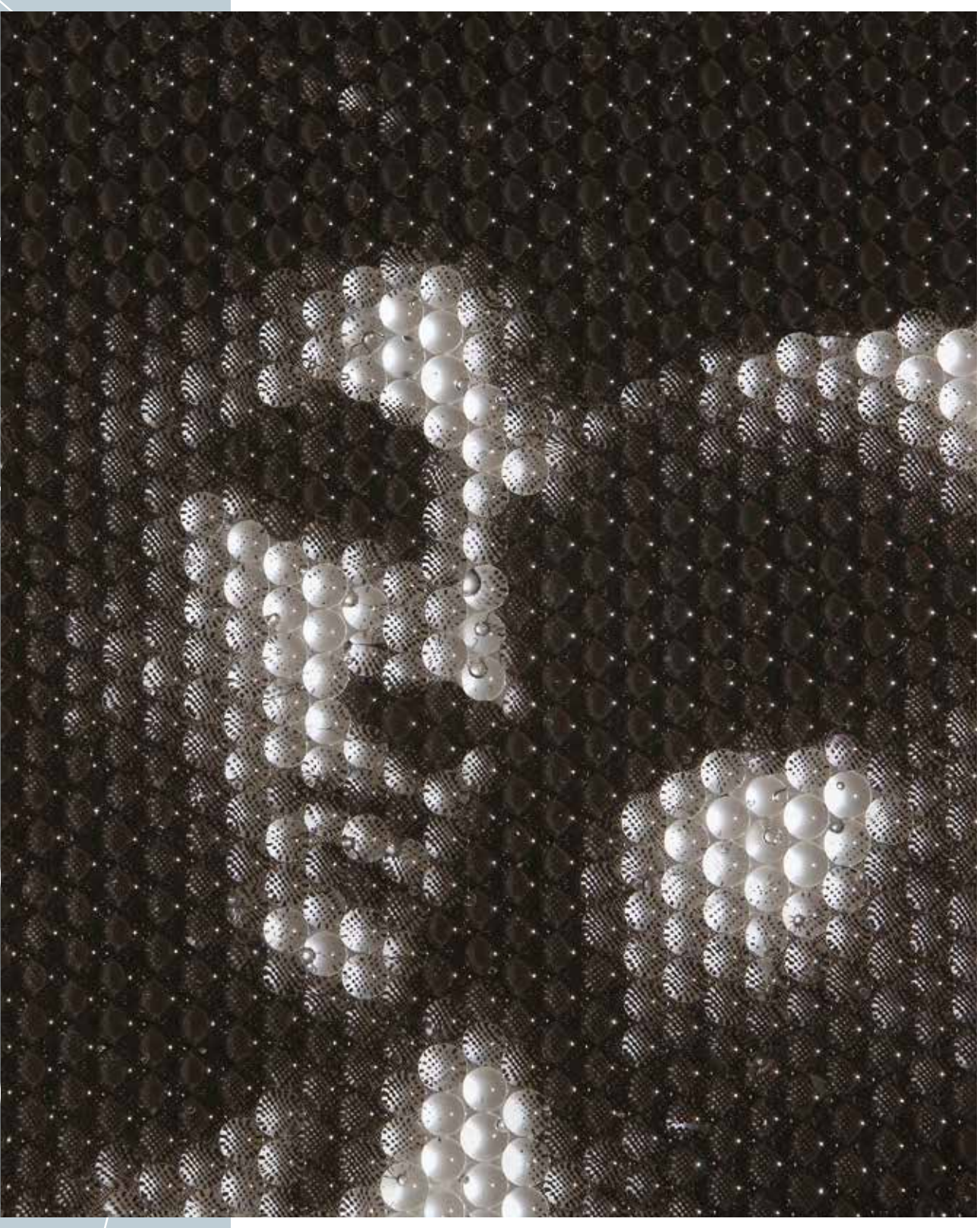
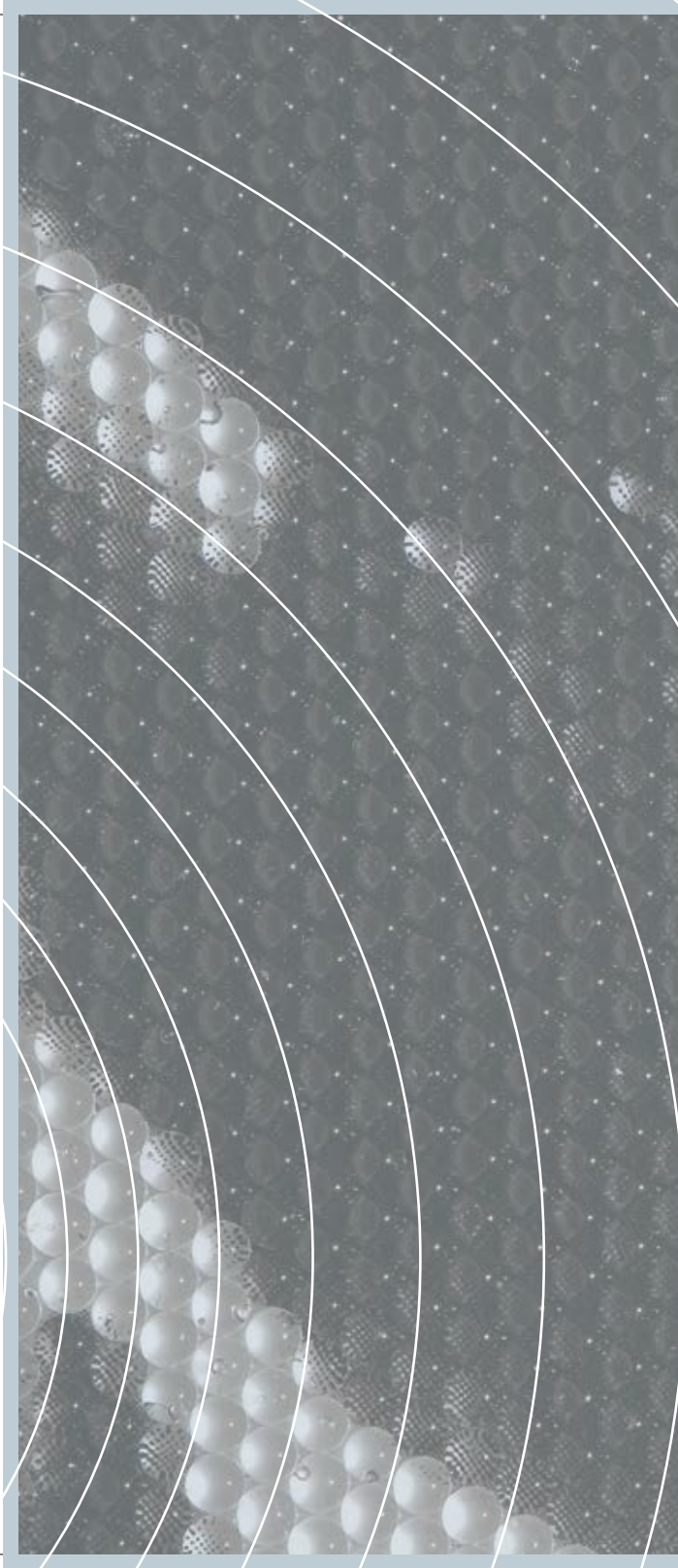




