

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Media Contact:
Tim Butler, Marketing and Communications Director

253.284.4732

tbutler@museumofglass.org

MUSEUM OF GLASS OPENS NEW EXHIBITION
SHE BENDS: REDEFINING NEON LEGACY

Exhibition features artists of historically under-represented communities in the neon art form and the women who taught them.



Jude Abu Zaineh (Palestinian-Canadian, born 1990). *tend to grow (watermelons)*, detail, 2022. Varying glass tubes and gases, electrodes; Dimensions variable. Photo courtesy of the artist.

TACOMA, WA. — Museum of Glass is proud to present ***She Bends: Redefining Neon Legacy***, opening February 11 and on view until October 2023. *She Bends* explores the evolution of neon teaching methodologies in the traditionally male-dominated art form, and the transition of the medium from an agent of advertising and commercial signage to fine art.

Redefining Neon Legacy is curated by the organization She Bends, led by co-owners Meryl Pataky and Kelsey Issel. She Bends aims to push the boundaries of neon and is dedicated to building a more equitable future for the art form through public education, curatorial projects, and artist programs.

“We want to tell neon’s story, and the stories of those who use it in their art. We want to change the narrative around neon and show that the process is becoming more personal for the artists. The process can be just as interesting as the finished product. It can be magical, and there are so many stories that can be told. And, by supporting and celebrating the artists who are making new and challenging work, we can help continue this story responsibly,” said Pataky.

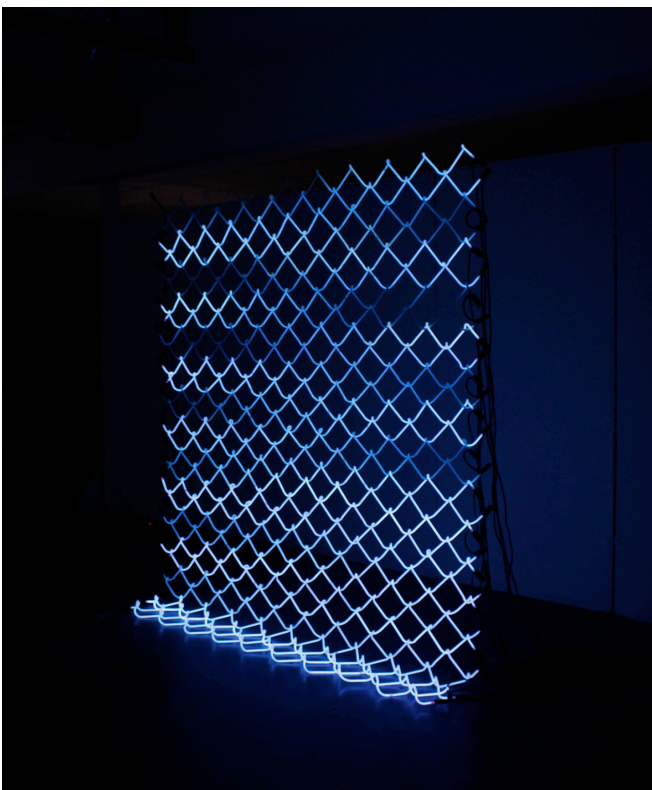
In addition to the process of neon and the importance of women and gender-expansive artists in the medium's history, visitors will learn about the intersection between art and science, the commercial history of the material, and its emergence as a more personal art form. Much of the exhibited work is not only a response to neon's commercial origins, but an exploration of themes of cultural identity, healing, or political activism. Additionally, since neon is a "master/apprentice" craft, the exhibition's curators are focused on how neon skills are passed on and how the material's legacy evolves to become younger and more diverse.

"Neon is an outstanding example of what makes glass art so special – a ubiquitous material that transforms in the hands of artists. I am excited for our visitors to see neon, a pervasive material for signage, through the eyes of the electrifying artists of *She Bends*," said Katie Buckingham, Museum of Glass Curator.

Exhibiting artists include Sarah Blood, Carissa Grace, Kacie Lees, Stephanie Sara Lifshutz, Victoria Ahmadizadeh Melendez, Meryl Pataky, Lily Reeves, Daniella Thach, and Jude Abu Zaineh.

"Museum of Glass is thrilled to partner with *She Bends* to amplify the voices, experiences, and identities of current and future artists. We continue to seek opportunities to represent our entire community through the stories told in our galleries, and we can't wait to share this groundbreaking exhibition. The more we in the glass community have experiences with adjacent art forms like neon, the more we can present an immersive and compelling narrative for our visitors," said Museum of Glass Executive Director Debbie Lenk.

An opening celebration will be held on Saturday, February 11, with Family Day hands-on neon activities, exhibition tours, and demonstrations. An evening RSVP-only reception will follow. More information about Museum programming throughout the exhibition installation is below.



