

BERTIL VALLIEN SIXTY YEARS OF EXPLORING GLASS ART

STARMAN



HAWK GALLERIES

in partnership with

KostaBoda



Kosta Boda, the Swedish heritage brand founded in 1742, celebrates

60 Years

of artistic partnership with renowned glass sculptor Bertil Vallien through a survey exhibition of the artist's seminal work.

STARMAN: *Sixty Years of Exploring Glass Art* evokes the radiant energy that defines Swedish artist and designer Bertil Vallien's oeuvre, while acknowledging his pioneering role in elevating glass from a craft medium to a powerful vehicle for conceptual and sculptural expression.

The title also nods to David Bowie's *Starman*, one of several musical touchstones that inform Vallien's artistic sensibility. Like Bowie he is a mythmaker who weaves and tells dark fairy tales - Vallien's are brought to life in glass by his dedicated team at Kosta Boda.

His sand-cast sculptures are created utilizing a modern adaptation of ancient metal casting techniques dating back to 2000 BCE.

In the mid-1980's Vallien perfected the process of making compacted-sand molds into which he impresses shapes and sculpts images that will be filled with molten glass. The resulting sculptures deliver rough textured granular surfaces that vibrate with energy as they speak of the immediacy of his process while supporting a symbolist language which nods knowingly towards the Art Brut tradition.





Vallien's storytelling through glass is infused with a musical essence. His works carry a spiritual musicality: forms unfold rhythmically, surfaces resonate like sustained notes, and motifs recur with the logic of a composition. Vallien's visual language operates as a score, where repetition, variation, and pause shape meaning as much as material and form.

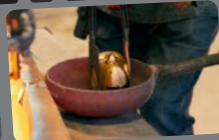
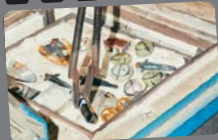
The **STARMAN** exhibition unfolds as a thematic journey through five career-spanning bodies of work. *Resting Heads* explore introspection and the interior life, while *Two Faces* reflects Vallien's enduring interest in duality, identity, and the human condition. His iconic *Ships* function as metaphors for passage, memory, and the unknown. *Idun's Magical Apples* are inspired by Sweden's national fruit as well as a symbol of the cycle of life. Idun was the Goddess of Spring who guarded magical apples that granted eternal youth. Completing the exhibition is a never-before-seen *Black Glass* series, which introduces a darker, more enigmatic register to Vallien's practice, emphasizing depth, absorption, and the quiet power of absence.

Together, these five series reveal Vallien's sustained investigation into humanity, spirituality, and the poetic possibilities of glass, affirming his position as a visionary whose work continues to resonate with both emotional intensity and conceptual clarity.

“ Bertil Vallien's singular work as an artist and designer has made an indelible mark on Kosta Boda's legacy and has impacted on the world of contemporary art by contributing to the advancement of glass as a medium for artistic expression ”

notes former Kosta Boda CEO and current Executive Board member Emon Maasho. “With this exhibition, Kosta Boda marks a significant milestone of its Art Glass program and signals the future for emerging glass artists in Sweden and beyond.”

“ Bertil Vallien's work is in the collections of more than thirty museums internationally including: State Heritage Museum (St. Petersburg, Russia); National Museum (Stockholm, Sweden); Victoria and Albert Museum (London, England); Art Institute of Chicago (Chicago, IL); National Museum of Modern Art (Kyoto, Japan); Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, NY); Powerhouse Museum (Sydney, Australia); and MFA Boston (Boston, MA). ”



*Exhibition
Artworks*



Heads

The motif of the sleeping muse is a well-loved art-historical thread—painters and sculptors across centuries have returned to the enigmatic power of the resting figure. For Bertil Vallien, the theme is rooted in his deep fascination with Karolina Olsson, the Swedish girl known as “Sleeping Beauty,” who lay in a coma from 1876 to 1908 and awoke to a transformed world as a middle-aged woman.

This liminal state—part hibernation, part dreamscape—has become a generative force behind Vallien’s long-running series of cast-glass heads. Some appear upright, as if stirred from an extended slumber; others recline on their sides, their subdued features conveying the gravity of profound sleep.

