

THE WORLD OF
INTERIORS
MAY '97

ANTENNAE

Blown into all Proportions

TO COINCIDE WITH THE PUBLICATION OF *THE BRILLIANCE OF SWEDISH GLASS 1918-1939*, GEOFFREY BEARD REFLECTS ON THIS EXTRAORDINARY PERIOD, WHEN THE SWEDISH GLASS INDUSTRY SCALED THE HEIGHTS OF ARTISTIC ENDEAVOUR TO PRODUCE OBJECTS OF ELEGANCE, BEAUTY AND TECHNICAL INNOVATION ▷

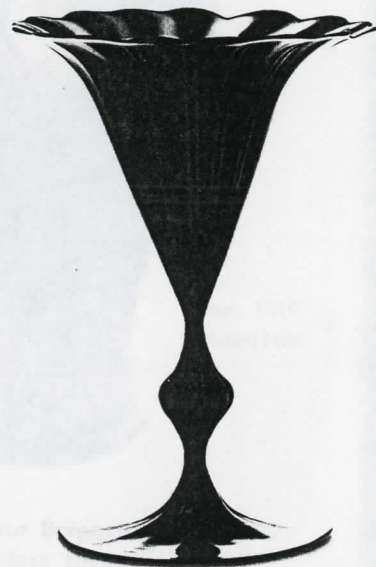
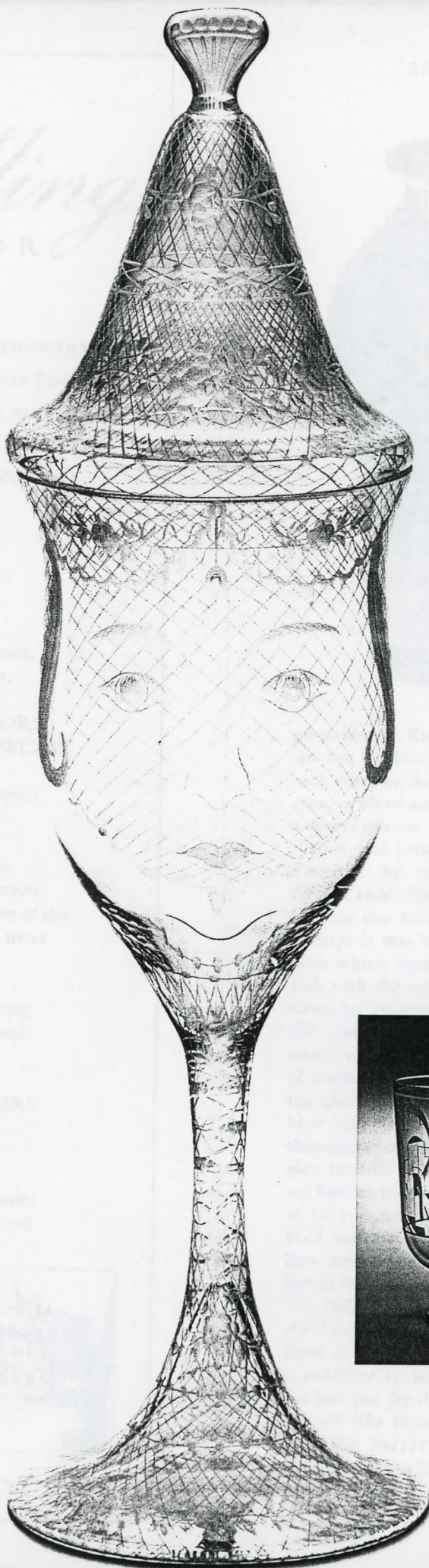


Travelling
THE INTERIOR

For someone reared in the dark shadows of the English cut-crystal factories, at Stowbridge in the heart of the Black Country, the artistic innovation of Swedish glass-making came as something of a shock. My first experience of the art was in October 1966, when I watched a bowl being made. The process involved a glass-blowing iron being swung effortlessly in a great spitting arc and the hot treacly mass attached to it plunged into a hastily scooped-out 'mould' in a barrel of sawdust. From the ensuing mayhem of steam and gaseous combustion was created a unique bowl, of crizzled grey-white glass. Since then I have witnessed more than once the 'sawdust experience' - snow was substituted as a cheap December alternative to mould wine glasses with rainbow-coloured stems and huge clear glass apples, fit for a giant's fruit bowl.

