

INTERVIEW: LAURA DE SANTILLANA

James Barron: Tell me about your concept of “books” and “pumpkins.”

Laura de Santillana: My glass has always reminded me of books. The people at the studio ask me, “Are you coming to make books or pumpkins?” “Pumpkins” is everything blown. “Books” are the idea of squeezing the bubble, instead of letting go.

JB: You’re trying to make a void?

LdS: Yes. It starts with the breath. I like working with glass because you put air -- your breath -- inside the material and you close it inside. It’s the moment between inhaling and exhaling. By trapping air inside, some interesting things happen in the process. The accidents are written inside the piece.

JB: And you accept the accidents?

LdS: Yes, you do something with the accidents. It’s controlled chance.

JB: Tell me about your color.

LdS: When I work with two colors, one is always harder. The harder color pulls, and then you get the softer one, which makes the line.

JB: What’s your favorite time of day?

LdS: I like to work late at night, two to four in the morning. It’s a time of suspension. It’s a moment of transition. I love to go to Murano at six am, by boat, in the morning light. The energy is fantastic.

JB: There’s a sense of illusion in Venice. The echoes, the light refracting on walls...

LdS: My work is about refracted light, low water and the horizon line. There is a very old technique, *incalmo*, which is the joining of two pieces. When you have *incalmo* on a round form, you don’t see much. When you bring together two walls, then you get things happening. You get an ellipse, or it doubles up, or the rim is folded inside and you get double color. All these things you only see because you are bringing the two walls together.

JB: This work is the culmination of a lifetime of working with glass. It’s in your heritage. In a way, you’re crushing a portion of history. Instead of being utilitarian, your work is non-functional.

LdS: It contains nothing, but it’s still a container, a vessel. It contains color and light. I say, *look at the glass in a different way*. That’s what I am trying to say with my work.