Carissa Grace (American, born 1997). *Comforter*, 2019. Argon, glass tubing, and transformers; 108 x 96 x 24 inches. Courtesy of the artist. Photo courtesy of the artist.



Victoria Ahmadizadeh Melendez (American, born 1988). *a quiet life, a couple of times over*, 2021. Blown glass, argon, and mercury; 14 x 14 x 5 in. Courtesy of the artist. Photo by Matthew Hollerbush.



Meryl Pataky (American, born 1983) with textile collaboration by Allie Felton. *A Modern Guilt* (installation view), 2020. Neon and mixed media; dimensions variable. Courtesy of artist. Photo by Deb Leal.

EXHIBITION PROGRAMMING

Family Day: We Bend

Saturday, February 11 – 1pm-4pm

Guest artist Jennifer Adams will show visitors how to create their own sculpture simulating neon artwork.

Opening Celebration

Saturday, February 11 – 5:30pm-8pm

Free – RSVP required

Museum of Glass will hold an opening celebration for the community. The reception will feature a cash bar and food truck, remarks from the exhibition curators, live neon bending demonstrations, and exhibition tours.

Neon Demonstrations

February 11-12: She Bends Artists

May 10-14: Visiting Artists GFTS (Gas Filling Tube Suckers)

May 27-29: Local Neon Artists

September 2-4: Local Neon Artists

October 11-15: Visiting Artist Jay Macdonell

Neon bending demonstrations will take place during the opening weekend of the exhibition, Memorial Day weekend, and Labor Day weekend. Additionally, visiting artists Gas Filling Tube Suckers and Jay Macdonell will have Visiting Artists residencies in conjunction with the exhibition in May and October.

Galen Turner, Jacob Willcow, and Dani Kaes founded the neon glass artist collective Gas Filling Tube Suckers (GFTS) in early 2022. Their residency will be an opportunity for visitors to experience the art of neon firsthand, including the creation of intricate tubes and vessels, bombardment demonstrations (how tubes are filled with gas), and the creation of plasma forms.

Jay Macdonell has worked in many studios for various artists, designers, and architects as a project manager, design consultant, and gaffer. He completed a traditional apprenticeship under glass master Robert Held in Vancouver, Canada. He co-taught at Pilchuck Glass School with Swedish designer Ann Wahlstrom and has worked for artists such as Laura and Alessandro De Santillana, Xu Bing, Angelo Filomeno, Bruce Mau, Catherine Chalmers, and Mildred Howard. Jay has taught at Pilchuck Glass School, The Bay Area Glass Institute in San Jose, Pittsburgh Glass Center, Espace Verre in Montreal, and the Royal Copenhagen School of Art and Architecture on the island of Bornholm, Denmark.

Artist Talks

February 11 & 12 – She Bends Artists Talks

Livestream Artist Talks – Thursdays, July 6 – August 24, 12pm-1pm

Third Thursday Speaker Series – June 15, July 20, August 17, 5pm-8pm

Livestream artist talks will take place each Thursday in July and August. Museum of Glass and She Bends staff will interview exhibiting artists about their process, work, background in neon, and their relationship with their teachers and influencers.

Additionally, as part of Museum of Glass free Third Thursday programming, the exhibition will feature a series of speakers at the Museum discussing the history of neon in Tacoma, the science of neon, and the artform's future.

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About Museum of Glass

Located in Tacoma, Washington, Museum of Glass is a premier contemporary art museum dedicated to glass and glassmaking with the West Coast's largest and most active museum glass studio. Opened in 2002, the Museum has established a reputation for hosting impactful and engaging artist residencies, organizing nationally traveling exhibitions, and creating unique programs for visitors while building a growing permanent collection chronicling the development of modern and contemporary glass. Museum of Glass provides an environment for artists and the public to ignite creativity, fuel discovery, and enrich their lives through glass and glassmaking.

Quick Facts

- Museum of Glass has displayed over 140 exhibitions since 2002, featuring glass art pioneers such as Dale Chihuly, Lino Tagliapietra, and Preston Singletary.
- Over 100,000 visitors explore the Museum each year.
- The Hot Shop hosts over 35 Visiting Artist Residencies each year.
- The Museum has engaged over 200,000 children through educational programs.
- 750 soldiers and veterans have been served through the Hot Shop Heroes program

Address: 1801 Dock Street, Tacoma, WA 98402

Hours: 10am-5pm, Wednesday - Sunday. Third Thursday of every month, 5am-8pm, free admission

Admission: \$18 - Adults; \$16 - Seniors (65+)/College Students (18+)/Military (Active and Veteran); \$10 - Children (6–18); Free - Children (under 6); Free - Museum Members; \$1/person; \$2/family - EBT Cardholders