







# A fascinating story created over a century

by Maria Lantz

The history of Orrefors is a fascinating story of how world-class craftsmanship and excellence have emerged from deep within the southern Swedish forests. It is also a story of people, their dreams and struggles, and of how nature, technology and culture interact in the effort to achieve the perfect result: light, heavy, clear, reflective, opaque and sheer glass.

The beauty and quality of glass is continuously reviewed, improved and refined – and the possibilities are endless. This glass is far from a final chapter, and its history is being written in this very moment.

## **A melting pot**

How did Orrefors achieve such renown all over the world? How could glass be so advanced here – so far north, in the heart of the lush, green forest?

To understand, we must look back in time. The foundation was laid in eighteenth- and nineteenth century Småland: innovations in glass manufacturing, international contacts, social and political movements... all of these elements are part of the glassworks' history, and so is the arrival of the artists in the twentieth century. Without them, Orrefors would not have been able to keep up with the competition or become the success it continues to be today. But the roots go deeper still. The glass we call "Swedish" is a fascinating result of relationships with people, with a faraway world, and with the local area, where nature is playing a key role.

## **Glass moves north – 13th century**

In Venice, knowledge of glass came from Constantinople, Italy and Spain. They found that the sand in the Po river could be used for manufacturing and for a long time, Venice was the capital city of European glass, together with Bohemia, Germany. Glass objects became important export products for both cities. Obtaining completely clear glass was still difficult, but when successful, people could make perfect mirrors, which were used

as objects and to furnish homes. Indeed, glass seemed to exist in a realm adjacent to alchemy – imagine creating something so remarkable out of almost nothing!

Glass production in Sweden developed surprisingly early, given the country's peripheral location relative to the center of glass-making knowledge to the south. Or perhaps that is precisely why it happened – in Sweden, people with this knowledge had the opportunity to develop it. As early as the Middle Ages, window glass for churches and monasteries was made locally. It was likely glassmakers from the Netherlands who brought this newly acquired knowledge to the north and found a market where numerous churches were being built.

#### **Glass for the king – 16th century**

The decision to replace wooden cups with glass drinkware at the Three Crowns castle in Stockholm is often ascribed to Gustav Vasa, who also furnished all the royal palaces with window glass. Imported goods were used at first, and then two Italian glaziers set up production in Stockholm in the early sixteenth century, in order to secure access. At this point, the glass still wasn't as artistically inclined as it was in the European glass centers – but it had definitely found its way to Sweden. And the forest is what made its production possible, because even though the individual components of glass are inexpensive, vast quantities of energy are required to manufacture it. Thus, countries like England and Ireland did not establish any sizable glass production factories domestically before coal and Industrialism, due quite simply to the lack of forest. In some cases, glass production was even prohibited there.

#### **New ideas – entering the 20th century**

Industrialism was moving through the country full speed ahead, and consumption of goods was spreading from society's upper classes to more and more people. Fueling the production process were forests and hydropower. The raw materials comprised everything available: wool, flax, wood, metal,

clay – and lime, soda and sand for glass. As an industrial product, glass became a significant part of modernity. Public schools, studies, public discussion and health and medical care were all being established – kerosene lamps were suddenly needed everywhere. Glass served an important role in health and medical care for another reason as well: laboratory glass and thermometers, test tubes and microscope lenses – glass is essential to all scientific achievements.

Many people were giddy with faith in the future, but at the same time, that created conflicts, which Johan Ekman, the owner of Orrefors Glassworks, and Albert Ahlin, director of the pulp mill, knew. A lot of bold, foolhardy and brilliant ideas saw the light of day only to leave inventors and investors destitute. Modernity also brought poverty, misery and war to Europe. With industrialism, a proletariat had emerged – a working class that provided cheap labor, but that was also in distress. Large groups of people emigrated from Småland to America; others began to organize. There were agitators and preachers, but also discussions, social life and the daily struggle for a better living. How could all of these contradictory wants and needs be united and defined in Orrefors?

