

## Contemporary Canadian Glass

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### Akiko Isono's World

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By Larissa Blokhuis

Welcome to the tiny, intricate world of Akiko Isono. From the seaside town of Wakayama, Japan, she lets us into a playful world of flameworked creatures. With enchanting names, she creates a narrative for her objects.



It does not yet bloom, 3 x 3 x 3 cm, 2012

"It Does Not Yet Bloom" sits on a budding branch, waiting. By photographing her work in situ, she adds life to the piece. This bead looks like an ethereal creature, and I imagine finding it by surprise while on a peaceful walk in the woods. This dreamy creature embraces what could otherwise be a relatively simple bead, creating a lovely symmetry with the bead embracing the branch.



The trail of the oak, 3 x 3 x 3 cm, 2012

"The Trail of the Oak" features a frog holding a bead or marble with an ocean-scape inside. This charming frog possesses a beautiful, intimate scene. Oddly, the frog sits in a forest-scape. As in the next image, "The Trail of the Oak" combines contexts.



Mushroom field on the stump, 3 x 3 x 3 cm, 2011



"Mushroom Field on the Stump" shows a calm little cuttlefish on a stump. The play between the ocean and forest worlds could be taken as a comment on the interconnectedness of nature. Although the ocean and the forest seem like two quite different and separate worlds, there is a certain amount of regular transfer, as with birds, fish swimming upstream, and countless animals which live by the shore in the water and on land. Cuttlefish are amazing creatures which can change the colour and texture of their skin in a moment. If a similar creature lived in the woods, you would never see it because of its highly effective camouflage abilities.

If you visit Isono's website, [http://www.iso.cx/english/eng\\_top.html](http://www.iso.cx/english/eng_top.html), and view the "Extra" section, you will find delightful sequences in which Isono's creatures are photographically followed around through nature scenes. These scene-sequences have great charisma, and help the viewer feel the delight of finding a little creature and watching it move through its environment.

Isono makes each sculpture as a bead, which leaves a question as to the intended use of the bead. If you decide the pieces are wearable, the wearer becomes the viewer in the scene-sequences, following after a creature in real life. However, Isono does not show her beads in a fashion context. This puts her work in the same category as many hot glass artists, producing objects which go beyond the beauty of a well-made functional object, without losing the potential for functionality. This ambiguity allows the viewer to decide if the works are functional objects or art objects for display only. Hot glass artists and artists using other 3D materials often walk this line, blending ideas about craft vs. art.

Isono shows more than just great skill as a glass artist. She also shows us an imaginative world that is much larger than the 3cm beads she produces.

*Larissa Blokhuis has been making art in western Canada for many years. She is a member of the Terminal City Glass Co-op and the Alberta Craft Council. She exhibits her work regularly, which can be seen here:*

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