

THE FBC: A KEEN SUPPORTER OF THE GLASS CLUSTER IN THE NORTH EAST

The Glass Cluster is developing in the North East. Since the Glass Mission organised and partly sponsored by the French Business Council last October, progress has been made. Christina Kirk, glass artist and Head of Glass at the University of Sunderland and Effie Burns who has been running her own cultural business for the past three years report.

“Glass is the guiding light of this new century, a material which emanates and reflects the qualities striving for within today’s societies. The sensuous material may be luminating, evocative and brilliantly radiating. The artists use glass in a number of different ways as an expressive material to create a dialogue within their art. No other material possesses such a power as glass.
Glass is the transparency of our future.”

The group of Glass Artists who achieved a very successful mission to the Limousin region of France continue to develop their glass art with the aim of having a Group Exhibition in 2003.

The dynamics of this unique group of glass artists have grown from the North East of England where glass has been a rich historical and cultural attribute to the region.

At the heart of the Contemporary Glass scene is the National Glass Centre, Sunderland, established in 1998. The centre grew from the strengths of the University of Sunderland’s Internationally reputed Glass Department which is now located within the National Glass Centre. The rich array of skills, intellectual vigour and creative energy within the department produce an outstanding stature of graduates.

Outline, a design consultancy based in Newcastle have collaborated with the Glass Department over a number of years. Along with Anne Tye, Glass Cluster Development Manager at the City Sunderland, Outline is sponsoring and supporting a preview exhibition of North East artists that will take place in June 2001.

Effie Burns, one of the exhibiting artists, has been running her own cultural business for the past three years, creating architectural glass for both public and private spaces. Each project is unique and often provides an interesting link between the old and the new. The business undertakes the design, manufacture and installation of the work.

As she notes “the mission to Limoges in October provided us with a valuable insight into the type of exhibition space available and also how artists work with industry to produce work. An exhibition this summer provides us with the opportunity to show the magical qualities that glass has and how they can be used to change the atmosphere of a place. Having the opportunity to exhibit in

the cultural centre in St. Yrieix in the same building that displays the Saint-Yrieix bibles is appropriate as the sculptural pieces that I am working on at the moment explore the links between geometry, art and religion. Being based in an area with a long history of glass making it will be interesting to show work in a region where the speciality is porcelain, another 'art of fire' that has both practical and sculptural qualities. I am looking forward to the show in France and the different opportunities that it will provide".