KATHARINE COLEMAN
All the Year Round
Left: *May – Horsechestnut*, 2015; Green glass overlaid on clear lead crystal, blown, cut, polished and wheel engraved; H21 x D12 cm (detail) (cat. 5)

Cover: *July – Blue Hydrangea*, 2015; Turkish blue glass overlaid on clear lead crystal, blown, cut, polished and wheel engraved; H11.2 x D16.3 cm (detail) (cat. 7)
Having recently visited upstate New York, Katharine Coleman’s original idea for her solo exhibition at The Scottish Gallery was to be entitled My America and would have been based on the amazing wild plants and people she saw there. However the monumental scale she had in mind for this work proved difficult due to health issues on behalf of her glassblower and herself. As she had always wanted to produce work on the theme of the four seasons she was inspired to create a collection based on the months of the year.

Illustrated books of hours have always fascinated me so I was intrigued to learn that the work in All the Year Round is described by Katharine Coleman as ‘a modest tribute to the Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry’, the very beautiful and famous 15th century illuminated manuscript. It has been stated that the attention to detail derived from observation of the world is evident in the book and the same can be said of Coleman’s exceptional work and her accompanying comments. Coleman quotes the 19th century American philosopher Thomas Moore whom she says coined the phrase ‘the beautiful ordinary’, explaining that the beauty to be found in the ordinary has been a constant theme in her work and each of the twelve pieces, representing the twelve months of the year, do represent ordinary themes but are produced with such meticulous skill that they become remarkable and extraordinary. The rich colour palette in the Très Riches Heures inspired the colour choices for the work and each piece affords an accurate depiction of the month it illustrates whilst also conjuring up thoughts of the four seasons. This is particularly evident in November – Stormy Weather where the pattern emulates bad weather and the cup and saucer symbolic of a warming hot drink is also an amusing reference to a storm in a tea cup.

Katharine Coleman first visited Japan in 2004 and is still inspired by the country and people that she describes as having the beauty of the ordinary at the heart of their culture and timeless aesthetic. She likens the public and strictly private persona of Japanese people to glass, which through its reflective qualities can reveal another world.

An example of this influence can be clearly seen in October – Golden Ginkgo although the timeless aesthetic is evident in all her work. April – Poissons d’Avril and August – Swallows are my two favourite pieces, the first because I like the idea of the fish seemingly moving when the bowl is lifted and the second because of the beauty of the swallows and the story of their senseless slaughter. The small scale of the work in the exhibition enhances their magical qualities and is testament to Coleman’s technical ability. It is not surprising that she was awarded an MBE in 2009 for her services to glass engraving and elected an Honorary Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Glass Sellers of London and a Freeman of the City of London in June 2015.

Katharine Coleman collaborates closely with the glassblowers who make the work to her design. She is very exacting and says she likes to be present when the work is being made so that she can ‘nag’ the blowers. The glass in this exhibition was made by Andy Potter of Potter Morgan Glass. Coleman is adamant that traditional engraving techniques do not have to produce traditional work and insists that lead crystal is essential to achieve full colour luminosity. She also believes that the full potential of glass as an artistic medium has barely been discovered and that engraving is a very important technical aspect in the study of glass. She aims to help keep engraving techniques alive through teaching workshops in Corning, USA and West Dean College in the UK, as well as summer schools in Europe, in the hope that her students will gain an understanding of the practical skills in glass engraving and value the many techniques that can be used. She is saddened at the thought of a younger generation of glass artists not having an appreciation of traditional engraving techniques and concerned that in the future there will be few qualified to hand on these skills.

ROSE WATBAN
Senior Curator, Modern and Contemporary Design
National Museums Scotland
January – Marmalade, 2015
Orange topaz glass overlaid on clear lead crystal, blown, cut, polished and wheel engraved; H20 x D11 cm
February – Snow, 2015
Smoke grey glass overlaid on clear lead crystal, blown, cut, polished and wheel and drill engraved; H26 x D8.4 cm
Ruby glass overlaid on clear lead crystal bowl, blown, cut, polished and wheel engraved; H7.5 x D17 cm
April – Poissons d’Avril, 2015
Ruby over yellow glass overlaid on clear lead crystal, blown, cut, polished and wheel engraved; H12.2 x D15 cm
May – Horsechestnut, 2015

Green glass overlaid on clear lead crystal, blown, cut, polished and wheel engraved; H21 x D12 cm
June – Little Bowl of Sunshine, 2015
Yellow glass overlaid on clear lead crystal, blown, cut, polished and wheel engraved; H4 x D12 cm
7  *July – Blue Hydrangea, 2015*