Suspended between consciousness and dream, these heads inhabit a somnambulant realm, where the act of dreaming quietly shapes their form.



Resting Head, 1997

SAND CAST GLASS, PAINTED INCLUSIONS (MIXED MEDIA)
13.0 (L) x 6.5 (H) x 11.0 (W) INCHES



Resting Head II, 2020

SAND CAST GLASS, SAND CORE INCLUSIONS (MIXED MEDIA)
15.4 (L) x 8.9 (H) x 11.4 (W) INCHES



Resting Head III, 2023

SAND CAST GLASS, PAINTED INCLUSIONS (MIXED MEDIA)
15.4 (L) x 8.9 (H) x 11.4 (W) INCHES



Two Faces

Vallien's enduring preoccupation with heads can be traced to his student years, when he first encountered Janus—the Roman deity presiding over thresholds, transitions, and the dualities of time. Traditionally depicted with two faces, Janus looks simultaneously backward and forward, embodying the tension between memory and possibility.

In this new series of cast works, Vallien revisits that Janus-like duality through a pair of double-faced totems that articulate contrast as their governing principle. One side presents a dense, opaque surface, heavily encrusted with objects—some glass, some metal—forming a material masquerade that recalls the weight and permanence of stone. The reverse is markedly different: a luminous glass façade that seems to dissolve, exposing internal spaces revealing what lies within.

The “neck” of each totem is cinched with a corset of leather and red string—a material departure that signals states of being bound and released. Through these opposing faces and textures, Vallien meditates on the fluid thresholds between opacity and transparency, concealment and revelation, past and future.



