



Chris Day (United Kingdom 1968 -)

Ancestral Gaze

Blown & sculpted glass with mixed media

55 x 26 x 16 cm (21 ⁵/₈ x 10 ¹/₄ x 6 ¹/₄ inches)

'Ancestral Gaze' is a unique collection of sculptures by the British artist, Chris Day, created from handblown & sculpted glass with micro bore copper pipe and recycled electrical wire.

The price shown is per artwork, please contact the [gallery](#) for details of all available works. The dimensions shown are the average size of artwork, excluding the steel stand. Stands are available in heights 100, 105 & 110cm.

The collection explained by Dr Emma Park:

After experimenting with an introspective direction for his *Reflections of Resistance*, Day has made it central to Ancestral Gaze, a collection of five masks inspired by depictions of the face in African art. The focus here is on the use of coloured but transparent glass as a medium for the mask, an item which is normally intended to conceal the face behind it. The use of glass, in contrast, exposes the identity of the imagined wearer. In particular, the exaggerated proportions of the eyes draw attention to what for Day is the most interesting part of the face: 'the eyes are the entry point to your soul.'

In making these self-revealing masks, Day puts his African heritage on display for all to see. The risks involved in this self-exposure are symbolised by the fragility of the glass, which, as it is blown out

through the wicker-like copper cage surrounding it, embodies the individual's search for free expression against both internal and external resistances. The tension between metal and glass perhaps also symbolises more practical limits on Day's creative freedom: he still works from day to day as a plumber, fitting his art in when time and funding are available.

The experience of growing up mixed race, Day says, may be 'hard to understand' for people who do not fall into this category. Similarly, 'being black is not a matter of what shade you are, it's a matter of what you've been through.' Even now, he still bears the 'emotional scars' of his past: 'I don't look at myself in a mirror. And I still find it hard to look into people's eyes.' Nevertheless, glass, not as a utilitarian mirror but as a material of art, has become his way of gazing both out at the past and into himself. 'Glass should be used to engage with people... I hope that my ancestors are looking down on me and thinking, "Thank you for telling our story."'

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.