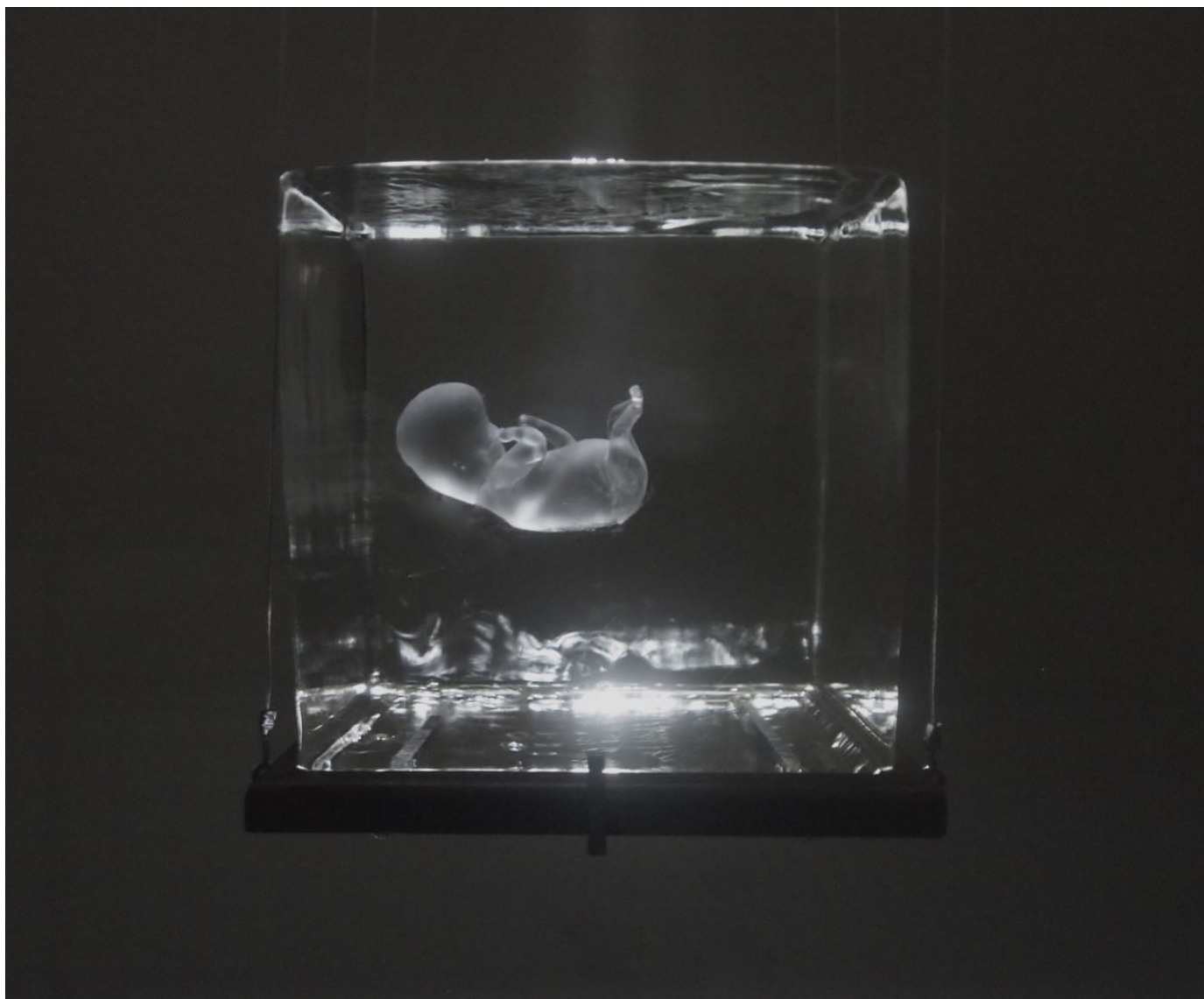


SHREVEPORT REGIONAL ARTS COUNCIL

Seeking Sanctuary

Award-winning glass artist Eric Hess curates artspace Summer of Glass

BY PAT VISER



ERIC HESS

Eric Hess, Glass, 2016. Glass and ice.

There is just something different about working with glass . . . it moves, changes in light, glows . . . it's magical," says award-winning Northwest Louisiana glass artist and co-founder of Sanctuary Arts School Eric Hess. This summer Hess will curate the *Summer of Glass* exhibition at artspace in downtown Shreveport, hosted by the Shreveport Regional Arts Council and Sanctuary Art School. Beginning June 7 and running through August 10, glass artists from throughout Texas will exhibit their art in artspace's MainSpace as a part of the *Texas Contemporary Glass* exhibition. At the same time, Hess and Michelle Pennington, his business partner and the co-founder of Sanctuary Arts School, will exhibit their glass works on the artspace mezzanine.

The *Texas Contemporary Glass* exhibition features twenty-two Texas artists who will showcase up to forty contemporary glass works, including blown, hot sculpted, sand cast, neon, vitreograph (engraved glass printing), and kilncast. The *Summer of Glass* will also feature artist talks and demonstrations in June by esteemed New Orleans glassmaker and founder of the New Orleans School of Glassworks Mitchell Gaudet. In July, artspace will welcome New Orleans Young Aspirations Young Artists (YAYA) glass studio manager James Vella for an artist talk and demonstration. Other nationally renowned artists will also be part of this program.

To Hess, glass is an anomaly—strong yet fragile; deep but transparent; sometimes shattered, but at other times solid and durable. Glass is the perfect medium for creating art through which the viewer sees what he chooses to see. This is especially true of Hess's *Fragile*, a glass sculpture that was recently named a 2018 Stanislav Libenský Award recipient in Prague, Czech Republic. *Fragile* is a four-inch-long sculpted-glass fetus encased in a one-foot block of ice, hanging in the middle of a dark gallery room illuminated by a single light from above. As the ice melts, the water drips off the sculpture. After six hours, the ice melts completely and the fetus crashes to the ground, leaving the viewer to experience his or her own personal brittleness, be it through reflection on the loss of a child, a stance on abortion, the tenuousness of life, or some other reminder of the fragility of existence.

Hess and Pennington met while studying glass art to earn their Master of Fine Arts degrees at the University of Texas at Arlington, and they have come to Shreveport to bring the art of glass here. This dream is taking shape in the form of Sanctuary Arts School, a blown- and kiln-glass studio, school, gallery, artist residence, and fabrication laboratory that will offer resources to professional artists from the region, the nation, and the world. The school will also offer outreach programs to the elderly, disabled, veterans, children, families who are economically challenged, and teens in the juvenile justice system. Sanctuary Arts School will offer summer programming, including a series of courses, residencies for established artists, accredited college coursework for area colleges and universities, a gallery to make artist works available to the public, and professional development to help artists learn how to market to a worldwide audience.

Summer of Glass, opening June 7 and running through August 10 at artspace (708 Texas Street) in downtown Shreveport, will offer a chance to reflect on how the art of glass can be integral to the transformational revitalization of a creative cultural neighborhood in Northwest Louisiana. Visit artspaceshreveport.com for more information.