#### **The artists arrive – 1910s**

Glass had evolved and was hotter than ever when Albert Ahlin, then director of the cellulose factory, entered the world of glass production in the early-twentieth century. But what would Orrefors' niche be? Ahlin was likely inspired by the intellectual tides of the day. And he knew that he needed help. Through personal contacts, the artist Simon Gate, who had trained at what are now the University of Arts, Crafts & Design and the Royal Institute of Art, came to Orrefors as an aesthetics consultant. Gate was a drawer and painter, but he had never worked with glass. However, like so many others, he was fascinated by the material and its possibilities. He was hired as artistic director in 1916. Gate's aesthetic manifested first in the detailed engraved patterns on glass and gradually in complex



*Above: John Selbing's iconic photography for Orrefors.  
Right: Ingeborg Lundin photographed by Erik Liljeroth.*





shapes in layered glass. A year later, another artist was hired: Edward Hald, a former student of Matisse in Paris. The two artists were different, but they brought renewal to the forms and patterns of glass in parallel with one another. Incredibly skilled engravers and glassblowers were now working at the glassworks to implement Gate and Hald's visions.

### **The boom of art glass – 1925**

Swedish art glass was now unsurpassed. More artists, designers and engravers became involved: Bergkvist, Abels, Augustsson, Kåge, Milles, Grünewald. They won international awards, but they were not just making magnificent exhibition objects and expensive collections. Gate, Hald and the others were also designing sets and drinkware for new target groups, as well as simpler everyday objects based on the motto: more beautiful everyday goods. These items were also successful exports and soon, Orrefors had sales agents in South Africa, the US, Australia and all over Europe.

The artists had an undeniable social impact at the glassworks. From the café scenes and bohemian lifestyles of major European cities, they brought curiosity, open good-naturedness, renewed forms of socializing, and a willingness to question conventions. For example, when Gate and Hald formed the Club for the Outstretched Hand. In the club, management and staff members came together to discuss ideas, worldviews and the possibilities of glass in festive yet unconstrained social gatherings. That would have been impossible in the hierarchical factory setting just a few years earlier. Women were still very much in the minority, even if they were there – both in the production and its surroundings. One of them was Flory Keiller. She had studied art in Paris and now she worked at the glassworks as a glass engraver. In 1929, she married Simon Gate, and she would later become a pioneer in ecology.

### **War and unrest – 1930**

The Depression had arrived and Orrefors had to carefully review its offering and manufacturing. They held sales and clearance sales; the only truly profitable product was glass for display cabinets. And then it was time for the Stockholm Exhibition of 1930. Many people thought that perhaps Orrefors glass had reached the end of the road. Style ideals were undergoing radical change, and product and fashion design were influenced by austere functionalist architecture. How would the artists find equilibrium in the face of this trend?

In the shadow of economic downturn, new experiments took place with new artists who joined the company. Gate and Hald were still there, but Edvin Palmkvist, the sculptor Edvin Öhrström and Vicke Lindstrand were continuing to work with new colors and shapes. Soon, the techniques known as graal and ariel had been fully developed: layers of glass were applied on top of one another with air sealed in between. This allowed the glass

itself to shine, with engraving and patterns inside of it.

Once again at the Stockholm Exhibition, audiences were abuzz – visitors and critics alike.

But the magnificent exhibitions and awards were not enough when the economic downturn deepened during World War II. Workers were let go, Palmkvist went to Stockholm for continued studies at the University of Arts, Crafts & Design, and Vicke Lindstrand left the glassworks. Hald became head of Orrefors and had a lot on his plate; many people needed his help. When many men are summoned to go to war and materials are in short supply, good advice isn't cheap. Hald decided to bide his time while continuing to focus on the future. Orrefors needed documentation and marketing in the form of photos and advertising.