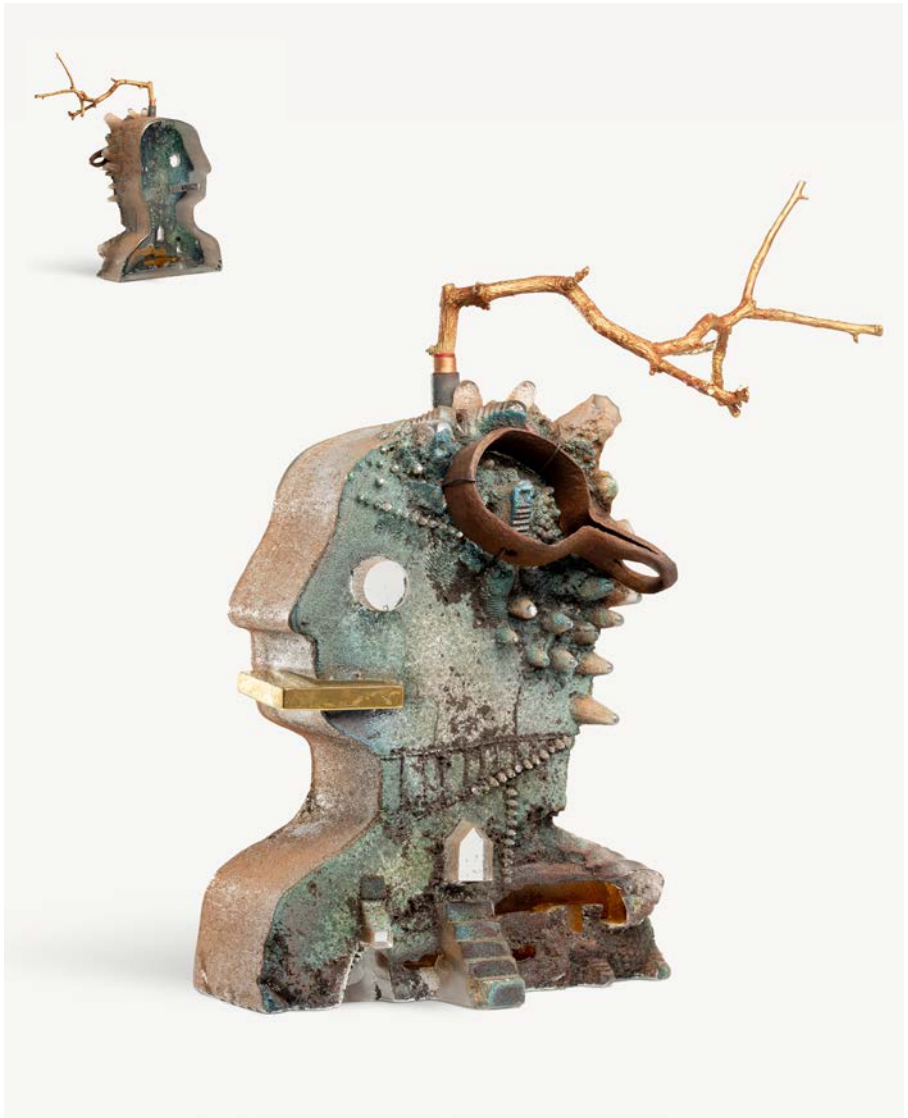
Janus Grande I, 2020

SAND CAST GLASS, PAINTED INCLUSIONS,
PAINTED SYNTHETIC MATERIAL COMPOSITES, SIKABLOCK (MIXED MEDIA)
15.5 (L) x 11.4 (H) x 6.3 (W) INCHES