Turkish blue glass overlaid on clear lead crystal, blown, cut, polished and wheel engraved; H11.2 x D16.3 cm
August — Swallows, 2015
Smoke grey glass overlaid on clear lead crystal, blown, cut, polished and wheel engraved; H11 x D17.5 cm
September – Mushrooms, 2014
Smoke grey glass overlaid on clear lead crystal, blown, cut, polished and wheel engraved; H17 x D11 cm
10  *October – Golden Ginkgo, 2015*

Yellow glass overlaid on clear lead crystal, blown, cut, polished and wheel engraved; H17 x D11.8 cm
November – Stormy Weather, 2015

Turkish blue glass overlaid on clear lead crystal, blown, cut, polished and wheel engraved. Cup H6.5 x D15 cm; saucer H2.5 x D17 cm
December – Mistletoe, 2015
Lime green glass overlaid on clear lead crystal, blown, cut, polished and wheel engraved; H22 x D19 cm
JANUARY – MARMALADE

Bitter Seville oranges arrive here in January and herald the first major post-Christmas kitchen upheaval. Orange marmalade was developed by James Keiller in Dundee in the late 18th century and became popular very quickly. While one can make marmalade (from the Spanish name for jam) from many fruits boiled with sugar, orange marmalade has become an essential part of the British breakfast table. Making marmalade takes up space and mother’s time, turning the home into a fragrant, orange-scented miasma.

This recipe comes from my mother’s copy of Mrs Beaton’s Household Management, publishing date unknown, (but her godmother wrote her name, address in India and the date 30th.4.1919 in the cover) pp.1112-1113, marked with a torn piece of a Player’s Navy Cut cigarette packet:

INGREDIENTS – 12 Seville oranges, two lemons, preserving sugar

METHOD – Slice the fruit thinly, removing inner pith and pips. Weigh it, and to each lb. add three pints of cold water. Let the whole remain covered in an earthenware vessel for three days, then turn the preparation into a preserving-pan and boil gently until quite tender. Let it cool, weigh again, and to each lb. of fruit add 1 lb. of sugar. Bring to boiling-point, skim well, and cook gently until the syrup stiffens quickly when tested on a cold plate. Turn into pots, cover with paper brushed over on both sides with white of egg and store in a cold, dry, place.

TIME – Altogether, four days.

FEBRUARY – SNOW

My son Toby was born in February 1979 when we had the coldest winter in Cambridgeshire for years. The temperature outside was down to minus 16 and snow blocked the road over the Gog Magog Hills from our village into Cambridge. A kindly midwife came in a police car and we stoked up the fires in the bedroom and the sitting room grates, the central heating having failed, the oil turning to jelly between the tank and the house. It was a lovely, peaceful birth in the total quiet from the snow outside and the gentle breathing of the dear, deaf, clever old lady.

Ever since then I have noticed that there are almost always at least a few flakes of snow that fall on that day. Only about five years so far without.
By March, one is getting tired of winter. The flowering bulbs that herald spring bring welcome relief. My favourites are the giant purple alliums, or ornamental onions, which tend to flower at the end of March, their tall, showy spikes and beautiful, perfectly spherical flowers rising above the tulips, daffodils and border plants, bringing a touch of the exotic to the depleted vegetable garden. The structure of the flower balls, each tiny floret, is a miracle in spacing and form. Even when the flowers die, the dried seed heads are magnificent.

Though I no longer have a garden of my own, I have always loved plants and gardening and now take pleasure in other people’s gardens. Gertrude Jekyll wrote “The love of gardening is a seed once sown that never dies.”

We have April Fool’s Day. The French have something similar, ‘Poissons d’Avril’, where paper fish are cut out and stuck on a victim’s back – the fun being the delay until it is noticed. While the fish in these goldfish bowls are not of paper, they represent the April fish, for the bowl inside is no bowl.

The illusion of the inner bowl is a simple combination of refraction and reflection that comes when you look through the side of thick walled clear glass that has some mark on the outside. In the case of the fish, the amusement comes when you tilt the bowl in your hands. Unlike the engraved fish on the outside of the bowl, the reflected fish are not fixed and will appear to move as you gyrate the bowl.
MAY – HORSECHESTNUT

In spring, the first trees to break into leaf are the great horsechestnuts, *Aesculus hippocastanum*. They are the signal of the summer to come. The leaves come out rapidly, one can almost watch them force their way out of the sticky buds and open like miniature umbrellas. Often the tree appears to change from bare branches to full leaf in a matter of two or three days. The delicate, fresh new leaves are a bright lime colour. The candle-like flower spikes follow shortly after the leaves are out. The horsechestnut was introduced from the Balkans in the 17th century. It is a hermaphrodite, self-pollinating species.