### **Peace and generational change – 1930-40**

In 1932, Hald's newly hired assistant Johan Selbing was given a new assignment as photographer for the glassworks. Selbing's goal was to design his own products, which he ultimately ended up doing. But for now, he was the photographer. And before long, he was so successful that his pictures were shown at exhibitions and won prizes. Selbing gradually also developed a technique in which photos were transferred to glass and then etched.

1940 was a difficult year. The war had depleted all resources. The production of glass panels for display cabinets continued, but buyers were not prioritizing other products. Gate was exhausted, and when he turned 60 in 1943, he decided to step down as head of the company and work only as artistic director. But two years later, Gate suddenly died, and Hald – who was also over 60 at this point – was left on his own. And then there was a miracle: peace was declared, and orders for glass objects began pouring in almost immediately. When American troops were leaving Germany, they wanted to bring home souvenirs from Europe. The reputation of beautiful Swedish glass lived on and "something from Orrefors" was at the top of many wish lists.

In the aftermath of the war, refugees arrived in Sweden and many found their way to industrial areas. Among others, Sudeten German refugees from Czechoslovakia – a country with a lengthy glass tradition – came to Orrefors. And they were needed, because consumers were also emerging on the home front. Orrefors also hired more new designers: Ingeborg Lundin, Nils Landgren, Gunnar Cyrén and Carl Fagerlund, all of whom had different styles as well as an ability to move seamlessly between art glass, industrial products, and products for public spaces.

### **New owners – 1950s**

Ownership was transferred to the Beyer family and soon,



the Beyer son, Johan, took over as the new director. The glassworks employees had renewed faith in the future, which was evident not only in the glass, but also in the architecture and surroundings. Johan Beyer had the old houses fixed up and personal homes built; he made sure gardens were tended and that the factory was modernized. In accordance with the law, workers were granted three weeks of vacation in 1951. With improved personal finances and time off, another wave of consumption arrived as the glass industry benefited from an interest in gifts. Selbing's photo glass was a popular souvenir, earning large quantities of money for several years. Orrefors seemed to be stable.

A generational change had taken place among the artists and now, no one had overarching responsibility for artistic development. But the new designers enthusiastically experimented and tried new things. Danish Henning Koppel, who was Jewish, contacted Orrefors when he fled Denmark while it was occupied by Germany, and he joined the designers for a period of time. He pushed himself and the limits of glass with his elegant patterns and shapes, in which the glass appeared to be billowing. "Glass has its limits. I want to get as close to them as possible." Eva Englund developed the graal technique, which incorporates colors and patterns within the glass, in her bowls and vases. Ingeborg Lundin's cut-crystal set quickly became a classic. And then came the next challenge: increasingly stiff competition from the rest of the world.

#### Shifting focus – 1970s

Glass originally came to Småland through knowledge from afar. Now, as the world was opening up, aesthetics and expertise emanated from the Kingdom of Crystal. This was especially thanks to the glass school in Nybro that Beyer started, which had developed a reputation around the world. Copies of Orrefors-style glass had begun to pop up in the US already in the 30s, but now there were variations of essentially every product in circulation, made in countries with competent glass industries, but where lower pay resulted in cheaper goods for consumers. How would Orrefors handle this new situation? Broaden the selection, or narrow it down? Enhance or streamline?

In the 70s, Johan Beyer needed support to face these challenges, which he received through the Wallenberg Group. They came in as partners first, eventually becoming majority shareholders. At this point, marketing and the ongoing recruitment of designers were both focused on increased sales.

#### Closing the circle – 1990-2020

Moving forward to 1990, the glassworks group Orrefors Kosta Boda was established to take advantage of synergies between multiple glassworks in Småland. New owners were brought in again: Orrefors Kosta Boda AB has been owned by New Wave Group AB since 2005. At this point, the assortment began to be refined and specialized. New products were

made for a target audience of conscientious private buyers, restaurants and businesses with high standards for excellent and sustainable design.

