



Martli Jansen van Rensburg





SHIFT

by Runette Kruger

Martli Jansen van Rensburg is renowned for her work as a designer in glass, but she regards herself firstly as a conceptual artist, and secondly as a glass blower. There is for her an important link between the conceptual content of her work and her experience of the process of blowing molten glass. Whilst Jansen van Rensburg works, the physical process which guides her intuitive decisions on form-making, compliments her conceptual framework. As a glass artist, the symbiosis between concept and 'craft' – defined as skill in making, with fine control over a chosen medium – is important to her. Jansen van Rensburg works in a style that can be described as neo-minimalistic. In this sense the work embodies a less-is-more approach, with clarity of form revealing underlying thought structures.

Whereas previous work relied heavily on geometric shapes and crystalline grids, the work for this installation shows a gravitation towards the softer, more organic aspects of molten glass. This shift in form mirrors shifts in Jansen van Rensburg's perceptions around her process, and around relationships between systems, and between people. Her internal shifts have caused a metamorphosis in her created

forms, and Jansen van Rensburg consciously exploits the properties of her medium in order for the seemingly solid shapes to embody the intangible internal shifts which occur upon experiencing a revelation.

Here the relationship between disparate or subtly related elements becomes the signifier which conveys the experience of change, of shifting awareness. The focus falls on the interaction between two or more forms, between the forms and the steel fittings into which they are mounted, and between the 'objects' and the vertical surface they are played off against. Each of these elements – the forms, the supports, the surface – have a relationship with each other element, and effect mutual change. There is also the relationship between the notion of a glass vessel as a stabilising, symbol of containment, of ordering, and the reality of glass as a permanent liquid, never coming to rest, subject to ongoing internal shifts. Glass is, contrary to ordinary perception, a hyper viscous liquid which changes form over time. Jansen van Rensburg notes: "Consider how glass panes in windows slump over years of gravitational pull".

In these works, the physical effects that soft glass shapes have on each other become captured in sculptural form. The invisible movements within glass have been speeded up by





applying heat to the glass and 'melting' it, so that imperceptible, almost geologically slow, processes are captured in the viewers 'real' time. Here the artist becomes an alchemist who conjures up the unapparent reality beneath the facade of appearance. The interaction/relationships between seemingly unyielding, cut glass forms are also explored. Certain shapes have a precise interaction, others have blurred, watery edges, and merge into each other. Certain shapes 'speak' and are open, others are closed off and incommunicative. Some conglomerations of shapes convey harmony, whilst others express an uneasy visual tension.

In *SHIFT*, the dialogue between shapes – dialogue which effects transformation – as well as the consequence of such transformation, is captured in glass: the before and the after of interactions; the shifts we feel, and the ones we cause. Interactions lead to shifts, and shifts transform outer and inner relationships in seemingly intangible, yet eventually perceptible, ways.

Image: (page 2 & 3) COMPOUND, 2012

Medium: Hand blown glass, steel, copper

Image: (page 4) EXTRUSION I, II & III 2012

Medium: Hand blown glass, steel

Images: (page 7) DISPLACED, 2012

Medium: Hand blown glass, steel, copper

Images: (page 8) DISTANCE, 2012

Medium: Hand blown glass, steel, copper

Image: (page 11) ORIGO, 2012

Medium: Hand blown glass, steel, copper

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Map - South Africa

PO Box 39

Groenkloof

0027, South Africa

info@map-southafrica.org

www.map-southafrica.org





Cullinan



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Pretoria - Tshwane



Richmond