



Square One, 2006. Glass and metal.
H 17 1/2, W 17 3/4, D 3 in.

PHOTO: SHANNON TOFTS

David Kaplan and Annica Sandström

The Scottish Gallery
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New York native David Kaplan met Annica Sandström in her native Sweden in the early 1970s while he was working at Boda Glass and she was studying at Orrefors. They joined forces in life and in art, and set up Lindean Mill Glass in Scotland in 1978 as a small rural workshop combining hard-won technical know-how with high aesthetic standards. Much of Sandström and Kaplan's time has been devoted to producing commercially viable glass such as tableware, but they also produce more pure, non-functional fine art pieces, some of which were recently exhibited at an Edinburgh art gallery. The exhibition made clear the cross-fertilization between these two areas. In the 1980s, Kaplan and Sandström's production bowls began to evolve into conical vessels, and these in turn

led on to the development of tall cylinders. And a few years ago their focus on functionality was abandoned completely in a series of large slumped panels that hinted at windows (decontextualised from their functional role).

Underlining all of this work was Sandström and Kaplan's use of color. As the form of their work evolved, so, too, did they begin to use color in an increasingly complex and skilful manner. Whereas their earlier work showed a more limited, bolder palette, their later output demonstrates a greater chromatic range and employs a more subtle tonality than their earlier emphasis on contrast.

Employing the *graal* process (a technique pioneered and developed at Orrefors), the couple have produced a small, concentrated grouping of glass panels that both acknowledge the particular quality of light found in Scotland and use it to great advantage. The works, although individual in design and execution, form part of a continuous, integrated whole, rather like parts of a symphony that can either stand alone or be experienced as a unified entity. *Between the Lines* (all works 2006) and

Square One, although devoid of color, use the tonalities of black, white and gray to reveal subtle abstractions of shape and form. On a closer reading these shapes might be revealed as anthropomorphic: the human figure emerging, backlit, shimmering, and strangely animated, especially when the light is changed by a passing cloud. It was Willem de Kooning who said that landscape is the woman and the woman is the landscape. Though far removed in one sense from the American painter's Abstract Expressionist colors and techniques, the observation is a useful one in understanding Kaplan and Sandström's approach. The landscape of the Scottish Borders where Lindean Mills is located is undulating, curvaceous, and rarely threatening, unlike the more northern parts of the country. Clearly, the couple have absorbed some of the *genus loci* they inhabit.

In other pieces such as *Spine*, the theme of landscape and the human figure emerges again. Here, in place of the monochromatism of *Between the Lines* and *Square One*, is a rich and complex combination of mauve and red. The intensity of the colors suggests molten rock, or glass that has only just emerged from the kiln. The central shape of the work is suggestive of a torso, but only just. These moves toward increasing abstraction are typical of Kaplan and Sandström's overall journey from functionality to pure form.

The exhibition was not, however, limited to sculptural work. Several of the couple's austere but delicate bowls were no less sculptural than the glass panels and had prices that suggested they are not intended for functional use.

Although the Scottish Gallery remains one of the very few Scottish venues with a complete commitment to exhibiting artwork from craft media, the constraints of the venue, which is located in a small basement space, inevitably make one long for this work to be seen in a bigger, brighter gallery. This in turn might encourage the artists themselves to extend their reach yet again and aim for larger, more complex works. The artists owe it to themselves and to their audience.

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