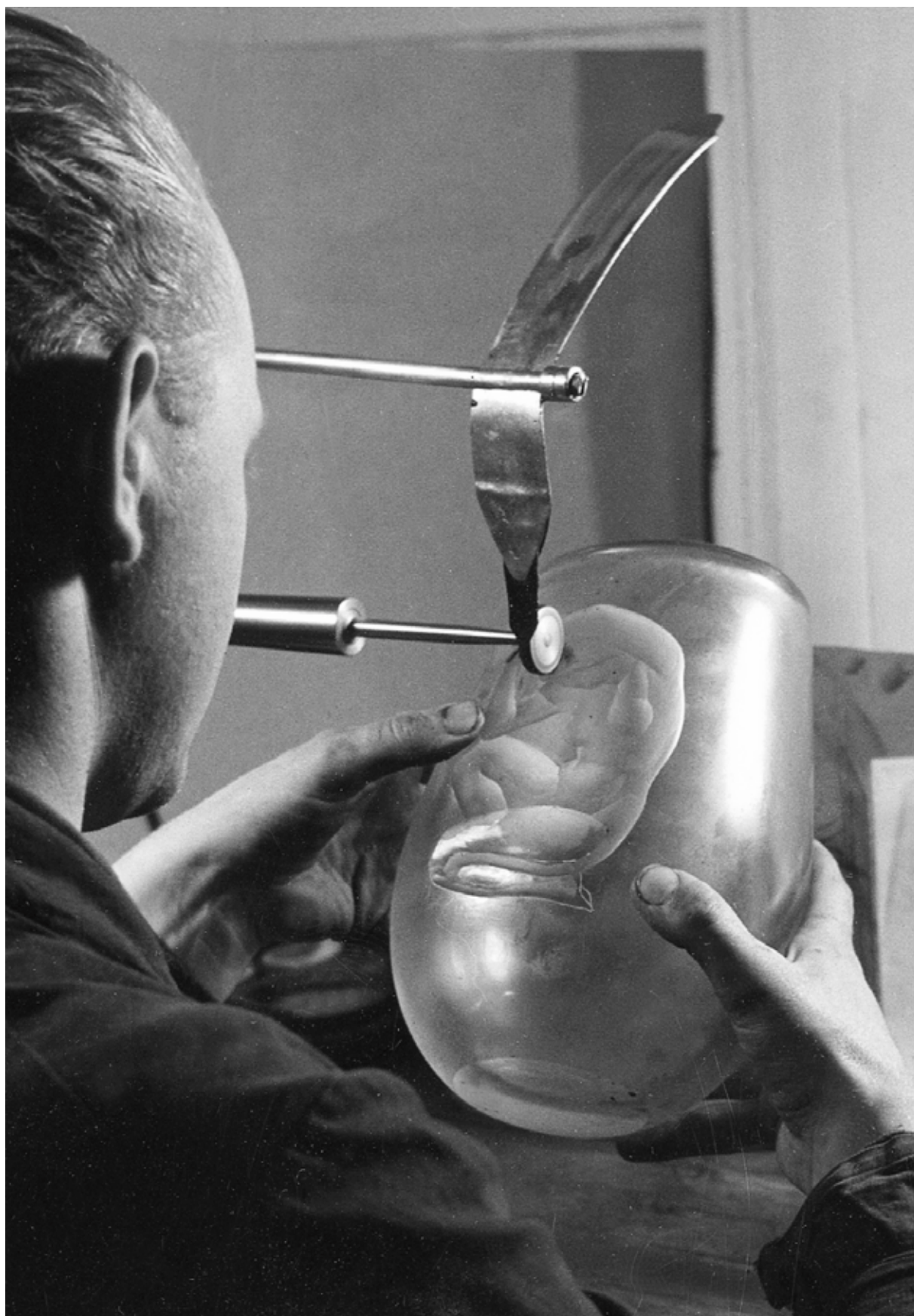
Most glassworks in Sweden have cooled down now, while the country still generates knowledge of glass at art schools and through internships in production. This allows Orrefors to continuously welcome new designers who began working with glass early in their artistic careers, and who can thus work closely with production.

