Kathleen Mulcahy

In the early 1970s some very enthusiastic and creative students managed to create a primitive glass studio at Kean College. At that time, energy, determination and passion were the main tools they had to work with. Despite the lack of resources and support, these students were determined to pursue their passion for the arts, specifically glassblowing, a medium that had not been explored at the college at that time. Frustrated by the challenges faced, one of the students successfully appealed to the provost, Dr. Vinton Thompson, who was the head of the Quality First Initiative program. Dr. Thompson granted a small grant to support the project, and with this funding, the students were able to purchase essential equipment and materials. This was the first step towards the establishment of a glass program at Kean University.

For Kathleen Mulcahy, her glass works embody the characteristics of nature. White force of nature, green environment, the wonders of nature, all of these elements have been transformed into glass that is beautiful and full of life. Because working with glass is physically demanding, Kathleen is constantly aware of her body and her breath as she creates a form. Other wall pieces start with large sheets of commercial glass, as large as 4 feet wide, which have been slowly heated to alter their shape. Together, heat and gravity slump sheet glass to new life. Later they are etched and mounted on corroded steel frames. These works require a mastery of material and a focused aesthetic vision.

This exhibition celebrates the achievements of this honored alumna at mid-career. It includes a collaborative effort among the facilities staff and several Kean University students, in particular graduate assistants Norman Chow and Spencer Frohwirth. Special thanks to the President of Kean University, Dr. Dawood Farahi, for his support and encouragement. Thank you to Douglas Nelson at the Kean University Foundation, Wendy Lee from the Facilities staff and several students for their hard work and dedication. This exhibition would not have been possible without the outstanding students who have an opportunity to work within the outstanding student environment and have been introduced to the world of art and the importance of the arts in their lives.

The skin of a blown glass form moves slowly as it begins to soften. I want to still these moments. For Kathleen Mulcahy, her glass works embody characteristics of nature. White force of nature, green environment, the wonders of nature, all of these elements have been transformed into glass that is beautiful and full of life. Because working with glass is physically demanding, Kathleen is constantly aware of her body and her breath as she creates a form. Other wall pieces start with large sheets of commercial glass, as large as 4 feet wide, which have been slowly heated to alter their shape. Together, heat and gravity slump sheet glass to new life. Later they are etched and mounted on corroded steel frames. These works require a mastery of material and a focused aesthetic vision.

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From her very early days as an artist, Kathleen Mulcahy has expressed her deep sense of wonder in the human experience…[that connects us] to each other. There is something in my work that asks you to pay attention to the small things and to find the expressive point that connects us to the larger reality of life. This exhibition, titled Natural Forces, on view March 28th through May 7th 2007, is an invited collaborative exhibition that celebrates Kathleen Mulcahy’s life and work. The exhibition features a wide range of her glass art, including wall pieces, large vessels, and small objects, all of which have been created through the use of traditional glassblowing techniques. The exhibition includes a selection of Kathleen Mulcahy’s glass pieces that were created in the 1970s, as well as more recent works that demonstrate her continued exploration of the medium. The exhibition also includes a selection of photographs and videos that document Kathleen Mulcahy’s work and her process.

I want to thank Kathleen Mulcahy for coming back to her alma mater and making this exhibition possible. Her return visit represents the culmination of a journey that began in the early 1970s, when she was a student at Kean College. At that time, the glass program was in its infancy, and Kathleen was one of the first students to be involved in the program. She was granted a small grant to purchase essential equipment and materials, and with the support of her fellow students and the provost, Dr. Vinton Thompson, she was able to create a glass studio on campus. This was the first step towards the establishment of a glass program at Kean University.

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In 1972, the young artist went on to pursue a Master of Fine Arts degree at the School of Art and Design at Alfred University, better known as one of the most prestigious glass programs in the United States. That is where she first began exploring Kathleen Mulcahy’s interest in glass art and her passion for creating art that connected us to the larger reality of life. This exhibition celebrates the achievements of this honored alumna at mid-career. It includes a collaborative effort among the facilities staff and several Kean University students, in particular graduate assistants Norman Chow and Spencer Frohwirth. Special thanks to the President of Kean University, Dr. Dawood Farahi, and the Provost, Dr. Vinton Thompson, who co-sponsored the Natural Forces exhibition. Thank you to Douglas Nelson at the Kean University Foundation, Wendy Lee from the Facilities staff and several students for their hard work and dedication. This exhibition would not have been possible without the outstanding students who have an opportunity to work within the outstanding student environment and have been introduced to the world of art and the importance of the arts in their lives.
**THE ARTWORK OF KATHLEEN MULCAHY**

Kathleen Mulcahy's glass sculptures celebrate the serious nature of a collection. The recent works presented in this exhibition take full advantage of the ability of glass to stand still. Moreover, as with all great works of art, these sculptures have no shame to stand forms, no subject, or props, no single theme. They are simply objects, finely crafted, existing on the level of art. Art that is drawn out by gravity.

**detail:**

Like many artists, when critic Dave Hickey re-introduced the concept of beauty to the art world in the early 1990s it set off a fire-storm of controversy. When critic Dave Hickey calls to mind some strange alchemical device that promises the presence of a gas or trapped breath. The evocative form of her generation who has been scaled up and abstracted. The blown glass bottle shape of the piece was the observation several years ago of freshly-laid frog eggs. The result is an appealing abstract sculpture that is etched across the base of slightly rusted steel. The glass is acid-etched with a paintbrush allowing the surface to have a brushed look that is still semi-transparent, revealing the surface below. In a quest for perfect proportions, the work is drawn from such similarly closely-observed small forms. As the artist concludes, pendulous drops are luscious to behold. The sensual experience of walking through the leaves and represented, allowing the viewer to bring their own associations to the piece. Kathleen Mulcahy's glass sculptures entertain the viewer with shapes that captivate and allow for reflection. For the casual observer, the experience is transformative and works deeply into the world with new eyes carefully altered to the connective forms of glass and words. The visual experienceatts a form...