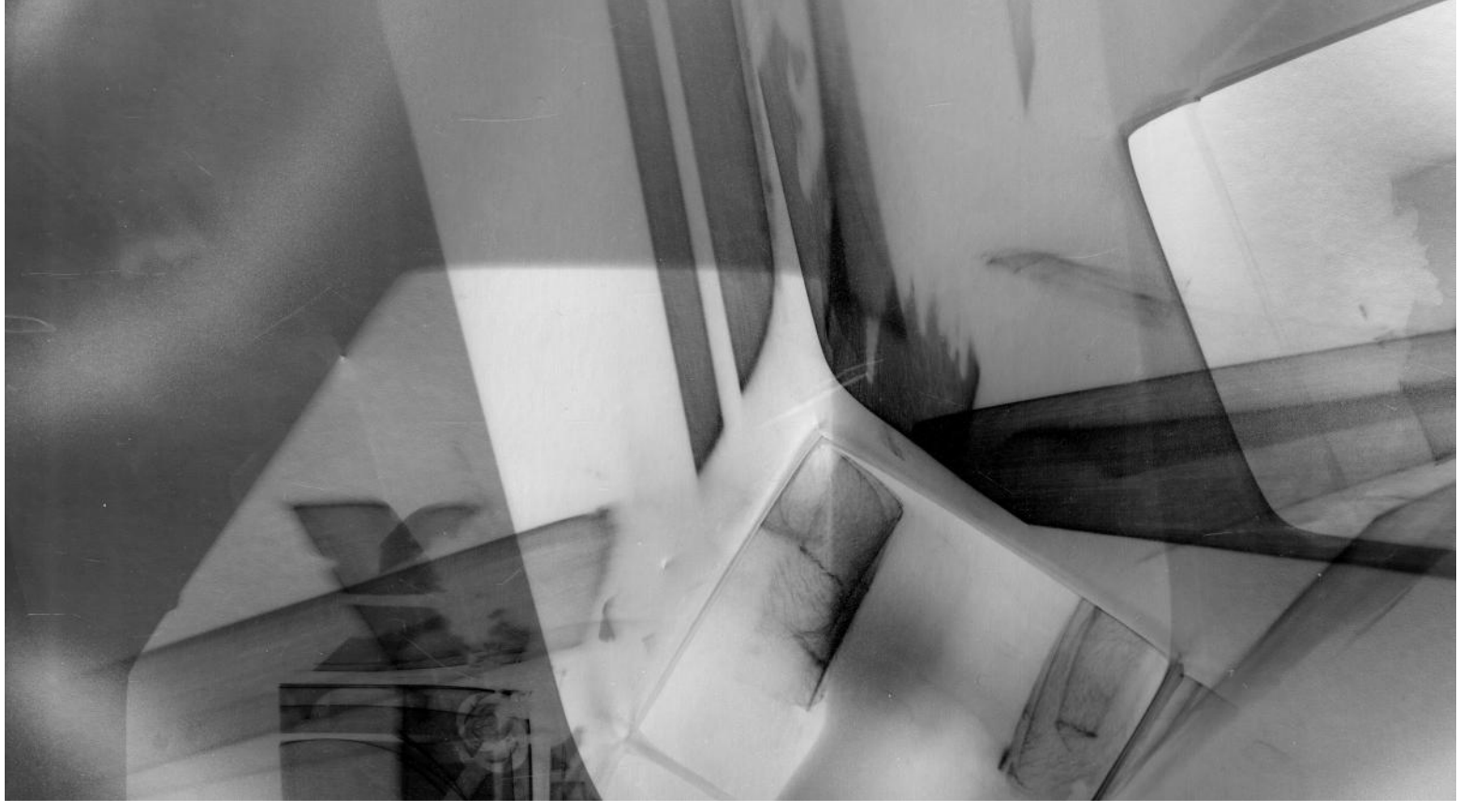
PHOTOGRAMS



Previous page (left) Morwenna Kearsley, photogram of a glass work by Dante Marioni, North Lands Creative collection, 2022
Left Morwenna Kearsley, photograph of a glass work by Paul Marioni, North Lands Creative collection, 2022
All other images Morwenna Kearsley, photograms from glass works in the collection at North Lands Creative, 2022

