

Stine Bidstrup: Two decades of glass craftsmanship

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Architectural Glass Fantasies by Stine Bidstrup for The Mindcraft Project 2021. Photo: Anders Sune Berg

Just over the harbor from Copenhagen's city center you will find the workshop and studio of glass artist and historian Stine Bidstrup. Together with a collective of glass artists, she has built a haven of creativity and craft. Although her practice has been rooted in the Danish capital for some time, it is Bidstrup's inquisitive and wandering nature that has led to a career that spans cities, continents, and now decades. Her body of work speaks of a student of glass, forever consuming knowledge of her chosen field in order to create work that spans the past, present and future.



Stine Bidstrup in her studio. Photo: Benjamin Lund

Classified as a self-confessed ‘glass geek’ of over 20 years, Stine Bidstrup is a sum of her educational parts. First training as a glassblower, followed by sculptor and art historian, her body of work speaks to a synthesis of these individual educations coming together to form a fascinating whole. You could almost add anthropologist to her educational list, with Bidstrup spending the better part of this century traveling between Denmark and the US; where learning from some of the industry’s best led to teaching and guest lectures of her own, as well as various residencies within Europe and beyond. Whilst her travels have often focused on the acquisition of craft skills, they have also formed the conceptual base of her practice, with ideas springing from chance encounters and foreign stimuli;

“My creative process starts usually from a place of inquiry – the contaminated land around a centuries old Swedish glass factory, glass bangle making tradition in India merged with a model for visually describing chaos theory, ruins in the Scottish highlands from the Highland Clearances, or simply how light can be explored to interact with glass.”



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Her growing collection of glass sculptures, titled ‘Architectural Glass Fantasies’ speak to the layering of knowledge and craft, time and travel, that has become the defining factor in Bidstrup’s work. Starting all the way back in 2003 whilst an apprentice with American artist Jack Wax, Bidstrup first learnt how to create one-shot molds for the specific glass blowing and casting process used for the series. Later during a residency in Bergen, this process was combined with paper folding techniques and her fascination with the utopian teachings of German writer Paul Scheerbart and architect Bruno Taut following World War II. The result is a collection of works that express values of perfection and imperfection, and an amalgamation of nature and architecture, as Bidstrup explains;

“The paper folding as a form-making tool with its flexibility and geometric changeability, enabled sculptural forms that are not intended or perceived as fixed and measurable, nor as an ideal conjunction of forms. On the contrary, if there is an ideal, it is in the shifting kaleidoscopic forms that are continuously moving out of chaos toward a potential perfection, which is, however, never fully attained and always in the process of becoming.”



Stine Bidstrup at Holmegaard Værk. Photo: Benjamin Lund

Just as the ideation of her projects beautifully combine seemingly disparate influences and learnings, the creation of her work is also one of moving parts. From her studio in Islands Brygge, Bidstrup cold works her projects, cutting and grinding, whereas glass blowing is often performed in Småland in Sweden's south, or the recently reopened Holmegaard Værk within Denmark.



Stine Bidstrup's process at Holmegaard Værk. Photo: Benjamin Lund

Proudly local in production, it is her collaborations with international galleries – Heller Gallery and Hostler Burrows in the US, and Gallery Fumi in London, that has allowed her to reach further with the ambitious nature of her work, both conceptually and from a craft perspective. Working alongside New York's Heller Gallery in particular, with their over 40-year knowledge of glass art, has allowed Bidstrup's work to sit besides some of her profession's most appreciated work within a craft reaching back centuries.

Coming out of a year that has somewhat subdued Bidstrup's nomadic nature – and the recent arrival of her first child, her fascination and drive to create has never waned. Current and upcoming exhibitions include 'Passage', a series of site-specific works on Scotland's northern-most tip, 'Matter at Hand' within Hostler Burrows' New York and Los Angeles locations, and 'Melting Point' at Heller Gallery. As with all of Bidstrup's work, these projects present a continuation and building upon years of research and conceptualisation – work that reflects her as an artist, a master craftsperson and an historian in one.