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Review of Harvell, Drew. A Sea of Glass : Searching for the Blaschkas' Fragile Legacy in an Ocean at Risk

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Harvell, Drew. *A Sea of Glass : Searching for the Blaschkas' Fragile Legacy in an Ocean at Risk*. Oakland, University of California Press. 2016.

Leopold and Rudolph Blaschka were a remarkable father and son team of naturalist glass blowers working in 19th century Germany. In addition to the well-known glass flowers that are exhibited at the Harvard Museum of Comparative Zoology in Cambridge, they created hundreds of glass marine invertebrates commissioned by universities in Europe and the U.S. for use as teaching collections. Working from illustrations in books as well as live specimens housed in their own aquaria, they received regular shipments of living sea animals from Trieste, Italy, Kiel, Germany and Weymouth, England. First they painted watercolors and then made the glass models. The author (Biology, Cornell) specializes in the ecology and evolution of corals and the effects of warming climate on coral reef ecosystems. Captivated by the beauty and accuracy of the Blaschka animals owned by Cornell and housed at the Corning Museum of Glass, she embarked on diving expeditions to survey the oceans off Friday Harbor, Washington, Liguria, Italy, Wakatobi Island Marine National Park, Indonesia and other sites to compare the numbers and diversity of living populations with those of 160 years ago. The reader is introduced to the anatomy, physiology and ecological relationships of such animals as anemones, corals, jellyfish, octopi, tubeworms, and sea slugs. Unfortunately, the increasing acidity of the oceans due to high levels of carbon dioxide, overfishing, and pollution has greatly reduced the numbers and types of animals living today. VERDICT: Harvell makes an eloquent plea for marine biodiversity conservation directed to the general reader. Readers of "A Reef in Time" by J.E.N. Veron (2008) or Richard Ellis' "The Empty Ocean" (2003) will appreciate this volume. Color illustrations (though not seen by this reviewer) will create interest both in the Blaschka collection (due to be exhibited at the Corning Museum from May 14, 2016 through January 8, 2017) and in the urgency of tackling the carbon dioxide problem. An 8 page bibliography is included)

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