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ARTEL

The young, Prague-based company bringing ultra-modern design values to Czech crystal

When we first saw Czech brand Artel's striking new 'Glacier' collection with its gorgeous asymmetrical facets, instinct told us that this was no ordinary crystal company. While the term 'Czech crystal' often has negative connotations due to tourist souvenirs of dubious quality, here was a collection that oozed hand-crafted finesse, in subtle, sophisticated hues and contemporary shapes.

Artel's history reflects this marriage of tradition and 21st-century slickness. It was set up in 1997 by American Karen Feldman, whose ambitions to work with historic Czech crystal manufacturer Moser had been frustrated. Instead, she started her own company combining up-to-the-minute design with fine craftsmanship, naming it after an early 20th-century collective of Czech

artisans and adopting as the company motto 'Artel is not your grandma's crystal!' Working with great international designers is key: the 'Glacier' vases and tumblers were created by young American talent David Wiseman, while famed US minimalist artist Sol LeWitt designed a limited-edition set of graphically engraved tumblers in 2005. We also love the lustrous 'Beehive' decanter, bowl and tumblers (by Karen herself), for their fluid Thirties-esque forms.

Despite its beauty, Karen is adamant that her crystal shouldn't sit on a shelf. 'It's functional art that people can use every day,' she says. *Artel* (www.artelglass.com) is available to buy from Fortnum & Mason (020 7734 8040; www.fortnumandmason.com) and Thomas Goode (020 7499 2823; www.thomasgoode.co.uk)



From top The 'Beehive' decanter set designed by Artel founder, Karen Feldman; glassware from the 'Glacier' collection by American talent David Wiseman