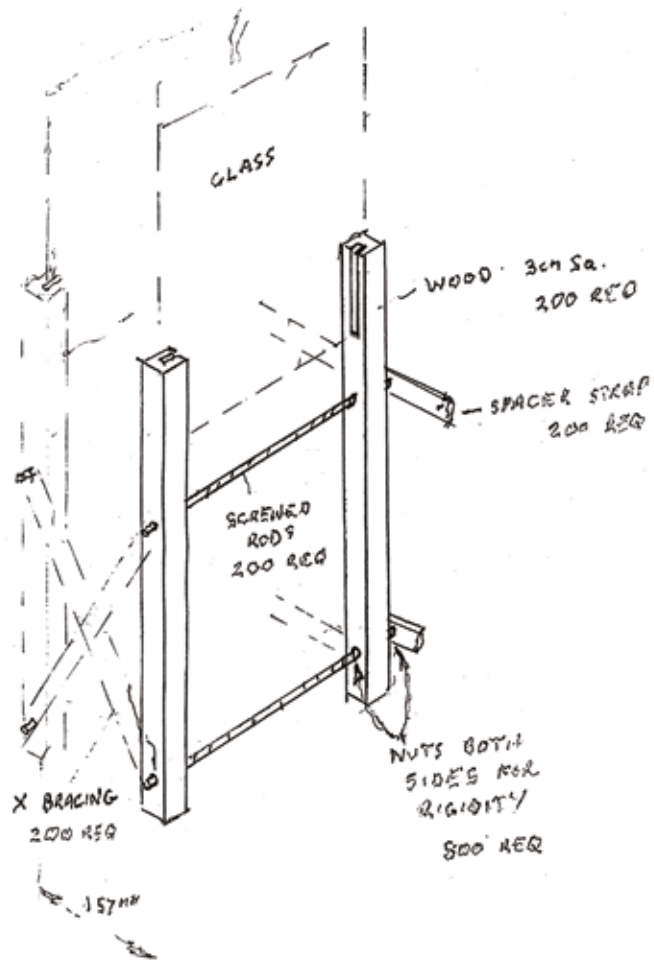
JEFFREY SARMIENTO CONSTRUCTIONS





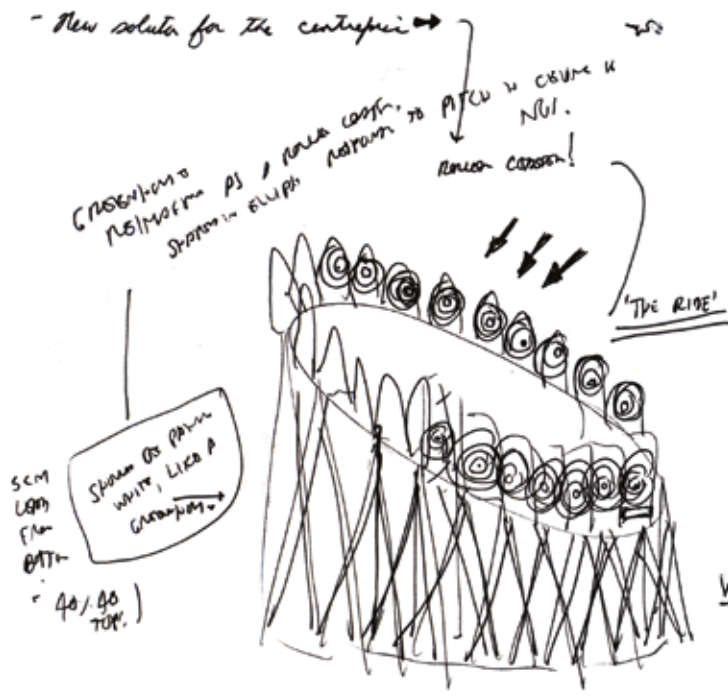
JEFFREY SARMIENTO CONSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL GLASS CENTRE

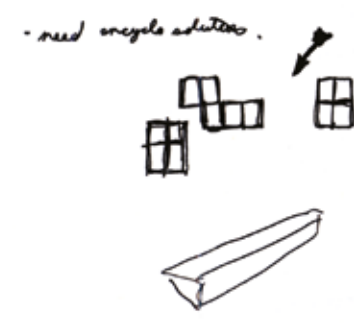


- An encounter of english culture
- Lloyd Sherrman.
  - The bubble.
  - shield mirroring hole/waterfall.
  - New solution for the centrifuge →

KILNS  
16 - LOUD ALL CLEAR!