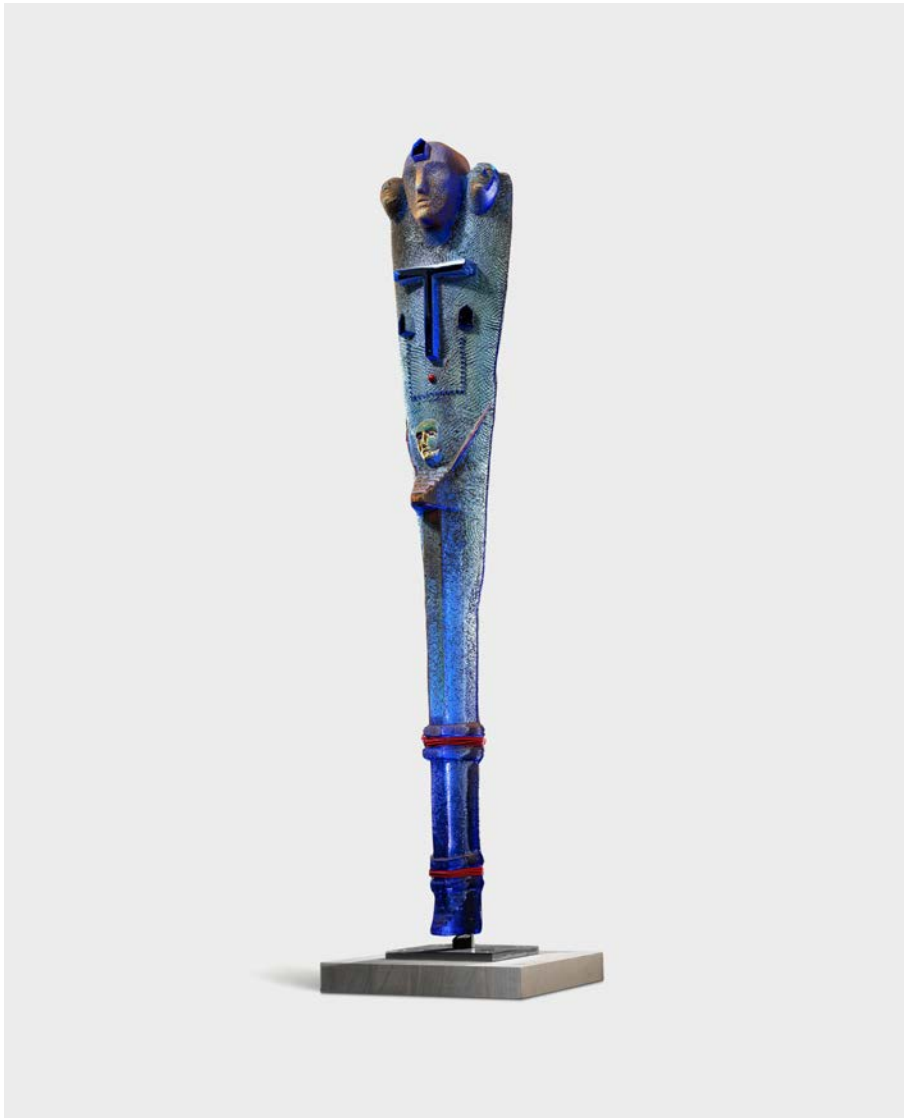
Hidden Code II, 2023

SAND CAST GLASS, FOUND OBJECTS, ROTATING IRON PLATE (MIXED MEDIA)
7.9 (L) x 25.4 (H) x 5 (W) INCHES



Kafka II, 2023

SAND CAST GLASS, FOUND OBJECTS, WOODEN BASE (MIXED MEDIA)
11.2 (L) x 15.2 (H) x 6.7 (W) INCHES



M WATCHER, 2021

SAND CAST GLASS, FOUND OBJECTS, WOODEN PLATE (MIXED MEDIA)
