



Marta Klonowska
Istota
Toyama Glass Art Museum, Japan

April 27 and September 23, 2019.

Michael Petry has written an essay 'Do You Hear The Dogs Barking?' for Marta Klonowska's new publication which accompanies her exhibition at the Toyama Glass Art Museum.

The *Istota* exhibition presents a selection of sculptures from 2003 up to the present.

For more information visit
[Toyama Glass Art Museum's website.](http://Toyama Glass Art Museum's website)
martaklonowska.com
lorch-seidel.de/artists/marta-klonowska

Do you hear the dogs barking?

There it is again, a deep woof, low to the ground, a rumble.

And now a growl, canine teeth flash and bite.

Blood flows, and looks like it has been poured out of a glass beaker.

A crash, glass on stone, now coloured a deep reddish brown. Life flows out and into the ground.

Dogs are but wolves in waiting.

They wait

For us,

Their masters,

To take them on walks;

To feed them;

To let them run wild in the fields and remember the call of the wild;

Of being wolves.

And then we collar them again.

Marta Klonowska makes dogs from glass, from shards of glass, small pieces that are grouped together like hairs stuck in a comb. Each piece built upon the next until, as if magic, the whole coalesces into an animal or a cypher of one, or its spirit. Klonowska conjures up dogs, and fish, and goats, and hares, and rabbits, and even demons.

There is a certain magic to the construction of Klonowska's art.

Her work doesn't just mimic nature, but also the man-made – because each refers to an animal from an art-historical painting. She focuses on animals painted in the background, and draws them to the foreground. She sculpts them.

Klonowska knows that dogs are wolves who have fallen in love with their owners.

Her work *Venus and Adonis after Peter Paul Rubens* (2008) draws on Rubens' *Venus and Adonis* (c1610). The 'ensemble' (a term she uses to describe her work) features a sepia reproduction of the painting and a glass hound. The historical distance between the works is echoed in the reproduced distance of each of the two replications of that dog. The viewer sees only one real three dimensional dog, the one that stands formed of pink glass. The sheen of the glass and its many hues echoes the flesh colours of the two lovers in Rubens' original painting, where the dogs hair is black and white. This tame wolf (it has a leather lead around its neck) is not the only wild animal in the scene. Behind the human formed lovers, two swans also mate. In another mythological creation story, Zeus famously turned himself into a swan to make love to Leda. Many artists have depicted that scene from Leonardo and Michaelangelo to Boucher and Cézanne.

But Klonowska leaves the swans in peace, she turns to the faithful hound who, unlike the small child in the painting, looks away from both sets of lovers. The wolf is no voyeur, though we are placed in that position, unless like Klonowska, we focus our attention on the dog. Certainly we should look at her dog very carefully. It is a thing of beauty. Even though it is glass, it looks as if it has only stopped moving as it caught our eye. It almost seems to want to run off the moment we turn away. This ability to capture an animal's tension in three dimensions, and in glass, is a rare trick, magic in action, her magic stills an image in our mind. If we walk around her animals they hold true to form, they exist like us.

However, sometimes a howl is a yap, a snap, a tiny bark that draws our attention but also our ire.

How often have we seen women of a certain class, with too much makeup on, (and usually dark sunglasses) and clothes too expensive for the purpose they represent (are they really for hiking?), who hold under their manicured talons the lead of a tiny domesticated wolf, or clutch one under their arm as they swing into a shop, or a restaurant, and in squeezing it just a little too tight, produce that yap?

In Klonowska's work based on Gainsborough's *Mr and Mrs William Hallet* known as *The Morning Walk* (1785) she presents the yapping dog along with the three shoes the humans wear in his painting. Like Cinderella they seem to have lost their glass slippers. This is a trope Klonowska revisits in her works *The Wet Nurse after Pietro Longhi* (2009), *The Declaration of Love after Jean François de Troy* (2004), *Les Jeunes after Francisco de Goya* (2003), and in *Maria Teresa de Borbón y Vallabriga after Francisco de Goya* (2003). Small glass wolves stand guard next to their missing owners' glass shoes, for dogs love their master's shoes, the smell of them reminds the dogs just who is in charge. They are like the fairy tale prince, they have the empty glass slipper and long for it to be filled in with the fleshy foot of their beloved. If you have dogs you will know they much prefer the company of humans than the company of wolves. But then again so many men are wolves in sheep's clothing, but that is another fairy tale.