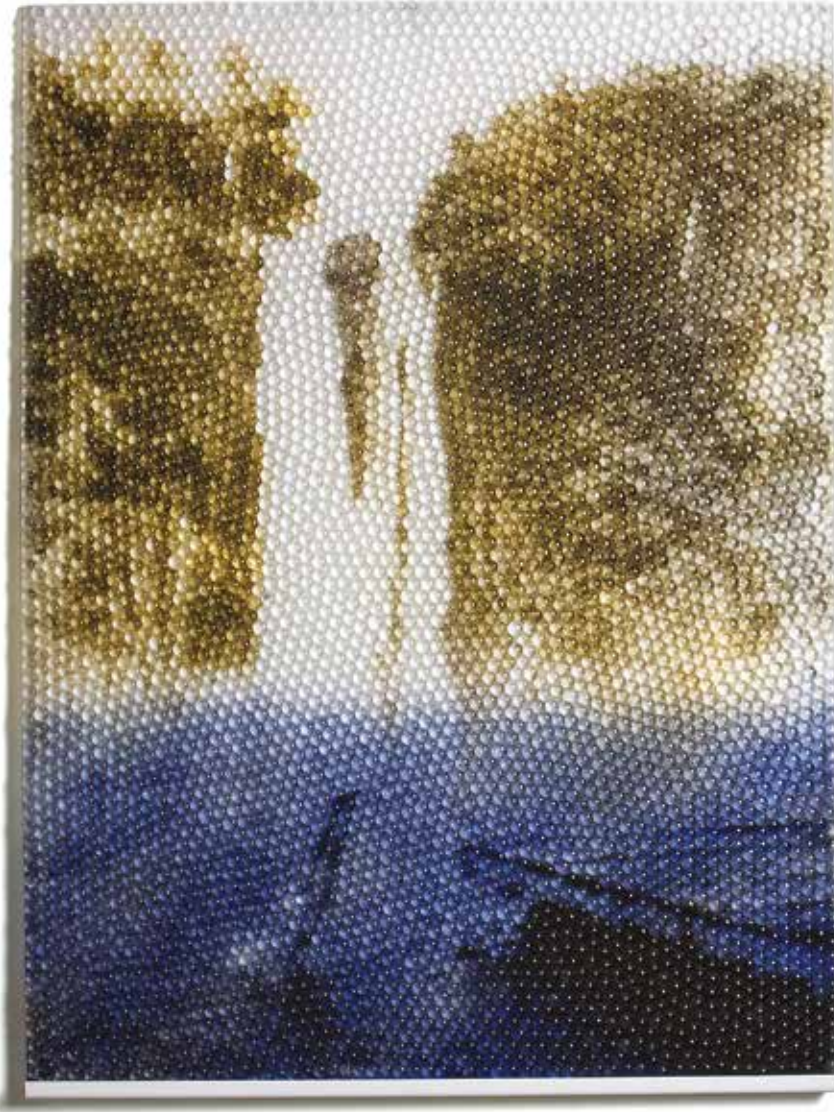


IS IT TORQUE DIMENSION Y ON NET?  
WHAT IS FINAL PATTERN?



11-430

FLAWS!  
- PRINT BEDS!  
- NOW IMPACT  
→ CORRECTED W/ 3 PYRAMID.



'Dive', 2013. Printed and kiln formed glass, 100 x 75 x 2 cm

**FOREWORD** JAMES BUSTARD, DIRECTOR, NATIONAL GLASS CENTRE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SUNDERLAND

This exhibition, shown at National Glass Centre, presents the work of the Filipino American artist, Jeffrey Sarmiento. It reveals National Glass Centre both as a production as well as an exhibition house. Sarmiento could only have made this show using the extraordinary range of glass (and ceramic) making production facilities we hold here at the University of Sunderland. Our newly remodelled galleries allow us to better represent the work of artists. Sarmiento is recognized internationally for his research and teaching with glass and print. Alongside his own practise he is also a master fabricator who facilitates artists in their exploration of glass as a creative medium as part of the Centre's visiting artists' programme.

I was first introduced to Sarmiento's work in an exhibition at Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens. Inspired by a Maori paddle and a tiny wooden comb in their collection he sought to embed the 'English' history of the foreign artefact within a glass replica by combining the printed image within a glass object. Chameleon like his rich visual vocabulary reflects both an ability and agility to assimilate his cultural context – often referencing his own identity and heritage. A later collaborative work with Erin Dickson, 'Emotional Leak' shows a growing interest in the relationship between art and architecture. Both works were striking not just in their scale, volume and presence but also the use of waterjet techniques and expression of concept. In 'Constructions' the building of both identity and glass permeates his ideas and objects.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Jeffrey Sarmiento and the veritable atelier of fellow artists and interns who have supported him in delivering this exhibition. I am confident that he is still in the early stages of what I am sure will be a highly successful career and look forward to his progress.





'Beautiful Flaws' (detail), 2013. Printed found glass, steel, aluminium, 640 x 350 x 280 cm

**SEE-THROUGH:** IN JEFFREY SARMIENTO'S MIXED MEDIA WORKS, THE TRANSLUCENCE OF GLASS IS EMPLOYED AS A VEHICLE FOR EXPLORING THE NATURE OF UNDERSTANDING ITSELF ANDREW PAGE

Glass takes the lead role in Jeffrey Sarmiento's mixed-media works. Playing with the material's transparency, the artist uses glass as container of information as well as a canvas, carefully calibrating its capacity to both reveal and obscure what is enclosed. Though 'what's inside' varies widely – from charts and graphs to hand-made rope, from symmetrical patterning to poignant photographic images – full understanding of the content is often impossible because of data density and visual interference.

The impossibility of complete knowledge is a recurring issue for Sarmiento, and his works make us aware of our process of perception and cognition by subverting it. While Sarmiento acknowledges the overload of knowledge in our accelerating information age, his work is not a simple critique. While at times disorienting, the surfeit of data is equally a celebration of the complexity of our constructs of culture, history, and individual life experiences. The works are part of the artist's ongoing investigation into his, and by extension, all of our senses of place within the world.

Born into a family of Filipino immigrants living in the US city of Chicago, the artist grew up keenly aware of the contrast between his cultural heritage and that of his Middle-American peers. The feeling of foreign-ness extended in both directions—he felt equally distanced from his parents' cultural life, since he was born and raised to be an American. His interest in glass took him out of the American Midwest, first to the Rhode Island School of Design for his MFA degree, then to Denmark, New York City, and Eastern Europe for artist residencies, before settling in England, where he

## ANDREW PAGE

works as a lecturer at the University of Sunderland. His status as a man out of place unifies much of his work.

'Ethnicity and cultural identity have always been about having a complex cultural identity, having more than one identity visible at the same time, or invisible in certain ways, constructed or built or imagined,' says Sarmiento.

Consider the piece 'Encyclopaedia' (2013), which occupies a long table at the center of the 'Constructions' exhibition installed at National Glass Centre. The title underscores the work's reference to multi-volume collections of knowledge, bound together in solid glass 'book' form, hundreds of pages thick.

Layers predominate. Page upon page of information, visual data, charts, illustrations are stacked, lined up, or overlaid in tome-like solid glass slabs tinted blue, yellow, orange or black by their scribbled or photo transferred pages of data buried inside. Nearby sits a monolithic object of solid glass – the size of a full set as it would appear on a shelf. You can see through the clear glass, detecting pages obscured by those that precede them, but as page upon page of data accretes, more knowledge is no longer illuminating, but the opposite, ultimately rendering meaning impenetrable.

