



The Glass Delusion

30 April 2010 **For immediate release**

Preview: Thursday 20 May, 6-8pm

21 May – 3 October 2010

'The Glass Delusion' was the name given in the late Middle Ages and Baroque times to a form of depression. Sufferers were obsessive, compulsive, driven by irrational fears, and imagined themselves to be made of glass, hence brittle and fragile. So pervasive was the condition that it entered world literature, philosophy and history. Cervantes wrote the novel *The Glass Licentiate*, Descartes mentions it as a premise to his syllogism *I think therefore I am*, and Charles VI of France had iron ribs sewn into his clothes to protect himself from breaking. Victims allegedly travelled padded in straw and refused to sit down fearing their body weight would fracture their buttocks.

The syndrome evokes a psychological separation between reality and imagination, between a strength and a vulnerability that we all experience at times. Glass is a barrier, yet allows light to pass through it; it magnifies and shrinks; it can be delicate as well as deadly. Its attributes are appropriated in symbolic ways: the Glass Brain and the Glass Man; mirror image, alter ego, Doppelgänger, and split personality all come to mind. More than any other material glass has the ability to combine opposites and it is this duality that is the inspiration for this exhibition.

Contemporary art, artefacts and scientific objects have been brought together to tell the story of human attempts to reconcile the physical and mental worlds. Susan Hiller's hypnotic video installation, *From Here to Eternity*, (2008) comprises a pair of projections onto canvas that trace the pathway of a moving point through a maze and Beryl Sokoloff's *My Mirrored Hope* (1962) which immortalises Clarence Schmidt's *House of Mirrors*. Schmidt started building a labyrinthine house in Woodstock, New York, assembled from wooden window frames, mirrors and found objects, that became his life's work and which burnt down in 1968. Artefacts, such as Charles Babbage's scribbling notebook, express his first thoughts on Artificial Intelligence in outlines that bounce from brain to mind and from thought into form; and scientific objects, such as Alan Bennett's *Klein Bottles*, which have no edges, outside or inside but are a single continuous surface.

A new commission by American artist Matt Mullican and Wearside Glass explores the artist's fascination with the visual manifestations of the relationship between information and perception. His work includes performances of the artist drawing and painting while under hypnosis.

Some works will only be shown at **NOVEMBER** gallery, 46 Lower Dundas Street, Sunderland, Thursday 21 May - Thursday 15 July, Weds – Sat, 11am – 3pm.

'The Glass Delusion': Events at National Glass Centre

Artist's Talk: Alan Bennett, Thursday 20 May, 4-5.30pm

Alan Bennett will guide you through some of his fascinating works in glass, including his Klein Bottles and amazing bubble machine. Glass as you've never seen it before.

The Glass Music Programme, Tuesday 15 June, 7-8.30pm

Produced by NGC, introduced and curated by Richard Bernas with Northern Sinfonia, orchestra of The Sage Gateshead and featuring Alasdair Molloy – one of the few performers of the legendary Glass Harmonica.

Film and Video programme presented in collaboration with **Star & Shadow Cinema** and **Lux**. Screenings take place on Weds 29th September, Thurs 30th September and Sunday 3rd October at Star & Shadow Cinema, Newcastle. Visit www.nationalglasscentre.com for further details.

Notes to editors

Artists include: Meris Angioletti, Celia Baker, Alan Bennett, Malcolm W. Browne, Annie Cattrell, Attila Csörgö, Katharine Dowson, Peter. J. Evans, Thomas Florschuetz, Helga Griffiths, Carla Guagliardi, Susan Hiller, Christoph Keller, Jorge Macchi, Cristiano Mangione, Anne Vibeke Mou, Matt Mullican, João Penalva, Roger Penrose, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Richard Rigg, Fred Sandback, Beryl Sokoloff/Clarence Schmidt, Jana Sterbak, Vedovamazzei, Alfie West.

Artefacts and objects from: Beamish Museum, Co. Durham, Tyne & Wear Archives and Museums, The Science Museum, London and Great North Museum Hancock, Newcastle upon Tyne.