Orrefors' glass products are now made at a single location in Sweden: the Kosta glassworks, where designers, glassblowers, grinders, painters, glass cutters and inspectors take part daily in the craftsmanship of production at the glassworks, which has around 150 employees. Orrefors also produces products in other countries at glassworks that were once predecessors to the glass of Småland, offshoots in some cases, and often, former competitors. Now they have become partners instead. Lessons, thoughts and ideas are exchanged once again across national borders and between continents – indeed, the same way that glass has always traveled: via trade routes, through people's knowledge, and with curiosity and a love for glass as a basis for the resulting products.

#### The future

Orrefors' history involves complex connections and the interaction and leveraging of ideas. Sometimes, this has meant random events, and bold ideas have often blossomed and occasionally failed. Stubbornness and dedication are the common threads. The forest has provided a key condition, and represents the ways in which glass, nature and society are connected and have evolved side by side in social and ecological interactions. The growth rings of the trees bear witness to the hard work, to the financiers who invested, and to the artists who made waves and brought vitality. Quality, generosity and curiosity are keywords in the history of Orrefors. Today, this is apparent through designers like Ingegerd Råman, who designs glass products with the utmost precision, or Claesson Koivisto Rune, a team that allows each item to be unique.

Glass is a material that is full of contradictions. It can be fluid and firm, hot and cold, soft and hard. Simple and complicated. It can be difficult to tame, but unbelievably beautiful when the artist and glassblower both succeed. The history and future of glass are contained in its lengthy and experienced past, and in the continuous challenge and desire to push even further. Orrefors products will continue to carry memories, to be used, and to amaze generations to come. They are loved, cared for, passed down, passed on – and they always contribute to a more beautiful world.





Above: At the drawing office at Orrefors glassworks. From left Simon Gate, Edward Hald and Vicke Lindstrand.  
Left: Engraver Ernst Åberg engraves a motif on a vase.



# FROM THE VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM IN LONDON TO INTERNATIONAL DESIGN AWARDS

*The endless passion and knowledge of Lena Bergström*

For more than a quarter of a century, Lena Bergström has designed glass for Orrefors, which has celebrated triumphs around the world. She is behind, among other things, the bestseller Carat, which has become an appreciated interior design and utility object in many homes.

Her interest in fashion, architecture and the present is evident in her glass products and her other sources of inspiration such as the love of tradition, craftsmanship and not least the Nordic nature of her upbringing.

"Nature has always been important to me. In Norrland it is very cloudy - gray, white, light blue, with dull light and long graphic shadows. But stumps in the forest can also be buildings in the big city. Traces in the snow can be structures in a silk fabric. Nature and the urban, the organic and the sharp, the timeless and the present, the nerve and the elegance - the contrasts between these poles are fields of tension in my design."

Lena Bergström (born in Umeå in 1961) studied design in Japan, Finland, Belgium and England and has a master's degree in textiles from the University of Arts, Crafts & Design (Konstfack) in Stockholm. She began working as a designer for Orrefors in 1994 while continuing to develop in her role as a textile designer for Klässbols, Design House and Designer's Eye, among others.

Bergström's work is represented at Nationalmuseum in Stockholm, Röhsska Museum in Gothenburg, the Cleveland Museum of Art and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. Her work has been exhibited at numerous galleries and museums worldwide and she has received many awards, including around fifteen in recognition of her glass designs for Orrefors.

For Orrefors, Lena Bergström has designed a number of successful series such as Carat (awarded the Elle Interiörs Design Prize 2010), Squeeze (Excellent Swedish Form 1997) and Puck (Excellent Swedish Form 1999).