Horsechestnuts in May will always remind me of Cambridge, the seemingly endless hours of revision for exams, the relief of the exams being over, my friends and the joy of learning. The appearance of those leaves triggers instant nostalgia. Early horsechestnuts also remind me of Paris and Madrid, but the first love is the best.

JUNE – LITTLE BOWL OF SUNSHINE

Flaming June is not always so sunny, but it is the prime month of summer in every way. The pleasure of being out in the warm sunshine, stepping outside without a coat, the long days of light, it seems like heresy to leave England in June when the gardens are at their peak, the days their loveliest.

This bowl was blown as a spare — in case of disaster — when I was commissioned in 2014 by Michael and Jenny Nathan to make a treasure for the 350th anniversary of the foundation of The Worshipful Company of Glass Sellers of London, the City Livery Company which represents functional glass other than glazing. The Salt sits in front of the Master at the High table at formal dinners. It represents a glass cone, the form for glass factories up till the mid 20th century. The arms of the Company include a shining sun, which forms the bowl for the salt.
JULY – BLUE HYDRANGEA

July spells the beginning of the school holidays. I was at boarding school from a very early age and the long school holidays spelled particularly longed-for freedom and return to the family for two whole months. In the 1960s every front garden in South-East England seemed to have blue hydrangeas (or the pink ones if the plants had not been kept watered with aluminium solution or some other secret recipe to keep them blue). I watched them from the back of the car, mile upon mile, as the distance grew towards home. My mother despised them, so I began capriciously to appreciate them and their forms, in flower and the dried deadheads. I now love hydrangeas, particularly the lace-caps and the climbing varieties. However, the blue hydrangeas now bring more complex emotions for me and I am never sure if I like them or not.

AUGUST – SWALLOWS

In August the nesting swallows have hatched their families and, by the end of the month, are clustering together, preparing to face the long flight south for the winter. Watching them flying high on thundery August afternoons, clouds of them, is becoming a rare and delightful experience. I remember more of them as a child. Sadly their numbers are depleted by the activities of Mediterranean ‘hunstmen’ and by the lack of suitable, sheltered nesting sites under the eaves of the modern house and farm building.

At Orthodox Easter in Crete this year we witnessed the shameful ‘tradition’ of the locals who own illegal machine pistols and slaughter clouds of these poor birds as they migrate north back for the summer. There seems no effort made whatsoever by the authorities to control this senseless, pointless killing.
SEPTEMBER – MUSHROOMS

There can be no greater pleasure than finding and eating fresh mushrooms, whether they are the great *funghi porcini*, *Steinpilzen*, or Penny Buns as they are commonly called in Britain, or the tiny *girolles*, *Pfifferlingen* and *chanterelles*. The days are shortening, the sun may be warm but the misty mornings force one back into the winter coat.

In a market in Germany this year I bought a kilo of field mushrooms for next to nothing. A quarter of a block of unsalted butter went into the hot frying pan, followed by the cleaned (not washed), roughly chopped mushrooms. Once these were browning, the juice coming away, they were joined by several pieces of chopped garlic and a couple of shallots, together with a large handful of roughly chopped homegrown flat parsley. By this time, half of Bild-Werk Frauenau had left their studios and were crowding into the kitchen. “What is this delicious smell?” Omelettes all round.

OCTOBER – GOLDEN GINKGO

Of all the leaf forms that I have engraved, I have enjoyed the ginkgo most of all, for its beautiful form. A living fossil, the earliest of all tree varieties, the ginkgo does not have branching veins in its leaves – like the maidenhair fern, they radiate from the stem. Trees are either masculine or feminine. We seldom see the female *ginkgo biloba* in Europe because we do not appreciate the stinking fruit surrounding the tasty nuts. We do, however, greatly prize the golden yellow leaves in October.

The ginkgo is greatly prized in China and Japan. In Japanese, it has the name ‘Ichō’ which is a special name for some living and non-living things. Ginkgo features widely in literature, religion, decoration and the kitchen. The nuts are particularly appreciated and the leaf form. The trees are also admired for their tenacity. A few were the only living things within 1-2 km to survive the Hiroshima atomic bomb blast in 1945.

My glasswork has been greatly influenced by visits to Japan since 2004 and my admiration for Japanese culture, also the sophistication and restraint of Japanese design.
NOVEMBER – STORMY WEATHER

The nights seem to close in so fast in November, the winds rise and the rain drives down between the days of sun and frosty nights. Darkness seems to take over from the golden light of October. Families are seriously preparing for Christmas, Diwali and Hannukah, all festivals to bring light to a dismal time of the year. With these preparations, tempers can rise and, as in this cup, one hopes it really remains just a storm in a tea cup.