The genesis of many of his works have been travel experiences – a hand-made rope factory he passed in Norway transfixed him as a shrine to a lost hand-craft, and the architecture of the purpose-built narrow house — stretching meters and meters long to accommodate



'Rope factory' (detail), 2013. Printed and fabricated glass, rope, 20 metres x 15 cm x 15 cm

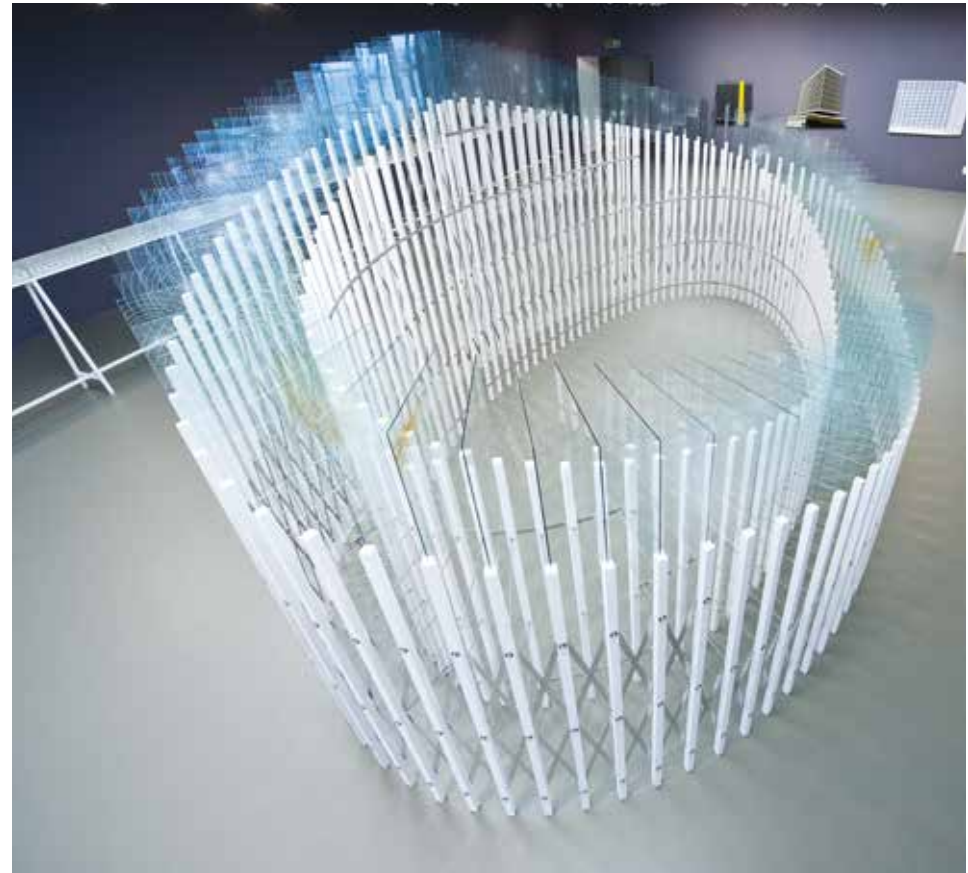
the manufacturing going on within — left an indelible impression. The eccentric building remade with glass walls, the Norwegian rope extending not just through its narrow confines, but through the gallery wall itself, is a celebration of the defiantly idiosyncratic discovery in the frozen Scandinavian fields. Sarmiento's travels to Eastern Europe, and the experience of Brutalist Soviet architecture in cast concrete, provided fodder for explorations of architectural form in a series of cast-glass works that undermine the heaviness of concrete through studies in glass.

## ANDREW PAGE

In 'Beautiful Flaws' (2013), Sarmiento's most ambitious work to date, pairs of circled scissor gates frame glass panes creating two nested circles. The glass sheets are decorated with intricate spirals and repeated symmetrical patterning riff off the circle motif intensifying the decorative to an extreme. Here, it is patterns that overwhelm, the lattice of the intersecting hinges of the gate creating one grid, the double-circle that rises in height, and the glass sheets echo the visual intensity, albeit in softer monochrome form. It is, indeed, a piece to get lost in, circling to find the way 'through' the work, but ultimately realizing there is no simple passage, only a greater understanding that will remain incomplete.

The glass lenses that festoon the nearby works such as 'Muscles' or 'Muse' (2013) reanimate the static two-dimensional photographic image, offering different views of gender archetypes drawn from different cultures – the Western strongman juxtaposed with the richly adorned Asian female. We sense we can't trust our eyes entirely, thanks to the visual disruption of the lenses, which make the view change as our vantage point shifts.

Glass is not the starting point for Sarmiento's diverse body of work, but it is the ideal vehicle for his explorations. What sets his use of glass apart from other conceptual artists that fabricate with glass is the artist's intimacy with the material. Trained as a glassblower, Sarmiento was fascinated with the optical effects of curved glass, and has an uncanny ability to manipulate its material properties to advance his ideas. Armed with the technical equipment available at the University of Sunderland, he is creating pioneering artwork



'Beautiful Flaws', 2013. Printed found glass, steel, aluminium, 640 x 350 x 280 cm

that advances his ideas in lockstep with the technical innovations he has realized by incorporating computer-controlled waterjet cutting, massive kilns, and high-tech imaging to transfer photos onto glass.

Sarmiento deploys an impressive arsenal of processes to realize his extremely timely observations on the changing nature of life in an increasingly globalized and yet interconnected world, when our sense of who we are is both within our reach and yet impossible to fully apprehend.

ANDREW PAGE is the editor of GLASS: The UrbanGlass Art Quarterly, which is published by a New York City nonprofit art center.