6.7 (L) x 37.4 (H) x 3.5 (W) INCHES

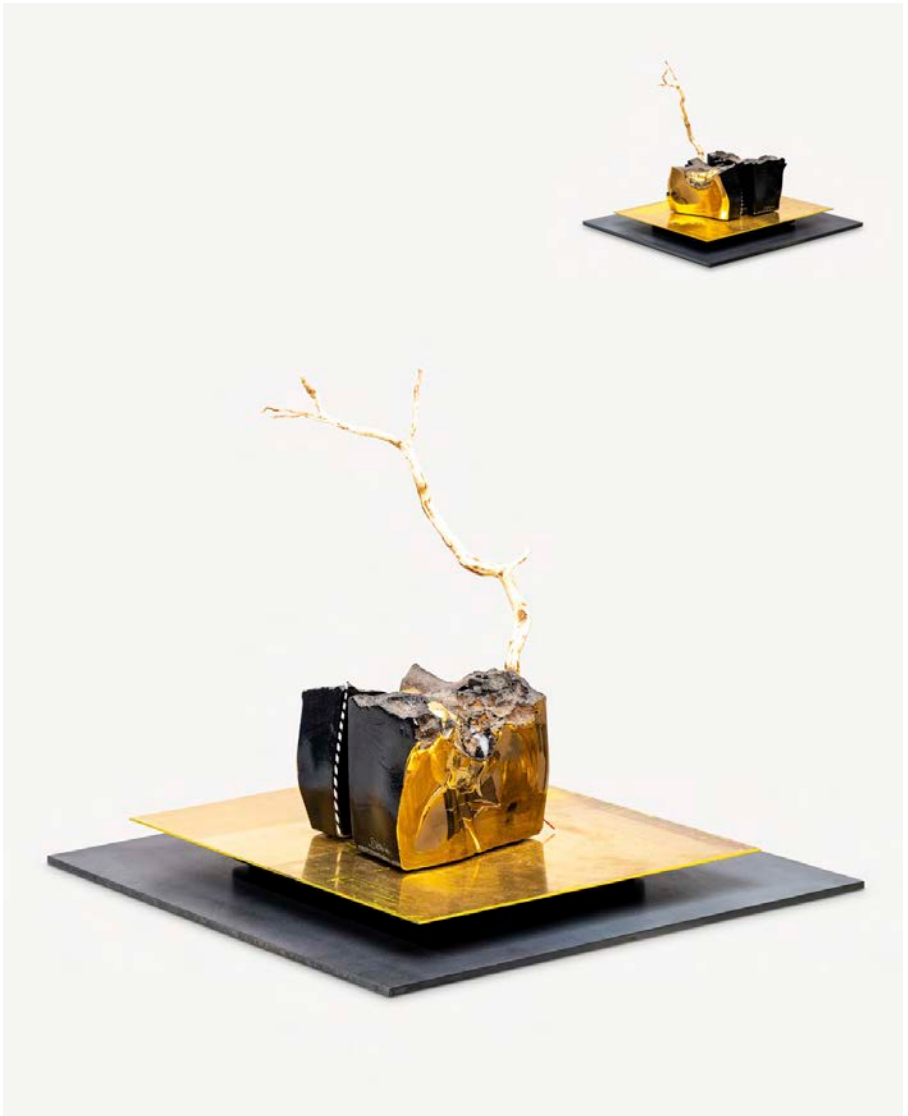


Black Glass and Landscapes

Renowned for the luminous blues that bathe his sleeping muses, Vallien arrived at black glass through an act of serendipity: an assistant, misreading instructions, added 2,000 grams of cobalt instead of the intended twenty.

