

WPB MAGAZINE[®]



ENTERTAINMENT

Rob Wynne's Mirror Images Are A Glass Act

BY SANDRA SCHULMAN

— FEB 20, 2017

Wynne doesn't see himself as a "glass artist" but it is the work he has become most widely known for.

By **Sandra Schulman**, WPB Magazine Arts & Entertainment writer, Music and Film Producer.



The glam rock lover in me has never been happier than I was standing in a gallery full of Rob Wynne's glass, mirror, glitter, mylar based work at his solo show at Gavlak Gallery in Palm Beach. Silvery and metallic and gleaming, his hand poured molten glass works drip and splatter and melt off the walls, evoking a watery respite from the brick and mortar world.

The show is called *OH2/H2O*, invoking water and mirrors and reflections, this is his third show at the Palm Beach location and his fourth with Gavlak Gallery. The gallery touts his work as "embodying the Rococo style of asymmetrical forms, elaborate ornamentation, and Enlightenment sensibility of the 18th Century, combined with contemporary and unexpected use of text and materials." Rob Wynne himself says he was immersed in Japanese art and ways to portray water.

"I am not a graphic technician by any means," Rob Wynne says by phone from his studio in New York. "My work is all about the process of the material. About 20 years ago I made a piece that I thought would look great in glass. Not knowing anything about it, I took it to a glass studio to be made and they gave me back something that looked like a molten banana boomerang. I thought oh no this will not do! So I went to another glass studio who made it really great. I started looking around the studio with the crew wearing these heavy protective gear suits and helmets, these glowing furnaces, barrels of molten glass and I was hooked. I wanted to try it so they suited me up and I held a ladle and scooped some molten glass that was really heavy and promptly flipped it over and dropped it on the floor. They were all explaining to me what I had done wrong but I was mesmerized by the piece I dropped as it started to cool and form and had this nice dimpling texture to it. I said save this, and it became my first piece."



From that Wynne went on to experiment with hand pouring the molten glass to shape puddles and letters and forms like butterflies. Then he created whole wall installations with them by first arranging them on the floor and creating a template to recreate them on the wall. Each piece, and some works have over 800 individual pieces of glass in them, gets coated on the back with silver nitrate at a mirror shop, then drilled with a hole so a screw can be inserted, then it's numbered according to the template.

It's an exhaustive multi-step process that can take three months to complete one piece from start to finish.

"What I love about it is its alchemical nature," he says. "Glass is sand and silica melted at temperatures of 2000 degrees. It glows orange. You can add colors too. I had no technical training in this so I use a crew at various stages, but the hand pouring is my own way of using this material. It's all totally organic and hand made, no molds are ever used to make these biomorphic shapes. The pouring stage can get very intense as it requires at least 3 people and I'm yelling directions all the while. I always have preparation drawings of what I want the end result to look like but it almost never does. After doing hundreds of these I now farm out making the simpler shapes like dots to a crew of assistants. I also have to keep in shape to do this kind of work, it's pretty intense - I go to the gym and I see a chiropractor."

I ask Wynne if the letters look like his handwriting. He replies "It has a certain relation to my handwriting but I am going for a balance of the letters and the design. It's kind of like a Ouija board when I move my arm with the ladle of molten glass, it's a spiritual concentration. It's like comparing an opera singers speaking voice to their singing voice. I originally thought the pieces would be much more reflective so when you are reading them you see yourself reading them, but the way my process works is they get a much more pebbled watery looking surface."

Rob Wynne doesn't see himself as a "glass artist" but it is the work he has become most widely known for. He did a collaboration with uber architect Peter Marino of haute couture Christian Dior stores worldwide with Wynne's glass works dappled across walls, mirrors and ceilings.

His current exhibition features words and phrases from Wallace Stevens, Baudelaire, and Rimbaud, in combination with mirrored curves, serpentine and spiral forms of glass. Text works have titles *The Sound of Water*, *Atmosphere*, and *Translucent Threads of Dawn* which aim to disrupt the barriers of the senses.

In contrast to the way most artists use glass, Rob Wynne says he is "the Elephant Man of the glass world."

To get away from the hazmat suits of glass work, he is also exhibiting delicate hand-beaded drawings on vellum, each of which can take 50 hours to complete. The beaded embroidery of butterflies trail webs of threads behind the transparent paper it is attached to, offering more layers of intricacy.

His new glitter paintings on silver mylar are definitely reflective, as the words *Frenzy* or *Romance* force you to see yourself in them.

Rob Wynne has had numerous solo gallery exhibitions, including Galerie Mitterrand, Paris, France (2016); The Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach, FL (2012); and Locks Gallery, Philadelphia, PA (2011). His work has been featured in Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA (1990). Wynne's work is in the collections of the Whitney Museum of Art, New York; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Philadelphia Museum of Art, Pennsylvania; Centre Pompidou, France; The Norton Museum of Art, Florida; and the Bibliotheque Nationale de France, Paris.

O2S/H2O is on view through March 18th at [Gavlak Gallery](#), 249 B Worth Avenue, Palm Beach, FL. More information about the artist's work and exhibits can be found here www.robwynne.net