



MATERIAL EXPLORATION AWARD

Noah Breuer

Little Compton, Rhode Island, US

This body of work examines the visual legacy of my family's former textile printing business, **Carl Breuer and Sons** (CB&S), founded 1897 in Bohemia. In 1939 the company, along with all other Jewish-owned property in German-occupied areas, was "arrayanized" and sold to Nazi-approved owners. Most of my family members were killed in **Auschwitz** and the product of their work was lost. Through my 2016 visit to the factory's archive of fabric samples and designs held at the **Czech Textile Museum**, I have amassed a rich digital collection of primary source material in the form of scans and photographs. This foundational archive has been my

springboard for creating a variety of printed work on paper and fabric as well as installations and glass objects.

These works are part of a series of glass objects I made during a 10-week residency at **Bullseye Projects** in Emeryville, California. They were created by screen printing powdered glass frit onto flat sheets of glass. After printing, the powder is fused in a hot kiln and the entire form is "slumped" into a sculptural form. Using the medium of glass to create these forms was a conscious reference to the importance of Bohemian crystal for that region's economy. The Czech glass

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Left page: Noah Breuer inspects his work after kiln-forming the glass at Bullseye Projects.

Below: **Noah Breuer *Bohemian Showroom*** 2019, cyanotype, cotton, dyed, wood, 18' x 8'. Right: detail.

and textile industries have long spread the material culture of Bohemia throughout the world, and better understanding how my ancestor's company fit into that history has been a central theme in my research.

In my "Bohemian Showroom" installation, I reference CB&S tablecloth designs from the 1910s and 20s as well as compositions from the Viennese Secessionists. The installation is meant to evoke a wholesale fabric store display. Three wall-mounted, vertical, wooden boards and a set of horizontal dowels form a display rack from which six cyanotype-on-cotton works are hung.

Instead of offering bolts of fabric for purchase by the yard, this composition invites reflection on the lives and labor of the designers and craftspeople whose livelihoods were





Noah Breuer *Yellow Tablecloth* 2019, kiln-formed glass, 18" x 13" x 13".



Noah Breuer *Yellow Tablecloth* (alternative view) 2019, kiln-formed glass, 18" x 13" x 13".



Noah Breuer *Swing Girl Terrycloth* 2019, kiln-formed glass, 17" x 20" x 1".

supported by the factory. Within this new context, the installation functions as a memorial to the tragic demise of the business and the murder of so many of its employees.

The glass forms, "Swing Girl Terrycloth" and "Yellow Tablecloth" reference humble kitchen linens that feature whimsical CB&S designs from the 1910's. In the transformation from domestic textile to glass art objects, these forms have become more permanent and simultaneously more fragile. "Yellow Tablecloth" is a self-supporting, wraith-like glass object seemingly draped over an invisible table. This piece of spectral glass evokes a burial shroud and suggests absence and loss.

These artworks not only resurrect the fruits of my ancestors' labor but also reinterpret them. They act as objects of devotion offered to my lost European family. Tablecloth and dish-towel designs are transformed into glass sculptures and mass-produced domestic textiles become unique art installations which, in turn, raise questions about labor, authorship and appropriation.

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