The resulting substance was unexpected—molten glass rendered light-absorbing, dense and utterly opaque. Glass that eats light - the antithesis of what is traditionally associated with the medium's transparency and radiance.

Confronted with this accidental material, Vallien recognized its potential and embraced it as a catalyst for new explorations. The discovery opened a pathway into darker psychological and metaphysical terrain, enabling him to probe what lies beneath the surface—both literally and symbolically. From this chance event emerged a series of haunting, apocalyptic landscapes, where black glass becomes a conduit for contemplating the unknown, the concealed, and the ominously sublime.



Ashes and Diamond, 2023

SAND CAST GLASS, FOUND OBJECTS, GOLDEN BASE, ROTATING IRON PLATE (MIXED MEDIA)
7.0 (L) x 3.9 (H) x 5.3 (W) INCHES



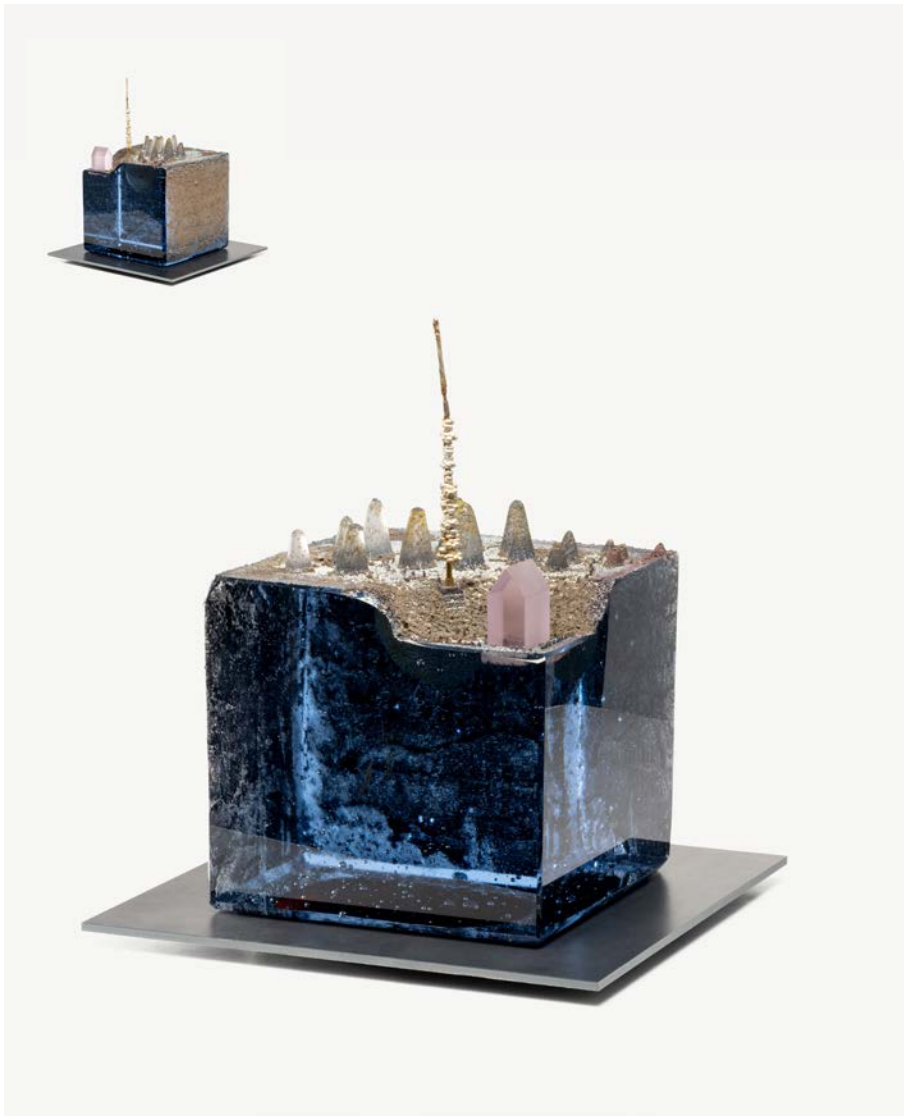
The Source, 2020

SAND CAST GLASS, SAND CORE INCLUSIONS, ROTATING IRON PLATE (MIXED MEDIA)
8.9 (L) x 9.25 (H) x 9.5 (W) INCHES



Fragile Crust, 2020

SAND CAST GLASS, ROTATING IRON PLATE (MIXED MEDIA)
8.9 (L) x 10.6 (H) x 8.9 (W) INCHES



Forecast III/ Landscape 2020

SAND CAST GLASS, SAND CORE INCLUSIONS, FOUND OBJECTS,
ROTATING IRON PLATE (MIXED MEDIA)
7.9 (L) x 8.6 (H) x 7.9 (W) INCHES



Landfall II/ Landscape, 2023

SAND CAST GLASS, ROTATING IRON PLATE (MIXED MEDIA)
12.4 (L) x 11.0 (H) x 9.8 (W) INCHES



Harbor I, 2018

SAND CAST GLASS, IRON STAND (MIXED MEDIA)
12.4 (L) x 11.0 (H) x 9.8 (W) INCHES



Enactment A, 2023

SAND CAST GLASS, IRON STAND,
MDF PODIUM (MIXED MEDIA)
24 (L) x 11.8 (H) x 32.3 (W) INCHES

Enactment B, 2023

SAND CAST GLASS, IRON STAND,
MDF PODIUM (MIXED MEDIA)
24.8 (L) x 11.4 (H) x 32.3 (W) INCHES



Intruder, 2022

SAND CAST GLASS, IRON STAND (MIXED MEDIA)
19.0 (L) x 18.5 (H) x 4.5 (W) INCHES



Ships

The symbolism of the ship within Vallien's heritage is profound. In Norse history, longships served as instruments of exploration, trade, and conquest, but also as a structuring force of social and cosmological order - vessels navigating both physical and psychological realms. Its sleek form carried people, belief systems, and power across uncertain waters, rendering the ship an emblem of mobility and transformation.

Mythology and saga literature further elevate the status of these vessels: distinguished individuals were often honored with ship burials, set adrift with treasured belongings and ignited by flaming arrows. These rites transformed the ship into a vehicle mediating between life and death, the earthly and the transcendent, their vessels transformed into blazing passages between worlds.

Working in molten glass, Vallien reactivates this ancestral imagery, translating the drama and solemnity of the longship's final journey into sculptural form. His elongated, tapering vessels become carriers of symbolic cargo, laden with fragments, figures and signs, markers of life's enigmas and transitions.

Over decades, Vallien has explored shifts in scale, color, and opacity within this motif, each sculpture a chapter in a continuing artistic inquiry. Collectively they form an armada charged with historical memory and existential gravity, navigating the liminal spaces between materiality, memory, myth, and the metaphysical.