The thrill of darkroom work is in watching a transformation occur. The seemingly blank piece of paper that you slid into the developer only seconds ago begins to change before your eyes. Dark spots appear and lengthen, until an image you recognise forms. There it is! The smell of the chemicals intensifies as you lean down in the low red light, tilting the developer tray to see better. You know it's still fragile, and will disappear into black if you let white light near it. Into the stop and then into the fix, where any unused silver is washed out, and then it's ready to be revealed. Throughout this publication are photograms, made from glass artworks, housed in the collection at North Lands Creative. In some, it's clear what the original work looked like, the photogram functioning as a facsimile of the original (or perhaps a doppelganger). In others, the light reveals a certain texture or shape that does not belong entirely to the original object but is a new image, conjured by the light and fixed in silver. Photogrammetry is the earliest form of photographic image, made without a camera. Instead, objects are placed directly on top of sensitised paper and activated by light – a shadow image is formed. ◻





Interview: **Morwenna Kearsley** and **Sarah Rose**

MK: We first talked a few years ago when we both were doing residencies (at different times) at North Lands Creative. Could you start by telling me a bit about your work and the ways in which you use glass?

SR: I've been interested in glass for a long time, it actually goes back to works that I was making in my undergraduate degree. It's funny, because the show we're discussing now connects back to works from that time. Early on, I was thinking about architectural glass and the way it forms a seal around a building. It creates a climatic control; you can still see out and prevent rain as well as wind from entering. So that was an early interest. In terms of the last ten years, I have become really interested in working with materials that are in circulation already, like glass.

MK: I recently went to see your exhibition (Torpor, Tramway, Glasgow) and think it's a really special show. You've used found objects, print, recycled glass and recycled waste material. For me, there is this really strong sense of transformation as well as a kind of eeriness, which I love. It's almost like the pieces in the show are kind of waiting to be animated by something that's either about to come into being or has passed. Every kind of glass making process necessitates a change of state - liquid to solid, hot to cool etc. I wanted to ask you about this idea of transformation and how that relates to the work that you've made for Torpor.

SR: A strand of my research looks at existing materials and takes me back to ideas around public recycling and transformative processes. A lot of questions came out of looking at plastics prior to this body of work. Initially recycling wasn't a public proposal, it was a private, corporate proposal, thinking about which materials could be reused. The plastics industry and the petroleum industries wanted to reinvigorate the narrative around materials. The plastic materials that they were creating, and people's relationship to these materials were going to shift. For example, a plastic milk bottle – is now known not as a single use plastic, but plastic that can be reused. Although the corporate narrative never addressed that it could only be repeated a number of times and at an energy cost, it can be re-melted but it's not endless. So that got me thinking about pauses in this process. ⮌

"Early on, I was thinking about architectural glass..."

Plastic does have a lifespan. But the idea of public recycling evades that end point, instead it suggests a constant cycle, relinquishing issues around our consumption and energy use, and our contribution to waste. With glass, it's the same, you can reuse it, it can be re-melted but it's not endless. So that got me thinking about pauses in this process. Taking things out of circulation. Taking things out of the system. That's what the exhibition also does – it creates a pause, a temporary space.

There's only a handful of glass works in the exhibition, although all the works are related to the material in some way. The sculptural pieces and paintings use or are coated with recycled glass. The material can be reshaped. So, it's in that state for the exhibition but whether it stays that shape further down the line, I don't know. There's a lot of labour involved in these processes of transformation and that's where some of the ideas in the show come from; related to physical movement, and exertion of energy. Transformation doesn't happen without a state-change, it doesn't happen without exertion of energy. There's something in the sustainable line of thinking around this transformation of materials, of circular economies and so on that we're not thinking about. Or, it doesn't fit the dominant narrative. So, in the works I hope to highlight different energy states: being active or being passive. Some of the sculptural pieces are depicting animals in a state of torpor, or sleeping, you could say. Torpor is slightly different but I'll come back to that.

"Transformation doesn't happen without a state-change, it doesn't happen without exertion of energy."

My interest in the sculptural objects that I've been making out of glass is in thinking about the life span of things and thinking about a pause in a longer trajectory. Or refusing that pause: staying still, refusing to change shape.
The pieces made out of the recycled glass, are animals that go through a part of a bigger cycle of life. They will either reproduce, or be food for something else and so return to the soil. So that is also a kind of cycle that the work talks to.
But there are end points. Materiality can change, but it can also be exhausted – it has a kind of mortality.