Klonowska wants to tell another story of how rich young things depicted themselves in history. The Hallets were rich, smart, twenty-one year olds who had access to a lot of non-essential cash. Not only could they afford to hire Gainsborough (1727-1788), one of the great portrait painters of the day, they could wear their finery in town or the country. Elizabeth wears her hat at a jaunty angle and the expensive ostrich feathers echo her own hair, which might be a wig like her man's. She also sports what might even be her wedding dress for a walk in the woods, or is it a city park? In either case, she does not fear a highway man will lift her purse at the end of a pointed gun. She has her trusty guard dog with her, and her young beau William. He too is nattily dressed in a velvet frock coat with what appears to be black silk breeches and white stockings, and upon his shoes - silver buckles. Paintings like this were done to show off wealth, status and style, and even the dog was an emblem of caste. The poor could not keep such a well groomed pet, they had no food to spare like this young couple. In the original, the dog was white, but Klonowska colours it blue like the print she displays with it and her three glass shoes.

In Klonowska's version of Goya's (1746-1828) *Les Jeunes* (c 1814), the dog and slippers are green like the print of a young woman reading a letter with her dog jumping up at her. Next to this rich young woman is her maid who struggles to shade her with an umbrella. The rich young woman, most likely an aristocrat, is dressed as a *Maja* (i.e. a member of Spain's romanticized underclass) while washerwomen work behind her. These washerwomen were usually local prostitutes, and their participation in the trade of sex for money is in stark contrast to the young woman's affair of the heart. The letter is most likely a love letter and the jumping dog is seen as a sexual metaphor... ahhh the young. The dog in Goya's *Maria Teresa de Borbón y Vallabriga* (1783) by way of contrast looks down, if not hound dogged, at the feet of the young child's courtly adult dress. Perhaps it knew she would be married off by the Queen to a lowly minister, to enter a loveless marriage of convenience, for the convenience of others. Klonowska's dog and the child's shoes are also in green glass like the colour of the print Klonowska presents to accompany them. In both of the original paintings, these young women are green, fresh to the world, ripe for picking and soon they were plucked. Does Klonowska ask us to sympathise with them or simply observe the fashion of the day, and the fragility in which women walked through the world?

Love and its aftermath are clearly the focus of Klonowska's works that recall the paintings of the Rococo painters Pietro Longhi (1701-85, a Venetian) and Jean François de Troy (1679 -1752, a Frenchman). In de Troy's *The Declaration of Love* (c 1724) an elegant young woman swoons as a dashing young man on one knee professes eternal love. Another small yapping dog leaps up at her; the man and the wolf are as one in stating their love, if not similar in intention. Both want to sit in her lap but for very different reasons. Her embroidered white dress professes her virginity in de Troy's painting, while her open bodice with a blue collar frames her womanly breasts. They, like she, are on a plate waiting to be consumed by the young man and

the viewer's roving eyes. Her erotic pink shoes peep out from under her dress and Klonowska presents her empty shoes along with his and the jumping dog in her ensemble. Have the lovers removed all their clothes, is the dog jumping to join them on the marital bed? The glass is a hot, red colour, wreaking of passion, signaling lust waiting to be slaked.