Equilibrium, 2023

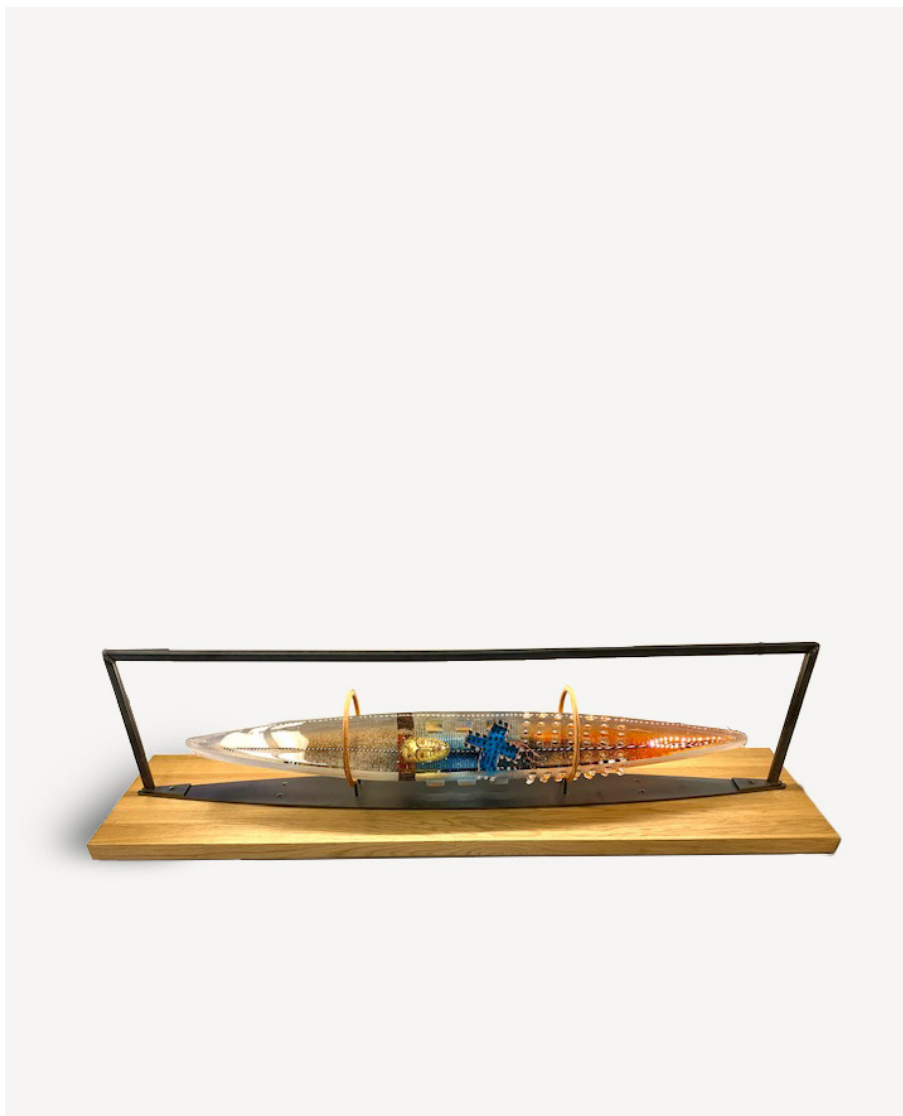
SAND CAST GLASS WITH PAINTED INCLUSIONS, IRON STAND (MIXED MEDIA)
77.5 (L) x 12 (H) x 5.3 (W) INCHES



Clear Boat, 2021

SAND CAST GLASS, PAINTED INCLUSIONS, IRON STAND, MIRROR PLATE
(MIXED MEDIA)

26.0 (L) x 3.1 (H) x 4.1 (W) INCHES



Outpost, 2022

SAND CAST GLASS, SAND CORE AND PAINTED INCLUSIONS, IRON STAND, WOODEN BASE
(MIXED MEDIA)

33.1 (L) x 3.7 (H) x 4.5 (W) INCHES



Viaggio Interiori II Painting, 2022

SAND CAST GLASS, MDF BOARD, ACRYLIC PAINT, IRON FRAME (MIXED MEDIA)
23.6 (L) x 47.2 (H) x 1.3 (W) INCHES



Idun's Magical Apples

A poetic reminder of life's fragility and fleeting beauty.

One day in the studio, Vallien surprised his team with an unexpected challenge: "No casting today. Let's blow. Let's show what human breath can do with glass. Let's see who can blow the largest bubble!"

From that spontaneous moment emerged a remarkable collection of twelve monumental blown-glass apples — an homage to Sweden's de facto national fruit. In Swedish cultural history, the apple is a powerful symbol of the cycle of life, renewal, and nature's constant rebirth. In Old Norse mythology, Idun the Goddess of Spring, guarded magical apples that granted the gods eternal youth. When the apples were lost or withheld, the gods began to wither, their very existence threatened.

These luminous glass forms echo that ancient story— fragile and breath-shaped they capture the delicate balance between vitality and impermanence.



Idun's Magical Apple, 2023

MOUTH BLOWN GLASS
18.1 (L) x 14.6 (H) x 13.4 (W) INCHES



Idun's Magical Apple, 2023

MOUTH BLOWN GLASS
17.3 (L) x 21.7 (H) x 15.4 (W) INCHES



Idun's Magical Apple, 2023

MOUTH BLOWN GLASS
18.1 (L) x 16.9 (H) x 13.8 (W) INCHES



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STARMAN

SEPTEMBER 3 - OCTOBER 31, 2026

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