Torpor, the name of the show, is talking to the process that animals adopt to reduce how much energy they're using. Usually, it happens at the point of a climatic change – when it's really hot or really cold, or when there's very little food. In winter, when there's less food in terms of berries, nectar, flowers and insects that animals might feed off, also in the summer when there's less water. So, these animals go into a kind of a state that is a little bit like hibernation, but it's more unconscious than that. A lot of my work is related to an environmental narrative, and therefore the presence of climate change, and so I was thinking of torpor as an interesting thing to think about for us humans. In terms of rest, or pause. We are always trying to be productive, progressive and constantly adapting to meet pressures. For me there is a material poetics here that also relates to wider issues.

MK: That's fascinating. Could you tell me more about your use of photovoltaic glass and how it operates within the context of your exhibition? It's a type of glass I didn't really know much about and I haven't seen it in an exhibition before.

SR:When Tramway first approached me to do the show, the curator and I were talking about glass a lot, and to me the main feature of the gallery space are those large windows. I'll need to give a little context to my interest in glass and windows. When I first started to experiment with glass and testing different potential processes for its reuse, I realised that if you break glass up into small parts and remelt it, it loses its transparency and it becomes opaque. In post-war architecture, glass is often used to suggest transparency – as a metaphor for openness, the idea that we can "see all," and that seeing all is democratic. I would say that idea is not true today, because of fake news, posturing, and so on. But it's interesting that these institutions and significant buildings were, and still are, using glass in this way. So, I was thinking about the building of Tramway, the glass, and the experience of seeing in from the street.

I was looking at these gallery windows and thinking about what the institution's resources were, and what is it that the space offers. Not only light, so that it's a nice gallery space, but it's also got energy that I could harness and reuse. I wanted to make those windows active and did a lot of research into the history of glass windows. One of these threads led me to different types of solar capture and I came across the use of photovoltaic dyes.

In the beginning I was looking at glass windows as a resource. There is a really interesting history of windows in the UK, especially the introduction of the window tax. People were taxed according to how much window space they had on the front of their flats and buildings. You can still notice buildings where sometimes windows are blocked out – either they've been broken or renovated and bricked in. Sometimes people bricked in windows because they didn't want to pay as much tax. John Smith's film 'Slow Glass' is really excellent in highlighting that, and has been an influential film for me. ⮌

As well as the tax, you may notice in parts of Glasgow that newly built state housing often emphasises letting light in. But if you look at older state housing, the windows are often very small. Partly this was because single-glazed windows could let a lot of heat out, but also because of the cost of glass and the limited value placed on light as a contribution to wellbeing.

In the exhibition there are glass tanks filled with water-soluble dyes that absorb light. It's the same sort of liquid used in the photovoltaic solar panels hanging in the space, which harness the light and convert it into energy captured from the gallery windows. Initially, I thought I could use the windows by hanging completely clear solar panels, assuming there must be a transparent dye capable of absorbing light. I imagined that if I could do that, we could start hanging these transparent solar panels in a sort of clandestine way, in many different places, and no one would even know. In general, corporate and institutional buildings use a lot of glass. I liked the idea that perhaps there could be a way to harness some of that energy and redistribute it – a kind of fanciful idea. That was my imagining, my dreaming.