Jeffrey Sarmiento and Erin Dickson, 'Emotional Leak', 2011. Waterjet cut glass, steel and rubber, 291 x 136 x 136 cm

## JEFFREY R. SARMIENTO: CONSTRUCTING AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY ANNIE CARLANO

When I asked Jeffrey Sarmiento what he hoped to accomplish with a mid-career exhibition, he replied that he felt challenged to create work for the show that stretched his abilities, and went beyond his expectations. A formidable task for an artist who constantly pushes the envelope and the natural propensities of glass. His recent collaboration with Erin Dickson, 'Emotional Leak' (2011), for example, resulted in an enormous lyrical sculpture of water jet cut glass, steel and rubber, that simultaneously rose up from the floor and dripped down from the ceiling. Like something out of MIT's Media Lab, this work not only demonstrated innovative use of technologies, but was a meaningful commentary on the nature of the interior space of the building itself.<sup>i</sup>

Screen printed, fused, and polished glass have been the mainstay of Sarmiento's work, but his explorations with cast glass, and its use in new constructs, has produced remarkable works for this exhibition that join object and image, technique and content, seamlessly. On his ideas for his mid career monographic exhibition, and its many references to construction, the artist has spoken of buildings, literally houses, factories, and their individual components, such as windows, as 'artifice', expressions of the various ways man has organized the built environment.<sup>ii</sup> These manmade structures have historically defined a place, as a physical, visual zeitgeist. It is not surprising that Jeffrey Sarmiento

<sup>i</sup> 'Emotional Leak' was presented in Kith and Kin at National Glass Centre at the University of Sunderland in 2011 and at Collect, Saatchi Gallery, London in 2013

<sup>ii</sup> While I have been paying close attention to the work of Jeffrey Sarmiento since Bullseye Gallery at Collect, 2009, much of the information about the artist cited in this text comes from a series of conversations with him that began in April 2013, in preparation for the Collect is Ten session at Collect, Saatchi Gallery, London, 11 May, 2013, and through a series of telephone conversations and email exchanges in September 2013.

has chosen to utilize an architectural vocabulary. His work is all about his sense of place and displacement in the world. Manipulating a language of objects and images--maps, historic documents, vintage photographs—from disparate locales and the Philippines, his ancestral home, he grapples with his authentic identity as an urbane resident and an *obvious* alien.<sup>iii</sup> The process, by which he meticulously puts together glass, image, found object, personal history, and architecture, creates cultural constructions in a literal sense. Magnificent in form and craftsmanship, Sarmiento's oeuvre is equally brilliant in the stories it tells of assimilation and cultural clashes.

Jeffrey Sarmiento's profound knowledge of his chosen materials and processes continues to expand, and not just in terms of the latest high tech and digital data applications. He has the sensitivity to understand when the most basic and labor intensive technology must be used to elicit the desired response. Take, for example, the use of handmade rope in 'Rope Factory', a work begun during the artist's residency in Bergen, Norway, February-March 2013, and completed for this exhibition. Drawn to the vernacular architecture of the region, Sarmiento was particularly taken with an abandoned rope factory, symbol of a dwindling trade. In a dramatic installation, the artist has constructed a glass building spanning twenty metres across the gallery, with a long-plaited hemp rope running through it. A Minimalist evocation of beauty in simplicity, at the same time, 'Rope Factory' brings to mind the nefarious uses of rope in maritime trade and cultural domination.

<sup>iii</sup> I have never discussed this with the artist, but Filipino identity is already a rich and multi ethnic construct, with various Asian and indigenous cultures combining with colonial Spanish heritage. A first generation American, born and raised in Chicago, it is interesting that the locus for his search for self is in an elusive Philippine family history, rather than in his Midwestern American roots.

An additional, work to come out of the Bergen residency is the extraordinary, 'Beautiful Flaws'. It too has its origins in Norwegian vernacular buildings, this time, a greenhouse. The artist took one hundred sheets of imperfect horticulture glass, which in its perfect state is considered an inferior glass product, and screen-printed patterns around the flaws. Set into wooden base units arranged in an ellipse, with light passing through them, they have undergone a metamorphosis, changing from earthly to ethereal.

Dedicated to finding a way to put images on glass, Jeffrey Sarmiento spent 10-12 years developing a printing process that is masterfully employed in many of the works in this exhibition. Through the medium of glass, with its inherent transparency, the embedded images appear to be frozen in time, sometimes distorted, and ultimately transformed. The experience of the narrative is amplified looking at images through a prismatic material; they appear more real and more surreal at the same time. Sarmiento's interest in materiality and process coincides with a current trend in contemporary art, design, and architecture, to combine visceral satisfaction of making things by hand, with the intellectual exploration of new technologies, but he has been at it far longer, since graduate school at Rhode Island School of Design (RISD). Indeed, his prodigious explorations of processes yield astonishing innovations. In the diptych 'Muscles/Muse' (2013), we see a vintage picture of an alluring Filipino woman in traditional dress, alongside a picture of a movie star handsome body builder-type man from Northeast England. Both seem contrived, illustrations for billboards or magazine advertisements, perhaps. In fact, the 'Muse'

## ANNIE CARLANO

is from a photograph taken by the artist's great uncle for the Philippines Tourist Board. Seen through one centimeter wide thin lenses on the surface of the flat glass, the effect is of pixilated half tone photographs, but wet and luscious. Such technical bravura applied to these disparate images serves to unite them in the here and now.

Cultural assimilation is most clearly expressed in 'Dive' (2013). Another pair of images, a waterfall in the Philippines, and a man diving in Northeast England, is blended into one rapturous composition. The artist seems to have reconciled the incongruence of his bloodlines with his current home, expressed through gentle manipulations of the technique. Evocative of soft watercolors, 'Dive' has a sublime, dreamy patina, not unlike that of William Blake's works on paper. Sarmiento seems to have reached an epiphany moment where his encounters with foreign cultures are part, not separate, of his true self.

Dual identities are distilled into one entity in 'Slither' (2013). The large scale of the work, the majestic posture and surface patterning of the snake, conjure up an exalted breed, but the image is in reality that of a common grass snake that Sarmiento found in an encyclopedia. An arresting representation, its graphic impact is the result of four layers of prints and a glass strip construction in which individual strips contain parts of the images. Like no one since Danny Lane, Sarmiento plays with the effects of light, distortion, and the lenticular. 'Slither', although a wall mounted work, invites examination of its details from all angles; straight on, from left to right, and right to left, the work reveals how light and



'Dive' (detail), 2013. Printed and kiln formed glass, 100 x 75 x 2 cm

vantage point modify the pictorial. What is seen from a distance is a powerful image of a corpulent slithering snake deconstructs into delicate prismatic abstractions, at close range. Sarmiento has said that 'Slither' is a 'self portrait nouveau,' albeit a 'darkish self portrait.' Citing Biblical references to the snake as evil and deceptive, the artist also identifies with the snake's characteristic means of 'exposing and reconsidering' self through the shedding of its skin. At mid career, Jeffrey Sarmiento's cultural agility may still be his cultural conundrum, but it has been a catalyst for a superb, mature body of work, beyond my expectations, and I hope his.

