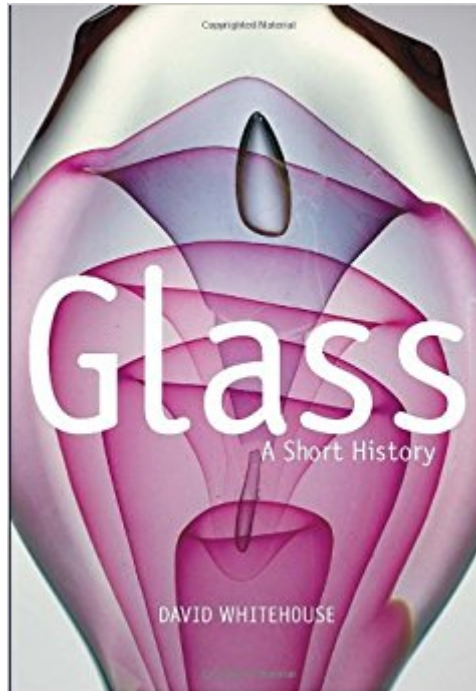




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# **Glass: A Short History**



## Synopsis

Illustrated with 120 superb pieces, *Glass: A Short History* brings to life a centuries-old craft that has served many purposes, styles, and cultures. Until the first century BC, glass was made only in Western Asia, Egypt, and the Mediterranean regions; its manufacture then spread to China and other areas. The peoples of the Roman Empire included the most versatile glassmakers in the ancient world, leading to both widely available low-cost glassware and stunning luxury glass. During the Middle Ages, Islamic glassworkers decorated their fine cut glass with gilding and brilliant enamel. In the 15th century, the focus of luxury glassmaking shifted to Venice. Glassmaking in Europe was transformed again in the 17th century, when thick-walled objects with cut and engraved ornament were in great demand. By the nineteenth century, glassmaking was well established in America, where, as in Europe, industrial processes were developed to supply the rapidly expanding population with glassware for daily use. Within the past 50 years glass has gained acceptance as a medium for artistic expression, and the Studio Glass Movement, born in the United States, has inspired artists all over the world to explore its unique properties. *Glass* tells this sweeping story from ancient times to the present in an accessible text with gorgeous examples.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 128 pages

Publisher: Smithsonian Books (May 29, 2012)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1588343243

ISBN-13: 978-1588343246

Product Dimensions: 7.8 x 0.7 x 10 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars 4 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #763,884 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #28 in Books > Engineering & Transportation > Engineering > Chemical > Coatings, Ceramics & Glass #37 in Books > Arts & Photography > Other Media > Glass #104 in Books > Crafts, Hobbies & Home > Antiques & Collectibles > Houseware & Dining > Glass & Glassware

## Customer Reviews

PUBLISHERS WEEKLY Despite the ubiquity of glass objects in our lives, “it is difficult to identify a book that provides a short, readable, overview of the subject, argues Whitehouse

(Roman Glass in the Corning Museum of Glass), senior scholar at the Corning Museum of Glass. Although this is not the most scintillating text, it does the job, while full-color photographs represent beautiful examples of glass objects from around the world. The discovery of glassblowing by the ancient Romans revolutionized production, but techniques of molding, casting, and core-forming glass produced unusual results, such as dimpled tableware of the fifth-century Achaemenids or slumped glass artwork from the 20th century. Glass decorating techniques distinguished glassworkers in the Hellenistic Mediterranean, who used multiple methods to create glass tableware, and also early-modern European glass etchers. Photo captions provide insight into how glassworkers made both the everyday and the extraordinary, from an Iranian molded tumbler to a pitcher cut with delicate green lines. Whitehouse concludes by remarking on the growth of glass as a medium for art and collectibles, and this book will certainly be welcomed by visitors to museums and galleries. Three pages of glossary and further reading round out this succinct presentation of a versatile medium for the utilitarian, decorative, and artistic. (May)LIBRARY JOURNALWhitehouse (senior scholar, Corning Museum of Glass) has compiled an informative history of the creation and use of glass. People have been making glass for over 4000 years, and Whitehouse traces its history from its rough beginnings to the discovery of glassblowing to its rise as an art form. The text is beautifully illustrated with 130 color images of glass from ancient to modern times, drawn from the British Museum and the Corning Museum of Glass collections. Previous works, such as Alan Macfarlane and Gerry Martin's *Glass: A World History*, focus on the cultural impact of glass and glassmaking; this book traces glassmaking from its beginnings to the present, touching on its global spread in the first century B.C.E. and centuries of innovations in craft and changes in style. A glossary and index complete this well-thought-out book. VERDICT A beautifully illustrated history of glass for those interested in knowing how glassmaking began and how it became the art form it is today. Recommended. —Sandy Knowles, South Carolina State Lib., Columbia