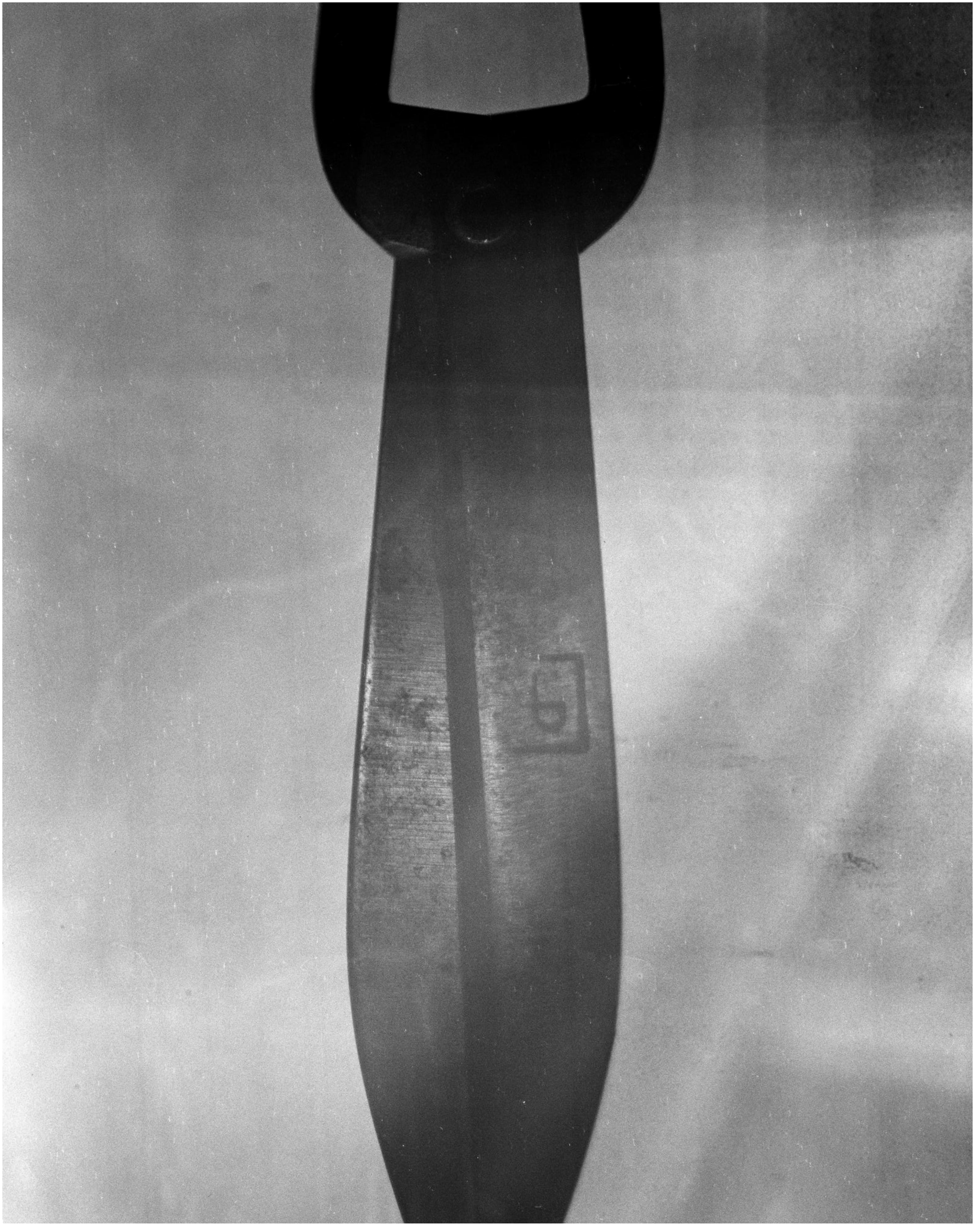
The one thing I hadn't conceived of was that, actually, the more light you let through a solar panel, the less energy is captured. So, if you have a completely see-through solar panel, light floods back into the gallery space but isn't being captured. The solar panels in the exhibition let through about 50% of the light coming in from the windows. For me, transparency as a common glass property is interesting because, as you'll have picked up in your own work with photograms, glass is completely bound up with light.

I liked the idea of using semi-transparent solar panels that you could still see through, but with a filter, so maybe you reflect more critically on the idea of transparency. The solar panels are clamped onto the space, so they could be moved into another context – they are provisional. The panels themselves were used in this exhibition to power the works. I had hoped to do a show that didn't run off Tramway's full infrastructural system at all, but instead harnessed and localised the energy from the front windows.

"I liked the idea of using semi-transparent solar panels that you could still see through"

MK: It's so interesting to hear you talk about your work in relation to the history of architecture and glass and windows. And light! When I visited your exhibition, I was reading into it an analogy with analogue photography, especially the idea of the latent image. This kind of image that is there but is, essentially, invisible. I was also thinking about the silver residue, leftover from analogue processing. Apparently, wherever there were analogue photography studios, the drains beneath would be lined with silver from exhausted chemistry poured down the sink. I was thinking about these glittering, underground systems when I was looking at your screenprints, which are coated with recycled glass dust.

SR: I think the show is about photography as well, especially the paintings as I've used a photographic image (of a moth). I guess I was thinking about this moment of capture. I don't know a lot about analogue photography, but that materiality you are talking about, the silver residue, really resonates with what I was thinking about with the materialising, the moment of the image or capture - something elusive, not often seen or made visible. □



Left Morwenna Kearsley, *Shears*, 2022

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Nº 1

ARTICLES OF **GLASS**