ANNIE CARLANO is Senior Curator of Craft, Design, and fashion at the Mint Museum, North Carolina, USA

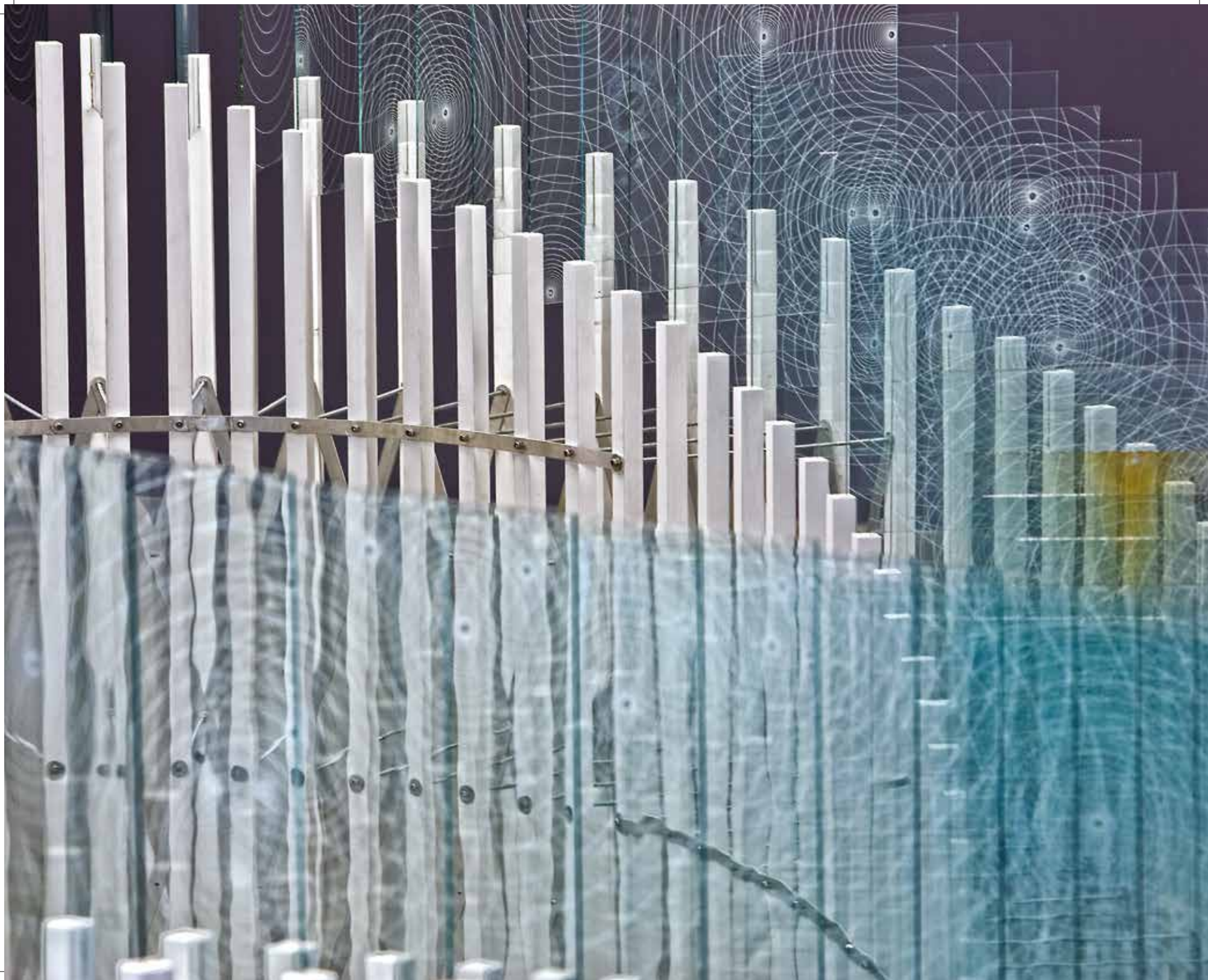
<sup>iv</sup> This information was shared in a telephone conversation with the artist, 13 September 2013.



'Beautiful Flaws', 2013. Printed found glass, steel, aluminium, 640 x 350 x 280 cm











22 'Encyclopaedia Chapters I-IV', 2013. Printed and kiln formed glass, 180 x 105 x 2 cm





'Encyclopaedia v.20-44', 2010-13. Printed and kiln formed glass, 21 x 15 x 5 cm each



'Encyclopaedia', 2013. Printed and kiln formed glass, 107 x 21 x 15 cm





'Slither' (detail), 2013. Printed and kiln formed glass, 130 x 90 x 2 cm







30 'Police Building', 2013. Waterjet Cut and Kiln Formed Bullseye Glass 120 x 120 x 2 cm





