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## Panel: SUSTAINABLE GLASS EDUCATION

Moderator: Eddie Bernard

Panelists: Rika Hawes, Ruth King, Jessi Moore, and Chris Taylor

"Sustainable Glass Education" is part of an ongoing series of panel discussions at the GAS conferences.

While there are countless approaches to reducing the environmental impact of operating a glass studio, this discussion looks at the role our educational system does, doesn't, should, or shouldn't play in addressing the sustainability issue. The moderator sent two surveys each with ten questions. One was sent to the 408 administrators from GAS's national and international database; 51 participated in the first survey. The second survey was sent to 303 current fulltime student members; 32 students from six countries participated. The tabulated results are below. Many participants also provided comments or lengthy descriptions on how their departments are addressing these issues.

### Administrator Survey:

1. How are utility expenses handled for your department?

56% (28 respondents): Grouped in with other parts of campus facilities

34% (17): Measured and billed separately from other departments

10% (5): I don't know

2. Does your institution's administration pressure your glass department to reduce utility expenses?

48% (24): Yes

52% (26): No

3. Does your department have a functioning "reduce, reuse, recycle" program/policy for:

87.5% (42): Furnace Glass

70.8% (34): Bottle Glass

66.7% (32): Aluminium Cans

66.7% (32): Paper

50% (24): Fusing Glass

41.7% (20): Steel

16.7% (8): Other

4. In the cold shop, is there a water "reduce/reuse" program?

8.2% (4): Yes

91.8% (45): No

5. Do you find that students are becoming increasingly aware and interested in sustainable practices?

52% (26): Yes

36% (18): Difficult to tell

12% (6): No

6. Do you believe that as an instructor you are obligated to educate students about the energy and resource intensive nature of glass as an art medium?

95.8% (46): Yes

4.2% (2): No

7. Does your glass department curriculum include any discussions or projects regarding the following?

83.3% (25): Energy Efficiency

36.7% (11): Environmental Impact

70% (21): Resource Consumption

26.7% (8): Other Sustainability-Minded Concerns

8. Do you think issues of energy and resource consumption are in conflict with the making of art?

39.1% (18): Yes

60.9% (28): No

9. Have you noticed a positive change in students' respect towards energy, equipment, and materials since you began incorporating sustainability into the curriculum?

42.9% (21): Yes

12.2% (6): No

44.9% (22): Not Applicable

10. What format do you think would be helpful to you as an instructor to develop relevant curriculum in your department?

75.5% (37): Visiting Lecturer/Workshop

49% (24): PowerPoint Presentation

34.7% (17): Video

10.2% (5): Not Interested

6.1% (3): Other

### Student Survey:

1. What country are you from?

75% (24): United States

9.4% (3): Canada

6.3% (2): Australia

3.1% (1): Argentina

3.1% (1): Netherlands

3.1% (1): Finland

2. Which category of student describes you the best?

56.3% (18): Undergraduate

31.3% (10): Graduate

9.4% (3): Intensive Workshops

3.1% (1): Night/Weekend Classes

6.3% (2): Former Grad

3.1% (1): High School

3. As a student, do you feel it is important that you learn ways of implementing sustainable practices in your studio and art-making?

100% (32): Yes

0% (0): No

4. Whose responsibility is it to assure that you are informed about sustainability as it relates to using glass as an art medium?

90% (27): Mine

63.3% (19): My instructor's

26.7% (8): The studio technician's

0% (0): No one's

5. Do your educators offer you information or assign projects to help you learn about energy and resource consumption or other sustainability issues?

31.3% (10): Yes

68.8% (22): No

6. Can you think of any projects or assignments that would help establish an ongoing conversation about sustainability in your learning environment?

43.3% (13): Yes

46.7% (14): No

10% (3): Not interested

7. Have you made any artwork that addresses issues of sustainability?

34.4% (11): Yes

65.5% (21): No

8. Are you curious about how to use, maintain, or construct glass-making equipment so that less energy and/or resources are used?

90.6% (29): I'm very curious

9.4% (3): Maybe a little bit

0% (0): I never think about it

9. Do you think energy and resources consumption can be reduced through the development of your skills in working with glass and related materials and equipment?

93.5% (29): Yes

6.3% (2): No

10. Do you think issues of energy and resource consumption are in conflict with the making of art?

50% (16): Yes

50% (16): No

An overview of the survey results was given before the presentations by Rika Hawes and Ruth King.

Rika explained that her early mentors and instructors instilled an appreciation for the resources consumed in the glass arts. In her role as an instructor at Salem Community College (SCC), she maintains conversations with students about their use of materials and energy. They are given assignments to use recycled materials in their projects. SCC's glass studio is fired with landfill-gas, so there is an automatic awareness about the energy's origins.

Ruth King has long been in the glass art community's educational arena as a professor and currently as the artistic director at Pilchuck Glass School. In these roles she has designed curriculum and workshop sessions with instructors and course objectives spread across Pilchuck studios. Ruth has helped bring in instructors who would address issues of energy and resource consumption. In a class named "Mind Over Matter" by Ken Rinaldo and Joe Cariati, students used modeling software, "Cinema 4D," to develop their ideas prior to gathering glass from the hotshop furnace. Co-instructors Nanda Soderberg and Madeleine Boulesteix took students on a field trip to the local thrift store for glass and other items that the students proceeded to break, glue, cut, melt, fuse, blow, sculpt, assemble, and fashion into their work. One example

is Soderberg's footed beaker made from marbles fused together. Eddie Bernard taught a mixed-media class where students learned to make work with moving parts. The class culminated in a gallery show in collaboration with another class in which projectors and all lights (except candles) were powered by battery-stored solar electricity. The kinetic artwork was activated by hand-cranks, pedals, solar power, homemade ethyl alcohol, and even human breath.

