

First U.S. Exhibition of Medieval Glass Objects for Daily Use Opens at The Corning Museum of Glass May 15

***Medieval Glass for Popes, Princes, and Peasants* brings together rare objects from 500AD to the Renaissance, from international collections and treasuries**

Corning, NY, April 30, 2010 — An unexpected variety of medieval glass vessels will be explored in an exhibition of objects for daily use and display at The Corning Museum of Glass beginning May 15, 2010 and running through January 3, 2011. *Medieval Glass for Popes, Princes, and Peasants* will follow the evolution of glass production over 1,000 years, from its height in the Roman Empire, through the radical social and political change of the Middle Ages when all but the simplest glassmaking techniques were forgotten, until the golden age of Venetian glassmaking during the Renaissance.

The glass vessels and objects in the exhibit will range from highly decorated drinking vessels to church reliquaries—highlighting the many uses of glass in medieval society, and the significance of the material to local economies, religious ceremonies and scientific developments.

“The phrase ‘medieval glass’ often evokes an image of stained glass windows, but there exists a remarkable range of glass objects made for daily use which provide rare insight into a cross section of medieval society,” explains Dr. David Whitehouse, executive director of The Corning Museum of Glass and curator of this exhibition. “The objects in the exhibition trace the history of the Middle Ages in Europe through the lens of glassmaking. The story touches on politics, trade, urbanization and the disintegration of cities, religion, science, and technology and highlights the importance of the material to the development of the world we know today. Its arc spans a period of 1,000 years—nearly one quarter of the history of glassmaking—and depicts the rise of glassmaking from a dark period of reduced knowledge to an era of innovation.”

Glassmaking saw its greatest era in the ancient world during the Roman Empire, when glassmakers used a rich variety of techniques to meet the demands of wealthy patrons. As the Roman Empire disintegrated and Europe became politically fragmented, there were fewer glassmaking centers. The demand for glass and other luxury goods was reduced, and many glassmaking techniques were lost. It was not until the late Middle Ages, with the rise of craft guilds and cities, that glassmaking techniques were revived, setting the stage for the next great era of glassmaking: the emergence of Venice as the principal glassmaking center in the Renaissance.

The more than 100 objects in *Medieval Glass* are drawn from the Corning Museum’s collection, as well as from museums and cathedral treasuries in Europe, where many pieces were held for centuries without being properly identified. Some were discovered during archeological excavations—which gave scholars and archeologists a groundbreaking new vision of the richness and variety of medieval glass, its production centers and techniques used by medieval glassmakers.

One area of the exhibit will display glass objects used for eating and drinking, arranged chronologically to show the evolution of glass tableware through this thousand-year period, and to illustrate the increase in the decoration and complexity of the glass vessels as glassmaking techniques were rediscovered in the late Middle Ages. Copies of illuminated manuscripts and

paintings throughout the exhibit will illustrate how these glass objects were used and valued in medieval society.

Other sections of the exhibit explore glass for the church and treasury, and glass used for science and medicine—including glass used in scientific instruments, for medical diagnosis and alchemy, as well as the critical development of reading spectacles and other lenses. A gallery reminiscent of a medieval cathedral will feature the sole stained glass window in the exhibition, as well as highlights of glass used in the church: ceremonial lamps, drinking vessels and glasses used to preserve relics.

Also on view through the fall of 2010 will be *Tiffany Treasures: Favrite Glass from Special Collections* (through October 31, 2010) and *Voices of Contemporary Glass: The Heineman Collection* (through January 2, 2011).

The Rakow Research Library of The Corning Museum of Glass opens an exhibition on May 17 of American stained glass drawings and designs from its collection. *Drawings for American Stained Glass* will run through December 31, 2010.

The Corning Museum of Glass

The Corning Museum of Glass (www.cmog.org) is home to the world's most comprehensive collection of glass. Spanning the globe and encompassing more than 3,500 years of human ingenuity, the collection includes masterpieces from ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome; the great civilizations of Islam, Asia, Europe and the Americas; and the range of artistic movements beginning in the late 19th century and extending to the present day. Interactive exhibits tell the story of life-changing historic advancements and contemporary innovations in glass technology.

Live glassblowing demonstrations (offered at the Museum, on the road in the U.S. and abroad, and at sea on Celebrity Cruises) bring the material to life for audiences of all ages. Daily Make Your Own Glass experiences at the Museum enable visitors to create their own work in a state-of-the-art hot glassmaking studio.

The Museum's campus includes a year-round glassmaking school and the Rakow Research Library, the world's foremost archive and reference collection on the history of glassmaking. A center for scholarship, the Museum also publishes glass-focused periodicals, books and exhibition catalogs.

Located in the heart of the Finger Lakes Wine Country of New York State, the Museum is open daily, year-round. Kids and teens, 19 and under, receive free admission. The Corning Museum of Glass is conveniently located directly off I-86/Rte. 17, mid-way between Niagara Falls and New York City.

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