*Click on the picture to view Lena Bergströms design story.*

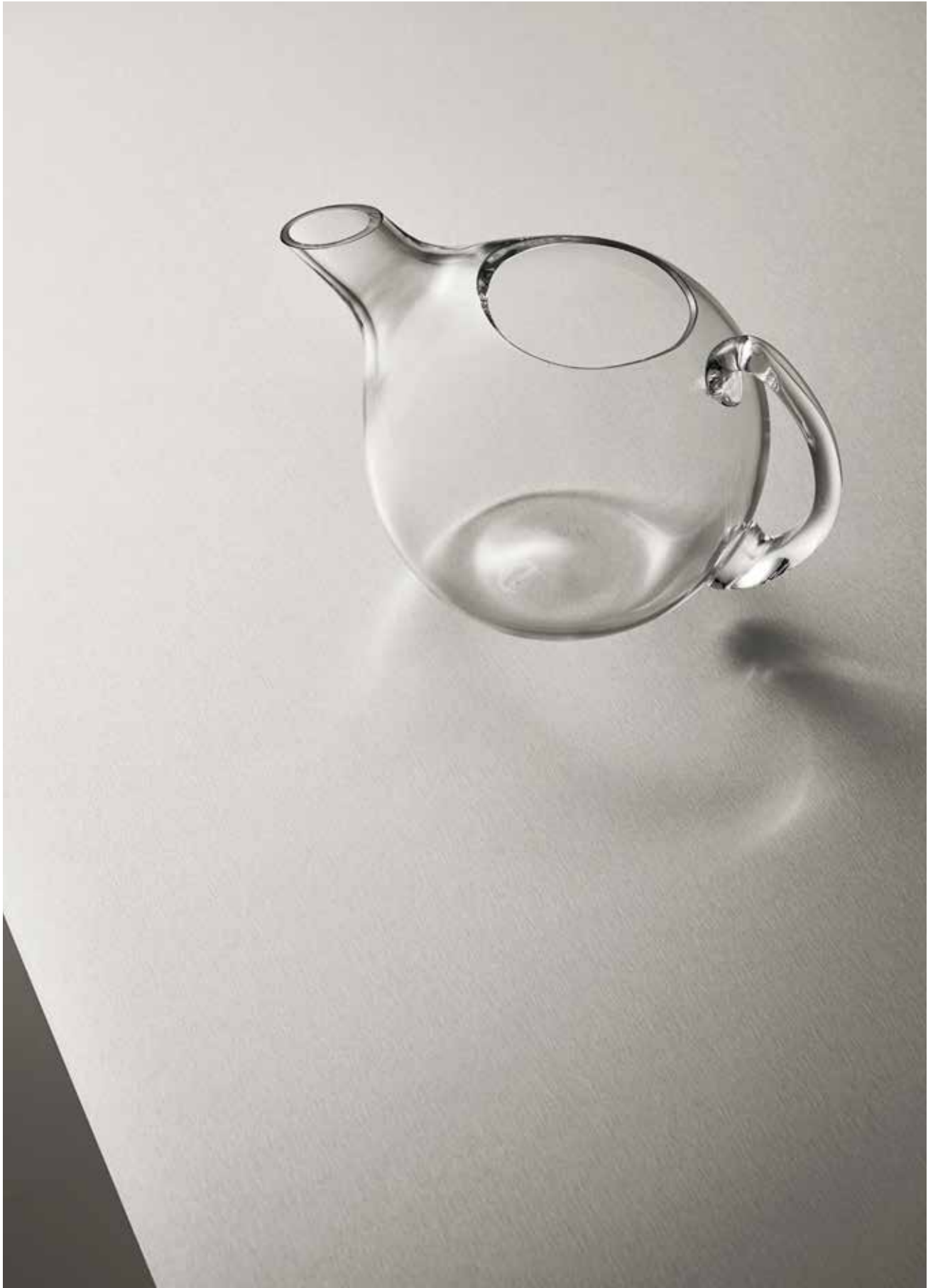








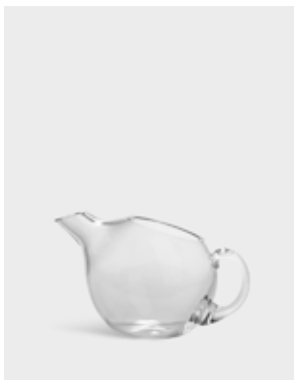




# Mingus

*Design Vicke Lindstrand*

Vicke Lindstrand's Mingus is an iconic piece of Swedish glass. It was designed for Orrefors in 1934 and has been mouth-blown here in Småland ever since. Mingus was launched as a martini pitcher, but is used just as often for ice water and other cold drinks. The pitcher has won numerous design awards and often represents Swedish glass design in national and international museums.



**6119395**

Mingus Pitcher

H 145 mm W 220 mm

150 cl



# Nobel

Design Gunnar Cyrén

Gunnar Cyrén is one of the great designers of Swedish glass history. In 1991, he created this set, which is still used at the annual Nobel Banquet in Stockholm City Hall – an unparalleled gala where invited award winners from around the world celebrate with over 1,000 guests, including members of the Swedish royal family, prestigious politicians, scientists and artists. The collection, which is mouth-blown in Sweden and hand-painted with details in real 22-karat gold, includes wine glasses, beer glasses, champagne glasses, a pitcher and a carafe. The entire Nobel set is now a highly coveted collectors' item, both in Sweden and internationally.



**6267906**

Nobel Wine

H 191 mm W 61 mm

16 cl



**6267982**

Nobel Decanter

H 300 mm W 130 mm

118 cl



**6267990**

Nobel Jug

H 300 mm W 145 mm

100 cl



**6267918**

Nobel Goblet Wine

H 181 mm W 66 mm

20 cl



**6267920**

Nobel Goblet Beer

H 213 mm W 80 mm

39 cl



**6267914**

Nobel Champagne

H 220 mm W 59 mm

18 cl



**6267915**

Nobel Martini/Champagne

H 117 mm W 108 mm

23 cl









# Bloom

*Design Lisa Hilland*