The conversation opened to the panelists and audience. Chris Taylor asked everyone to ponder whether NASA might ask themselves the same question (about reducing our environmental footprint) as they fired space shuttles into outer space. The point is, we are small-scale consumers compared to giants like the space programs or industrial conglomerates.

Ruth King was especially interested in the question regarding whether or not energy and resource issues are in conflict with making art. The classes she hosted at Pilchuck showed there wasn't always a conflict. Chris Taylor pointed out that if someone wants to make artwork, he/she will find a material. Once when he was without a hot glass studio, he blew hot glue on the end of a straw just to experiment with shapes. Often artists connect with a certain material and the work follows an exploration into the working properties and potential of the material. In this case, material resource and energy consumption are not at the forefront of the art-making process. There can be quite a bit of waste, often with nothing physical to show for the venture. Who is to say whether an artist should or should not be permitted to explore a medium in this way?

Jessi Moore reflected on the 10% of administrators surveyed who said they didn't know how their department's utility expenses were handled. Many administrators expressly avoid the subject with their superiors for fear that if those expenses were exposed, the department could be shut down. This is an unfortunate reality, because it thwarts progress towards the reduction of energy consumption that can often come with studio facility upgrades and policies.

Rika Hawes mentioned three main industries that have led entire civilizations to their demise due to their energy and material intensive nature. Glass has historically been one of them. She asked the audience to ponder whether glass artists will be the pariahs of the art world, meaning that our behavior will be recognized as out of line with accepted norms.

Audience member Nadege Desgenetiz pointed out that although hot glass seems to be targeted in terms of energy use, fusing, flameworking, neon, etc., all begin with glass that was melted in a furnace and then formed and cooled prior to reaching the artists' hands.

Toots Zynsky, a Rhode Island School of Design trustee and alumna, noted that the financial departments of most institutions look for any opportunity to reduce utility expenses. As they stroll through campus hallways, offices,

classrooms, studios, and labs, they're evaluating energy use. There's no way they can overlook the glass studio. Glass department heads and instructors are advised that the subject will come up sooner or later. It would be a good idea to be prepared with suggestions as to how the department could reduce its impact.

Wes Valdez, a student at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, spoke on behalf of the student body with the intention of informing the administrative body that the students absolutely do care and are definitely interested in being a part of the solution to this issue.

As moderator, I believe it's everyone's responsibility to work to understand the breadth of these issues and seek solutions. Nothing is lost in developing a mindset where we try to be less wasteful. Reduce, reuse, recycle—these are three imperative words that can guide this objective. In the end, glass is the medium most revered by GAS members. We chose this material. We interact intimately and often extensively with it. We don't want to see it go away. Nor does it have to. As individuals, we must

remember that we can be less bad. Some authors in the sustainability field would say that less bad isn't good enough. We must actually be good. Consider starting your next class, whatever your role, by saying, "I (we) am (are) embarking on an exciting adventure with a material that is energy and material intensive. It is important to the medium's survival that I (we) are respectful of the material and the energy consumed when we work with it."



From left to right, Eddie Bernard (at podium), Jessi Moore, Ruth King, Chris Taylor, and Rika Hawes

**Eddie Bernard** ([www.wetdogglass.com](http://www.wetdogglass.com)) is an artist, craftsperson, and technician. He earned a BFA in glass in 1996 from Rochester Institute of Technology, the same year he founded Wet Dog Glass, LLC, which designs and manufactures high-end, glass-processing equipment. He has taught hot glass sculpting workshops at Penland School of Craft, Glass Furnace in Istanbul, and The Studio of the Corning Museum of Glass. In 2002, he co-founded Conti St. Glass, a community-access studio in New Orleans, LA, and has overseen a similar studio GlassLab in Star, NC. He served as a GAS Board member (2004 – 2010) and is a frequent contributor to GASnews.

**Rika Hawes** is a multimedia artist, who was a 2008 Fellow at the Creative Glass Center of America and awarded the Leeway Foundation grant. She is also a writer and critic.

**Ruth King** ([rking@pilchuck.com](mailto:rking@pilchuck.com)) has been artistic director of Pilchuck Glass School since 2004. She was a professor of art and administered glass programs at Ohio State University, Alfred University, California College of the Arts, and Rhode Island School of Design. She has exhibited internationally, including an exhibition at the Titor Glass Art Museum in Taiwan. She earned her MFA degree from RISD in 1989. She has served on the GAS Board.

**Jessi Moore** ([www.jessimooreglass.com](http://www.jessimooreglass.com)) joined the GAS Board as the student representative in June 2011. She is currently a third-year MFA graduate student at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. Originally from Seattle, she studied in Washington, Illinois, Hawaii, and Denmark, and has been an instructor, teaching assistant, and artist assistant at various glass studios. She has received numerous awards and scholarships to study at Pilchuck Glass School, Penland School of Craft, and the Studio at the Corning Museum of Glass.

**Chris Taylor** ([ctaylor@risd.edu](mailto:ctaylor@risd.edu)) was born in Tehran, Iran, and lived in many other countries before he was 20. He has received awards, fellowships, and grants from organizations such as the National Endowment of the Arts, The Louis Tiffany Foundation, and the Fulbright Program. Taylor has also been an artist-in-residence at many locations around the world, and has exhibited his work at prominent nonprofit galleries as Real Art Ways in Hartford, CT; ArtSpace in New Haven, CT; and Exit Art in New York.