In *The Wet Nurse*, Longhi presents the period of time nine months after the marriage bed has been ruffled by Eros. The rich aristocratic woman in a lovely silk gown, has just handed over her child, her baby, to a wet nurse to suckle the child on a poorer woman's breast. The rich woman's breasts are only to be suckled by her rich husband; her children will have to settle for poor substitutes. The little white dog at the edge of the painting looks up, perhaps in disbelief, knowing she would suckle her own pups, and her gaze seems to question her mistress' actions. Klonowska again tints her image red as well as the glass that makes up the dog and singular glass slipper. Has Cinderella's dream come crashing to the ground as the reality of Eros, of passion, of sex, comes home and the dirty job of feeding and cleaning a child become a reality, which only the rich can afford to pass on to others? When Elton John the famously temperamental homosexual singer claimed to nightly change the diaper of his surrogate baby, the world laughed, so ludicrous an image did it conjure - this from a man who does not hang his own clothes nor fill his own vases with flowers!¹ The reality of a little human is anything but romantic. The fairytale is never the reality, as women over many decades can attest.

There are a lot of dogs in Klonowska's work, but then again there are many of man's best friends in the historic paintings that catch her attention. Wolves call her name, they howl at night and she answers their call.

Foxes are not wolves but they too are carnivores and they too have deadly canine teeth which can tear at flesh as readily as the glass shards Klonowska utilizes in her work. But where wolves howl, foxes sing. They serenade each other at night and are thought of as cunning, whereas wolves are fierce. Fox cubs are also called pups, but the pups of hounds grow up to chase foxes across the countryside, and will tear them into pieces should they catch them. A fox must always be on guard and in *Fox after Ohara Koson* (2019) Klonowska presents a glass version of Koson's (1877-1945) 1930's print featuring a ginger fox tentatively stepping into water under moonlight. The Japanese artist was well known in the West and his prints of animals were highly regarded for their quiet, stillness and authenticity to the animals they depict. The poetry of his colours is echoed in her glass version of his work. Koson is not the only Japanese artist that has caught Klonowska's interest. Utagawa Hiroshige's (1797-1858) traditional but visually innovative wood block prints captured the imagination and influenced a generation of French painters. His prints were collected by Monet, Manet and many others. It is Hiroshige's depiction of a *Carp* (c 1840) that Klonowska reworks.

The original print shows a carp quietly swimming in a light blue sea, but only hints of that blue touch the outer edges of Klonowska's green glass version of it. Her *Carp after Hiroshige Utagawa* (2018) looks as strong and firm as Hiroshige's. The transition from two to three dimensions is another trick of the light, for Klonowska's fish glistens as if it too is wet, as if its scales have become the small pieces of glass that flesh it out, as if a lucky fisherman has just landed the best catch of his life. The carp is an odd fish and one that is considered almost holy in Klonowska's native Poland, where they serve carp on Christmas eve. No turkey for them, and the fish is said to bring good luck, despite being one of the boniest fish possible to consume. Cursing someone to swallow a fishbone (and die) is a hex that should not be uttered lightly.

Yet we are prone to casting spells, uttering oaths, shouting damnations, and the religious might say that those who do are possessed by spirits, by demons. Klonowska's works *Demon after Giotto di Bondone* (2018) and *The Temptation of Saint Anthony after Frans Francken the Younger* (2008) present the viewer with glass demons. The Flemish painter Francken (1581-1642) took five years to complete his major work (1610-15). It depicts all the earthly delights promised to Anthony, and the demons who threatened him on his journey into the desert to find St Paul of Thebes, who Anthony thought was a better monk than himself. Anthony's trials included an encounter with a centaur, a satyr, as well as being tempted by earthly pleasures such as gold and comely women. Needless to say he overcame all the obstacles and when he died was declared a saint. In Francken's

painting the central image is not Anthony (who kneels and prays for deliverance to the left of center), but a beautiful woman with the whitest, palest skin. She looks as if she had just stepped out of a whorehouse in Francken's native Antwerp. Anthony, being an Egyptian Coptic, would have been very dark and swarthy, yet he too is depicted as Flemish, so the object of his sexual desire in the painting needed to be a woman from Northern Europe. This alone makes the image wonderfully fictive, as are all the pale blond, blue-eyed Jesuses of the same period. The rosy-cheeked maid holds in her hand an expensive glass filled with red wine, both of which would have cost dearly, and would have tempted any Flemish or Egyptian monk. An old man (with horns), possibly a devil, presents her to Anthony while another proffers a golden ring, and another baked goods.