Bloom was born from a question: can a vase be equally beautiful with or without flowers? By borrowing from nature's sense of geometry, Lisa Hilland created a shape simultaneously simple and detailed. The glass moves with suppleness toward the removable metal top. Both pieces reflect light, but in entirely different ways.

The grid of the top also serves a purpose, if you want to place flowers inside Bloom: it allows you to shape your arrangements. You can even place a single plant in it, for an understated Scandinavian look. The Bloom collection launched in 2018.



**6400025**

Bloom Vase

H 125 mm W 230 mm



**6400026**

Bloom Vase

H 284 mm W 230 mm









# Cirrus

*Design Anne Nilsson*

Each Cirrus candlestick weighs over two pounds (one kilogram), thanks to the large base. The weight is an homage to the raw material glass, but also a result of wanting to make something as majestic as a candelabra, with only a single candle. Cirrus has a minimalistic shape, with its character coming from the materials instead, a merge of transparency, matte and glossy finishes. The frosted interior of the base transitions into a completely clear stem, leading to a stainless steel candle holder. Cirrus launched in 2020 and is both timeless and contemporary. The combination is Scandinavian and effortless.



**6267062**

Cirrus candlestick  
H 185 mm W 195 mm



**6267063**

Cirrus candlestick  
H 285 mm W 195 mm







# Cut in Number

*Design Ingegerd Råman*

With Cut in Number, Ingegerd Råman has applied Orrefors' extensive tradition of cut glass as starting point. She has stepped away from the tradition of polished cuts, leaving the cuts matte instead, which emphasizes the geometrical surface of the clear glass. Cut in Number consists of three cylindrical objects: a bowl and two vases, which all come with two different cut patterns. When the light meets the crystal and those carefully positioned lines, it becomes clear that mathematics also can be poetic. The collection launched in 2021.