David Whitehouse is Executive Director of the Corning Museum of Glass, Corning, New York.

My younger son is very much into glass working. He spent more time with this book than any other gift we've given him in the past year (except his dog)

I wanted a history of glass and this was, in my opinion, a good, concise history. It also had the attraction of beautiful illustrations as a bonus.

This book is excellent for a person curious about glass or one who wants to see examples of glass and techniques through the ages. Yes it's "A Short History" meaning there are details which will enlighten you but not everything there is to know about the piece. In this "let's show you what's out there" book you are exposed to many specialty styles, eras, and countries that are covered more extensively in other books. Chapters cover Glass Before Glassblowing, Ancient Rome (more thorough than even the books I'm going to recommend), Europe pre- and post- Renaissance, Islamic and Eastern Asia, and America. Where there isn't a photo on the page, a full page photo will be on the adjacent page so you can see exactly what the text is discussing. The commentary is easy to follow and understand and the glasses, goblets, vases, etc are a feast for the eyes. The photos are from the Corning Museum of Glass principally and the British Museum. So if you want to look at more of Corning's collection, you will enjoy "Masterpieces of Glass" (the books share a few of the same items). If you would like more Venetian style creations, then "Beyond Venice" is from the same collection and shows how other countries imitated the style but incorporated their own accents. These are large coffee table books. Many like the elegance of European glass. There are two books that will provide hours of enjoyment from their commentary and hundreds of color photos: "European Glass from 1500-1800" which includes a lot of etched glass and "Sotheby's Encyclopedia of Glass" which begins its historical narrative in Medieval times. If you want the "WOW" factor of over-the-top beauty and detailed workmanship, "Miller's Collecting Glass" will introduce you to the world-class collector level and "Moser Artistic Glass Edition Two" will let you see what you can't afford but if you win the lottery.... You might have to be rich to buy "Enamels of the World 1700-2000" but you would have to be in the 1% to buy what is shown.

This 128-page book is informative to read and enjoyable to look at. The history of glassmaking from its earliest years to artistry in glass is very interesting. The book covers glass-shaping techniques before the discovery of glass-blowing. Glass artisans included painters and engravers, the latter more active after measures to harden glass were developed. Some glass was formulated to imitate precious stones such as chalcedony and opal. Cameo glass was a pinnacle of glass artistry. "Moorish Bathers" by Thomas Webb and Sons took eight years to complete. Hand presses for glass using a simple mold eventually allowed 100 glass tumblers per hour to be produced. Glass was important in society for such uses as kerosene lamps and glass stills. Photographs of glass objects created from antiquity to the present are stunningly presented. The astonishing "Lycurgus Cup" from 4th century Rome is shown, demonstrating its "dichroism," green when viewed with direct light, pinkish with transmitted light. A good glossary is given. Thirty six books for further investigation are

presented in the bibliography. Stained glass and industrial glass are generally not covered in Glass: A Short History. The titles of seven books that cover these topics are offered. There is a good index.

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