In the background a northern European church is on fire, aflame like Anthony's desire and both needing to be extinguished. But it is the miasma of little demons that takes our eyes off the main prize. Winged blue monkeys, massive toads, bare breasted she-wolves, and a goat headed camel assault him. Most charming of all is a creature with a very long nose that it plays as if a flute, a skin flute in fact, proffering another precious glass cup (filled with white wine or water) balanced atop its head. The creature sports a bright red cloak like Red Riding Hood will in future tales of lust and murder. It is this creature that Klonowska chose to make into a glass sculpture. Her demon is also a scarlet fire red. The small glass pieces that construct its shape almost seem like tongues of flame in a roaring fire, like the fires of hell perhaps. Her demon sits delicately on a white plinth instead of some sort of dragon as in the painting, and Klonowska's creature's fine, tiny feet keep it balanced. Yet it looks like it wants to jump up and start a dance to its own tune. She has interpreted the demon and made it live, we too can also almost hear the seductive tune it plays.

Klonowska's demon however seems much more scary than Franken's. Klonowska's sculpture is very charming, yet common with all her work it has a dangerous side. Each piece of cut glass she uses in their construction is deadly sharp. Run your finger over the edge of one of the strands of hair and your hand will turn red with your own blood. These sculptures are not as polite as they seem. This demon is a real temptation, as you do want to touch it, to stroke it, to fondle it, as much as you long to pet her dogs or possibly even slip on her glass slippers. But you know, like Anthony, that disaster awaits those who give into that temptation. Equally if you break one, you have bought it, as they say in retail! Klonowska's creatures are not as fragile as their appearance might suggest, they may be glass but they have a back bone of steel and if you touch them, any of them, they might bite.

Like many beautiful and dangerous creatures (foxes, wolves, *loose women*) Klonowska's sculptures remind us of death, for they are true *nature morte* objects. That her sculptures are only part of her ensembles which include altered versions of their genesis, adds a sophisticated reference system to their viewing.

But they still howl.

They still bite.

And they will drag you to hell if you let them!

BEWARE!

Dr Michael Petry, 2019

¹ in a court case in 2000, it was revealed that Elton John spent £293,000 on cut flowers in one year.



MARTA KLONOWSKA Istota

マルタ・クロノフスカ
不思議ないきもの

2019.4.27 SAT - 9.23 MON

会場：展示室3（富山市ガラス美術館 3階）／開場時間：午前9時30分から午後6時まで（金・土曜日は午後8時まで、入場は開場の30分前まで）※初日のみ開会式（午前11時より）終了後開場／閉場日：5月8日（水）、5月15日（水）、6月5日（水）、6月19日（水）、7月3日（水）、7月17日（水）、8月7日（水）、8月21日（水）、9月11日（水）、9月18日（水）／観覧料：一般700円（500円）、大学生500円（300円）※小中高生未就学児無料 ※（）は団体料金 ©本展覧会観覧券で常設展もご覧いただけます「北澤美術館所蔵 ルネ・ラリック 『モダン・パリのエレガンス』展との共通観覧券：一般1,000円（800円）大学生800円（500円）※（）は前売り、団体料金／前売りチケット取扱い：「北澤美術館所蔵 ルネ・ラリック 『モダン・パリのエレガンス』展との共通観覧券（一般のみ）アーツナビ Tel 076-432-3113、アスネットカウンター Tel 076-455-5511、TOYAMAキラリ 1階総合案内／主催：富山市ガラス美術館／後援：ポーランド広報文化センター、北日本新聞社、富山新聞社、北日本放送、チューリップテレビ、富山テレビ放送／お問合せ：富山市西町5番1号 Tel 076-461-3100 www.toyama-glass-art-museum.jp

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