32 'City Hall', 2013. Waterjet Cut and Kiln Formed Bullseye Glass, 75 x 75 x 2cm





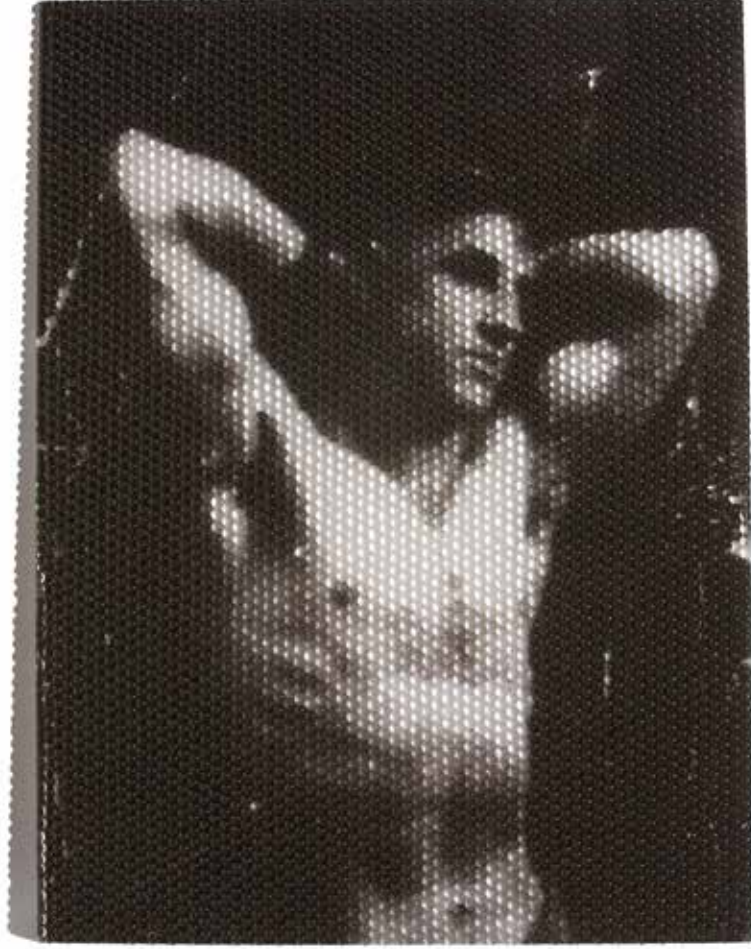




36 'Race/March', 2013. Printed and Cast glass, 170 x 170 x 40 cm







38 'Muscles', 2013. Printed and kiln formed glass, 100 x 75 x 2 cm

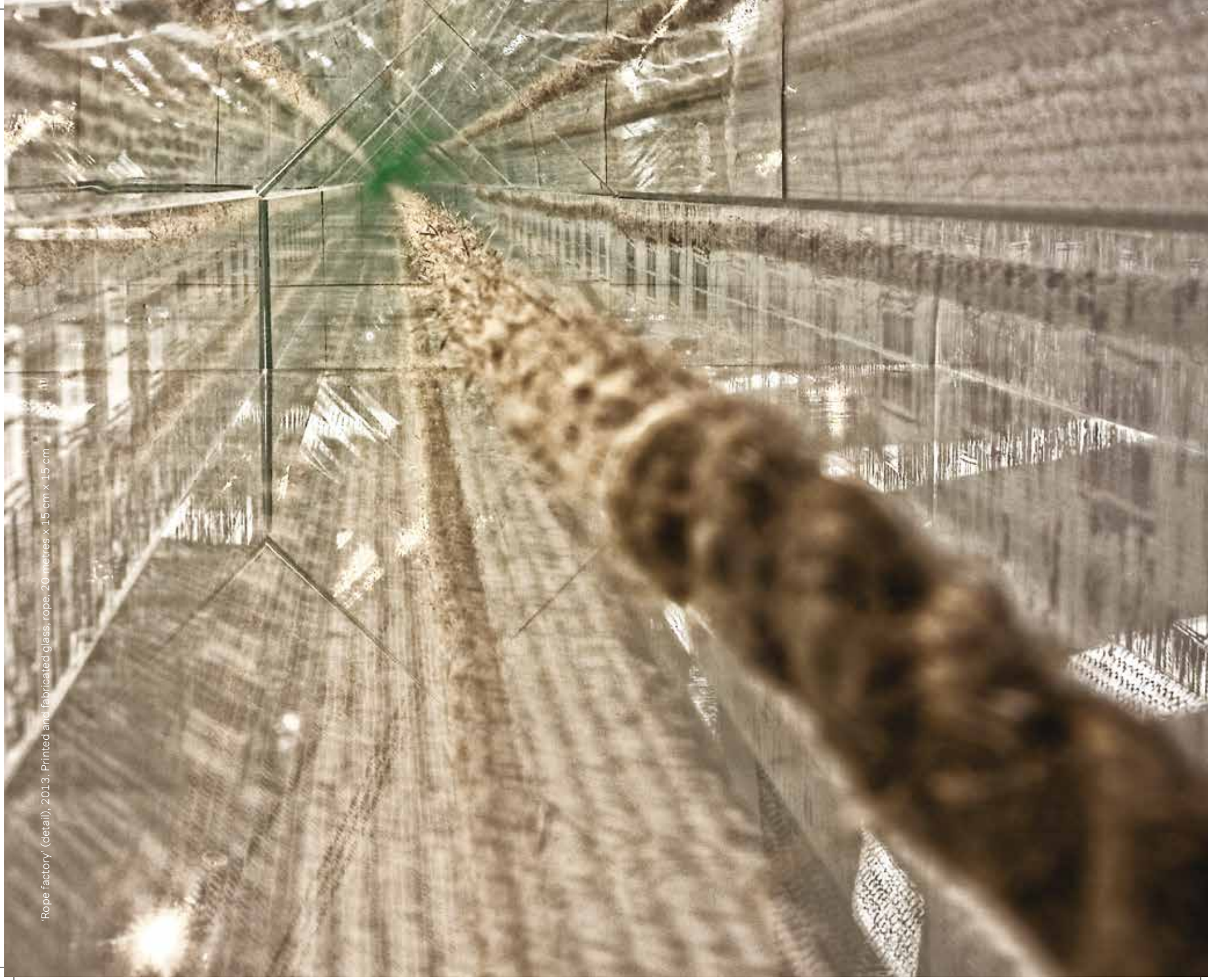


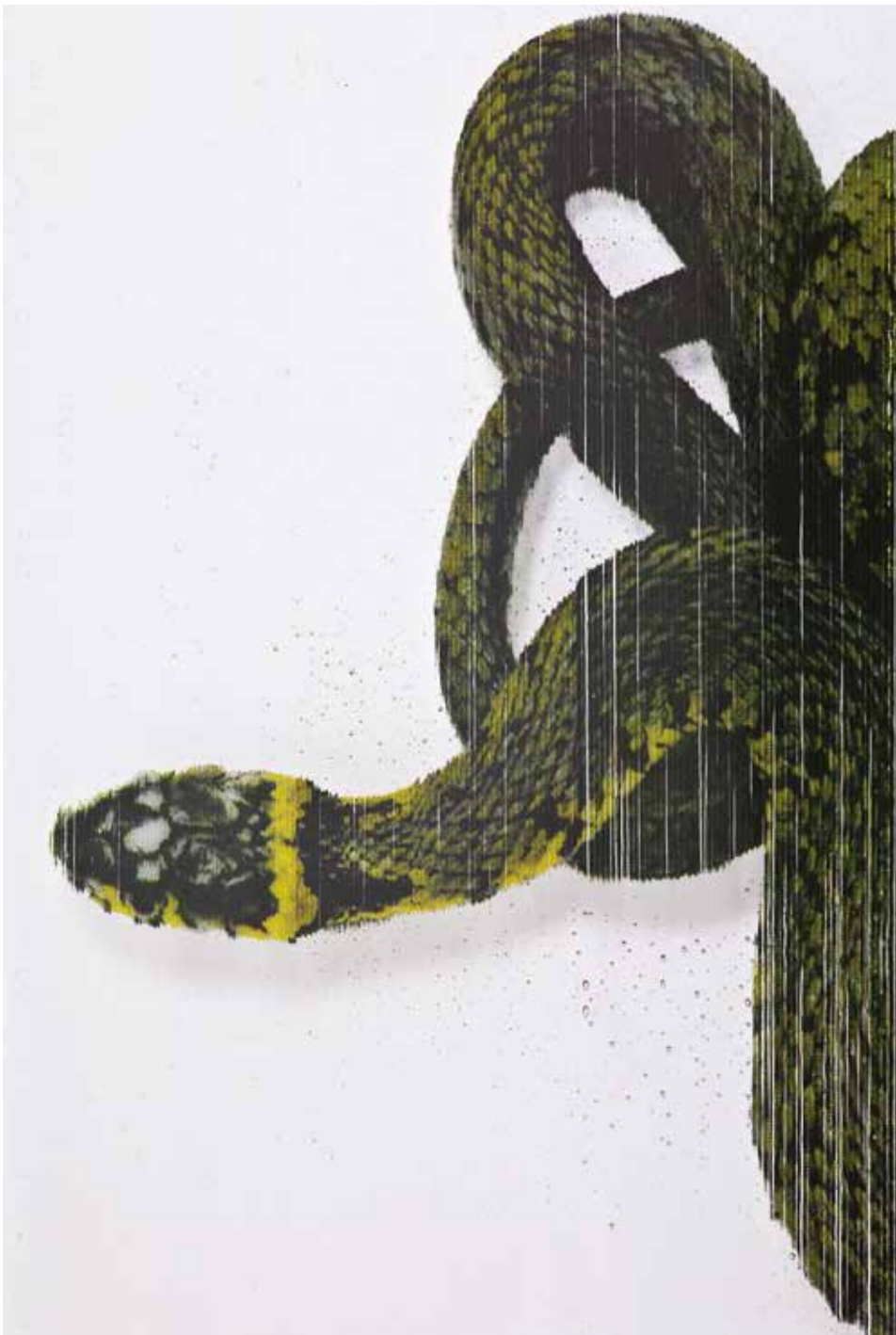
39 'Muse', 2013. Printed and kilnformed glass, 100 x 75 x 2 cm





'Rope factory' (detail), 2013. Printed and fabricated glass, rope, 20 metres x 15 cm x 15 cm





'Slither' (detail), 2013. Printed and kiln formed glass, 130 x 90 x 2 cm

## JEFFREY SARMIENTO: CRACKING CODES

JAMES YOOD

There are many artists — the great majority, actually — whose art is driven by their achievement of a personal visual style, by the repeated and perfected performance of a set of visual criteria somehow tied to their being, all of which makes their work instantly recognizable (this seems particularly true of sculptors who work in glass). There are other artists, though, who pick up and drop these visual tendencies as each subject or object requires, who approach style as a means, not an end, and whose work is more driven by successive conceptual concerns than by formal repetition. Such an artist is Jeffrey Sarmiento.

Whether his subject is a 19th Century rope factory or a beefcake pinup of an attractive and muscular hunk, a close investigation of neo-Modernist state office buildings in the Baltic States or an extremely long and coiled snake, a kind of semi-autobiographical multi-shuffled encyclopaedia or, well, we'll get to 'Beautiful Flaws' in a bit, Sarmiento is an artist that defies easy classification. He seems to range widely and willfully, an artist more of guile than of style. These are exercises of the mind as much as they are demonstrations for the eye, and they sometimes give an exhibition of Sarmiento's work —and I mean this in the most complimentary way — the look of an excellent group exhibition, where you move from work to work largely starting afresh each time.

But not completely; the observations above are not to indicate that Sarmiento carries no signature elements in his quiver, they're just more attitudinal than motivated by style. He's consistently fond of glass as a kind of lenticular element, functioning as a way of breaking imagery apart and culling it