**6552521 New**

Cut In Number Bowl Stripes  
H 85 mm W 160 mm



**6552533**

Cut In Number Bowl Stripes  
H 95 mm W 275 mm



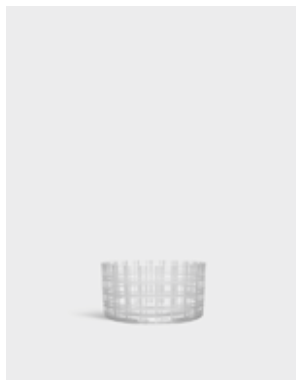
**6552524**

Cut In Number Vase Stripes  
H 200 mm W 185 mm



**6552525**

Cut In Number Vase Stripes  
H 330 mm W 118 mm



**6552522 New**

Cut In Number Bowl Checkers  
H 85 mm W 160 mm



**6552534**

Cut In Number Bowl Checkers  
H 95 mm W 275 mm



**6552526**

Cut In Number Vase Checkers  
H 200 mm W 185 mm



**6552527**

Cut In Number Vase Checkers  
H 330 mm W 118 mm









# Ebon

*Design Claesson Koivisto Rune*

The multi-disciplinary architecture and design trio Claesson Koivisto Rune have spent a great deal of time in Japan. Based on the relationship between designer and producer, Orrefors and Claesson Koivisto Rune have asked: why instruct a glassblower to make each item identical, even if the design is clearly defined? The Ebon vase shows that glass is a soft, glowing mass whose mobility slowly lessens as the temperature falls. Each vase has been allowed to set into its own shape and is thus deeply individual, within a strict framework. The collection launched in 2020.



**6720022**

Ebon Vase Black  
H 190 mm W 290 mm



**6720024**

Ebon Vase Black  
H 240 mm W 370 mm







# Lumiere

*Design Ingegerd Råman*

Ingegerd Råman studied for a period of time in Italy, where her friends were surprised by the delight the Swede took in flowers and candles. Orrefors Lumiere is a candlestick with a reduced, minimalist shape which sharply unites the crystal clear transparency of glass and the mirror-like metal. The collection launched in 2021.



**6298864**

Lumiere Candlestick

H 265 mm W 105 mm

**2-pack**



# Pond

*Design Ingegerd Råman*

Cut and centrifuged glass are significant to the history of Orrefors. With Pond, Ingegerd Råman has picked up this tradition while diverging from its path. Centrifuged glass traditionally has a circular shape, but here it is oval instead, while remaining as thin and strong as ever. When the dishes in different sizes are stacked on top of each other, an image appears – one reminiscent of rings on the water after a pebble is cast. The collection launched in 2021.



## **6554401**

Pond Plate Grey Set



## **6554470**

Pond Plate 137 mm Grey  
H 30 mm W 137 mm



## **6554472**

Pond Plate 212 mm Grey  
H 35 mm W 212 mm



## **6554474**

Pond Plate 290 mm Grey  
H 49 mm W 290 mm



## **6554475**

Pond Plate 365 mm Grey  
H 65 mm W 363 mm









# Squeeze

Design Lena Bergström

Like many other innovations, the idea for Squeeze arose by chance. While working on another shape entirely, Lena Bergström lost control of the heated, viscous glass, and the result was an asymmetrical inward bend. Inspired by her mistake, she made Squeeze, in which the shape has been intentionally reproduced. The "squeezed" indentations interrupt the symmetry, while simultaneously serving a clear function: flowers placed inside are neatly held together rather than spread out, even those with only a few stems. The collection first launched in 1997 and then relaunched in 2020.



**6562026 New**

Squeeze vase smokey brown  
H 230 mm W 120 mm



**6562028 New**

Squeeze vase smokey brown  
H 340 mm W 145 mm



**6562029 New**

Squeeze tulip vase blue  
H 180 mm W 180 mm



**6562030 New**

Squeeze tulip vase clear  
H 180 mm W 180 mm



**6562031 New**

Squeeze tulip vase smokey brown  
H 180 mm W 180 mm









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Art nr 7010018