The design for this cup came from an earlier piece, Stormy Seas, a pun on a writing exercise for children. I had to learn to write with a dip pen to flowingly join the letters. This pattern is the exercise for the letter ‘c’. Once we could write a whole page of joined up, coherent ‘c’s, we progressed to ‘d’. I liked the patterns but not the dreary exercises and the blots of school ink from the terrible steel nibbed pens. Curiously, when we finished the alphabet (several never seemed to), we were allowed to use biros.

DECEMBER – MISTLETOE

Mistletoe should always be hung in a generous, great ball. That is how it grows in trees. It is long associated with Christmas in Britain and is thought to pre-date Roman culture, playing an important role in Druidic mythology and Norse culture, being a symbol of peace and friendship. Through the Middle Ages it became associated with fertility and vitality. By the 18th century the tradition of kissing underneath the mistletoe was well established, any man being allowed to kiss a woman who stepped beneath the branch, and any woman refusing such a kiss receiving bad luck in return. One variation of the tradition says that a berry must be plucked for each kiss and that when depleted of berries, the kissing has to stop. Charles Dickens did much to popularise the custom, Under the Mistletoe in Pickwick Papers being but one of many references to the games of Christmas.

This bowl is my Christmas tribute to Emile Gallé, one of my heroes in glass, and to William Morris, founder of the Art Workers Guild of whom I am proud to be a Brother.
Born in Sutton Coldfield in 1949, Katharine is a freelance glass engraver and designer. She was taught point, drill and copper wheel engraving on glass by Peter Dreiser at Morley College, Lambeth from 1984-87 and continues to explore these techniques at her workshop in Clerkenwell. Katharine engraves on clear lead crystal forms, overlaid with coloured glass, blown to her design. Her work requires close collaboration with glassblowers Potter Morgan Glass and Sonja Klingler. Once blown and annealed, the top surface of the glass is cut and polished to allow one to see inside the piece, usually with the help of coldworker Steve Frey of Cold Glass Workshop, Frome. It is then engraved on the outside surface. The engraved decoration reflects and refracts onto the inner surface, creating an illusion of one body floating inside another. The inspiration for her work ranges from natural history to the modern urban landscape.

Katharine’s work has been exhibited widely in the UK and Europe, USA and Japan and can be seen in many public collections. She feels strongly that wheel engraving on glass does not need to be traditional in style or content. She prefers traditional techniques, engraving the glass surface with lathe-mounted copper, diamond and stone wheels, with which she is able to obtain the crispness, textures and fine finish; so difficult to achieve with sandblast and drill.

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS INCLUDE
National Museums Scotland, Edinburgh
Dan Klein & Alan J. Poole Collection, NMS, Edinburgh
Victoria & Albert Museum, London
Kunstsammlungen der Veste Coburg, Germany
Corning Museum of Glass, USA
Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge
Shipley Art Gallery, Gateshead
MUDAC Lausanne, Switzerland

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS
2015  Drawing – An Expressive Gesture with the Advantage of Permanence, The National Glass Centre, Sunderland
      2015 British Glass Biennale, Ruskin Glass Centre, Stourbridge
      Gravur on Tour: Modern European Glass Engraving, Red House Glass Cone, Stourbridge
      Guild of Glass Engravers, Red House Glass Cone, Stourbridge
      COLLECT, The Saatchi Gallery, London

      Coburger Glaspreis 2014, Kunstsammlungen der Veste Coburg, Germany
      UK Glass, Glass Museum Het Glazenhuis, Lommel, Belgium
      Spectrum, The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh
      A Sea of Glass, The Dutch National Glass Museum, Leerdam, Netherlands

2013  Galerie Hélène Porée, Paris
      Gravur International – heute-now-dnes-konnichi-vandaag-täna-actuel, Eisch Galerie, Frauenau, Germany
      Hot Glass! New Work from the Furnace, Contemporary Glass Society and Contemporary Applied Arts, London
      In the Name of Love, Alexander Tutsek Stiftung, Munich
Published by The Scottish Gallery to coincide with the exhibition
KATHARINE COLEMAN: ALL THE YEAR ROUND
28 November – 23 December 2015

Exhibition can be viewed online at
www.scottish-gallery.co.uk/katharinecoleman

ISBN: 978-1-910267-28-8

Designed by www.kennethgray.co.uk
Photography by Katharine Coleman with the exception of the portrait which was by Lara Platman, with permission.
Printed by J Thomson Colour Printers

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Right: December – Mistletoe, 2015; Lime green glass overlaid on clear lead crystal, blown, cut, polished and wheel engraved; H22 × D19 cm (detail) (cat. 12)

Back cover: October – Golden Ginkgo, 2015; Yellow glass overlaid on clear lead crystal, blown, cut, polished and wheel engraved; H17 × D11.8 cm (detail) (cat. 10)