Susan Hiller's practice encompasses installation, video, photography, performance and writing. She has lived and worked in London since 1973, when she first became known for an innovative artistic practice using automatic writing, e.s.p, photomat machines, wallpaper and postcards in such work as *Dedicated to the Unknown Artists* (1972-76) or collective performance, such as in *Dream Mapping* (1974).

Susan Hiller describes her art as "investigations into the 'unconscious' of our culture", the starting point for which is often a cultural artefact or aspect overlooked or rejected by our society and cultural production. Hiller has had retrospectives at London's Institute of Contemporary Art (1986) and Tate Liverpool (1996).

Charles Babbage (1791 – 1871) is considered to be the father of the computer. A mathematician, philosopher, inventor and mechanical engineer, he is credited with inventing the first mechanical computer that eventually led to more complex designs. In 1991, a perfectly functioning 'difference engine' was constructed from Babbage's original plans.

Alan Bennett is a glassmaker from Bedford, who made a series of Klein Bottles for the Science Museum, London in 1995. A Klein bottle is a surface which has no edges, no outside or inside and cannot properly be constructed in three dimensions. In the series Alan Bennett made Klein bottles analogous to Mobius strips with odd numbers of twists greater than one.

Matt Mullican uses a variety of media, installation and performance to explore the visual mapping of subjective thoughts and emotions. Since the late 1970s he has used hypnosis in his work, including performance under hypnosis, as he did at Tate Modern in January 2007. Performances can last several hours, as the artist exhibits different behaviour; pouring himself coffee, pacing the floor, grunting, crying, singing, or uttering phrases and exclamations, as well as drawing or painting in black ink on large pieces of paper, bed sheets or a wall.

Matt Mullican's commission is in collaboration with The Magnetic Resonance Centre, Newcastle University and Wearside Glass.

Wearside Glass designs and makes handmade glass giftware. Founded by Brian Jones and Norman Veitch in 1996, the two glassmakers decided to become business partners after spending several years working together in the science department at Pyrex in Sunderland.

Brian Jones and Norman Veitch specialise in lampworking: a type of glasswork that uses a gas fuelled torch to heat rods and tubes of clear and coloured glass so that they can be manipulated and shaped using a variety of methods whilst the glass is soft.

Wearside Glass is based at National Glass Centre and often collaborates with NGC artist projects and commissions.

Star and Shadow Cinema operates in the Ouseburn valley in Newcastle upon Tyne. It is one of a small number of venues around the world re-inventing cinema, championing independence and diversity, and community ownership in cinema.

LUX is an arts agency which explores ideas around artists' moving image practice through exhibition, distribution, publishing, education and research.

Clarence Schmidt (1897 – 1978) was a plasterer by trade and a movie set builder for the silent film studios of the 1930s. In 1931 he inherited land on a mountainside in upstate Woodstock, N.Y. and Schmidt and his wife relocated. In Woodstock he worked as a handyman and began building a massive house/labyrinth that would become his life's work. Over the years it grew into a huge assemblage of wooden window frames, mirrors, walkways, bedsteads and other found objects. By the time it burned to the ground, in 1968, it was a monument of outsider art — 30 rooms spread over seven stories and topped by a garden.

Beryl Sokoloff (1918 – 2006) was a New York-based artist/film maker. In the early 1960s Sokoloff made dozens of experimental films edited to draw together visual and psychological patterns. A number of Sokoloff's films were about other artists. The most notable was *My Mirrored Hope*, from 1962, a documentary excursion of an American outsider art eccentricity; the self-built home of Clarence Schmidt.

NOVEMBER gallery is a new studio/gallery space in Sunderland run by artist and University of Sunderland lecturer, Tim Brennan.

Essays available by Luca Francesco Ticini, Antonello Sciacchitano and Alessandra Pace.

The Glass Delusion is curated by Grainne Sweeney, Creative Director, National Glass Centre, Sunderland and guest curator, Alessandra Pace.

Images from L to R: Alan Bennett, *Klein Bottle*. Clarence Schmidt, *House of Mirrors* is featured in *My Mirrored Hope* (1962) by Beryl Sokoloff. Susan Hiller, *From Here to Eternity* (2008).

Sign up to NGC e-newsletter for the latest events related to this exhibition at www.nationalglasscentre.com

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Press enquiries

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Opening Hours:
Monday – Sunday 10.00am – 5.00pm
FREE
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