Sweden's glassworks, some 40 of them, are set in the forests of Småland in the southwest of the country; Kosta and Orrefors are the largest. Conifers and lakes surround the buildings. Some glassworks, like those at Orrefors, started as, or were associated with, older ironworks. Glass-making needed ready supplies of sand, potash and fuel and all of it was already there in more than ordinary abundance.

The designer Simon Gate (1883-1945) joined Orrefors in 1916. Visiting Orrefors Museum (designed by Gate's architect son) I saw perhaps the most beautiful piece of Swedish glass ever created, the blue-black footed *Slottsglass* or *Palace Glass* which Gate designed in 1923. The single 'gather' or taking up of the molten glass from the furnace mouth, had been blown and fashioned into a complex system of ribs by master >



Left: *Spanjorskan* (*Spanish Lady*), 1923, Edward Hald. Above: *Slottsglass* (*Palace Glass*), 1923, Simon Gate, Knut Bergqvist. Below: footed bowl, 1931, Simon Gate



Travelling

THE INTERIOR

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A one day exhibition of Fabrics,
Wallcoverings and Carpets,
in association with
THE WORLD OF INTERIORS
AS PART OF THE IDDA SHOWCASE

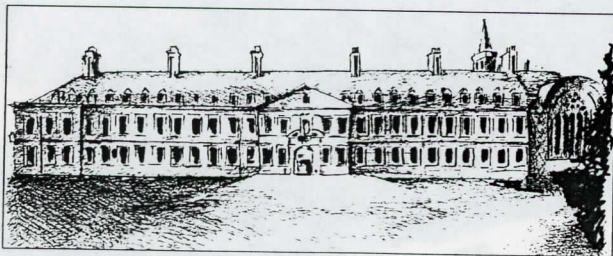
to be held at:- The Royal Hospital,
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This informal event offers a
marvellous opportunity to discover
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Interior Decorating World and meet
local interior designers

There is a charge of £5 for entry,
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Sasha Gibb of
THE WORLD OF INTERIORS
will give a presentation
at 11.00am and 4pm

For further information telephone:
0171-225-2298 (Manuel Canovas)



The Royal Hospital in situated in the centre of Dublin close to Heuston station

ANTENNAE



Vase, 1919,
Edward Hald

glass blower Knut Bergqvist, the only worker at Orrefors then capable of such dexterity. As soon as I saw it Swedish glass, in all its astonishing variety, claimed a devout convert.

Gate was joined at Orrefors in the Twenties by the freelance designer Edward Hald (1883-1980) who went on to become the firm's managing director. Perhaps it was his whimsical engraved glass which ensnared me – the *Spanish Lady* with the copper-wheel-engraved veil across her enigmatic face, like a lace mantilla – or the large vase, of 1921, with its own underplate, entitled *Fireworks* – a riot of bursting Catherine wheels and cascading spirals set against a dark blue sky. The blue was an overlay, so that cutting through it exposed the gleaming clear glass beneath. And I should love to keep my biscuits in Hald's covered *Monkey Cage* of 1923 because the designs of Gate and Hald (realised in part by Knut Bergqvist), have never been equalled; glass-historian biscuit eaters long for them ■

'The Brilliance of Swedish Glass 1918-1939: An Alliance of Art and Industry' edited by Derek E. Ostergard and Nina Stritzler-Levine is published by Yale UP at £45. To order this book post free (UK) at the special price of £42 call 'The World of Interiors' Directbooks on 01908 262111. Lines staffed 24 hours; UK delivery within 21 days