

# VESSEL GALLERY

## LONDON



**Chris Day (United Kingdom 1968 - )**

### **Message in a Bottle**

'Message in a Bottle' is a unique sculpture by the British artist, Chris Day, created from handblown and sculpted glass, micro bore copper pipe, copper wire, steel rebar, chain and reclaimed limestone.

This artwork was created as part of the artist's solo exhibition in 2021 at Harewood House in Leeds, curated by Vessel director Angel Monzon.

This employs Day's characteristic form of a blown glass bottle in a copper cage – this time, on its side. Metal chains bind it to a limestone plinth out of which steel rods protrude. These rods are known as rebar, and are used to reinforce concrete in the foundations of buildings. Day chose the rebar to allude to the fact that, historically, 'slavery was the foundation of many people's profits.' The title also refers to the legendary use of bottles by shipwrecked sailors to send messages across the sea in the hope that someone might find them. In Day's vision, these bottles were a 'cry for help'. The irony is that slaves on the plantations would not have been able to send such messages, as they were not taught to read and write. The artwork is also in itself a visual 'message' to the viewer.

Chris Day is an emerging glass & mixed media artist and a recent graduate from Wolverhampton University, who received a special commendation during the 2019 British Glass Biennale held in Stourbridge, UK. Creating works that are highly personal, Day's intention is to discuss and investigate the treatment of black people in Britain and the United States of America. Much of his research has focussed on the history of the slave trade in the Eighteenth Century.

The artist can also create pieces to commission, please contact the gallery for further information.

### **Artist description:**

Growing up in the West Midlands, Day has become Britain's only black glassblower, or certainly the only one that the artist is aware of. He creates highly personal works in glass and mixed media and his intention is to discuss and investigate the treatment of black people in Britain & the USA, with much of his research focussing on the history of the slave trade in the Eighteenth Century and the events leading to up & during the Civil Rights Movement.

A self-confessed 'arts enthusiast' Day's creative career comes after more than two decades as a plumber. Initially feeling that his life had taken him on a journey that significantly detoured away from his early love of the arts, Day is now able to reflect on the fact that many of the skills he has developed in his earlier career have directly transposed to the creation of his artworks.

Combining materials used in both heating and electrical systems into his creations, Day finds he able to create the perfect marriage of his artistic path and technical knowledge, both of which rely on dexterity and high levels of skill and craftsmanship.

A reoccurring and signature theme are 'copper cages' which enclose his glass, representing the restriction of movement both physically and mentally that traders possessed over other human's lives that were viewed simply as 'commodities'. These are created from simple copper tubing and wire but to dramatic effect. The glass, by contrast, Day compares to the human spirit, attempting to break free despite the restrictions that hold it in place.

In the artist's own words;

"Like the glass I have pushed my approach in how I work with glass and ceramics in both traditional and experimental methods, to create contemporary artworks that represent my passion for this part of our history. As a black glassblower, I am one of few and on a quest to find and inspire more. My main purpose, however, is to engage the audience on issues that are hard to confront on many levels, using art to help overcome some of the traumas that haunt our collective past"

An emerging artist and a recent graduate from Wolverhampton University, Day received a special commendation at the 2019 British Glass Biennale held in Stourbridge, UK. He has not only become a leading voice within the contemporary British art-glass scene but also with the continued conversation surrounding Black Lives Matter and racial inequality, giving his time for numerous interviews for both TV, radio and social media.