together, often having your experience of it change as you move around or toward it, his imagery dissolving or coalescing. That's why with his work you truly require multiple photographs to document a piece (not to experience it, that can happen in live time) as no single view is 'complete' in and of itself, whether wall mounted or free-standing, there are visual surprises and adjustments all along the way, a process for each viewer of visual deconstruction and reconstruction. Glass, after all, is never completely transparent, it always somehow alters the light that passes through it (though usually to such a small degree that it's easy to ignore), but Sarmiento is drawn to thick glass, glass rods, faceted glass with different images adhered to it, or successively stacked layers of glass that can bend light, permute it, making a vision changeling. Glass is never invisible in his work, even when it fronts or sandwiches a bit of pre-existing imagery.

Take, for example, 'Muscles'. This grainy black and white image of a male model (looking very much like a St. Sebastian figure by Guido Reni) is reminiscent of the kind of furtive erotica that was widely disseminated just a generation or two ago. Sarmiento's blanketing of this image with hundred of small glass balls re-pixelates it, a process that undoubtedly happened to the original image when reproduced in magazines and the like. It, and its gentler, more touristic companion piece, 'Muse', are perceived through a glass, obscurely, which both heightens its closeted aura and gives it a pointillist air. The woman is Asian, and represents a sign of the Orient as both exotic and erotic, as the desired "other" of a Eurocentric world bent on consuming all that Asia had to offer, both actual and fantasized. Sarmiento's own Filipino-American heritage and identity, his journey as

always more or less a stranger in strange lands, first in the US, now in the UK, is a subtext here, and surfaces again in the often cryptic and coded ongoing 'Encyclopaedia' series. On smallish but thick slabs of glass Sarmiento transcribes and layers bits of visual and textual information in some mega poetic and often obscurant collage. These are sometimes exhibited singly, but more often sandwiched together in rows, causing the embedded imagery to overlap into cacophony. They crackle with disembodied elements forming a rebus that never quite coalesces, probably like how our brain works, ideas and memories zipping around, sometimes accreting toward an idea, but often just a plethora of inspired and disjointed fragments.

I first came to admire Jeffrey Sarmiento through his wall reliefs of canny send-ups of late modernist architecture, that last gasp—and it gasped extra lastly in the Soviet bloc and Eastern Europe—of the impassive modularity of much official state architecture of the 1960s and 70s. As if reproducing how they were festively trumpeted in brochures and official propaganda, Sarmiento both delivers and undermines their promise of egalitarian efficiency, of a clean and democratic geometry of purity and order, while actually delivering repetition, boredom, and dehumanization.

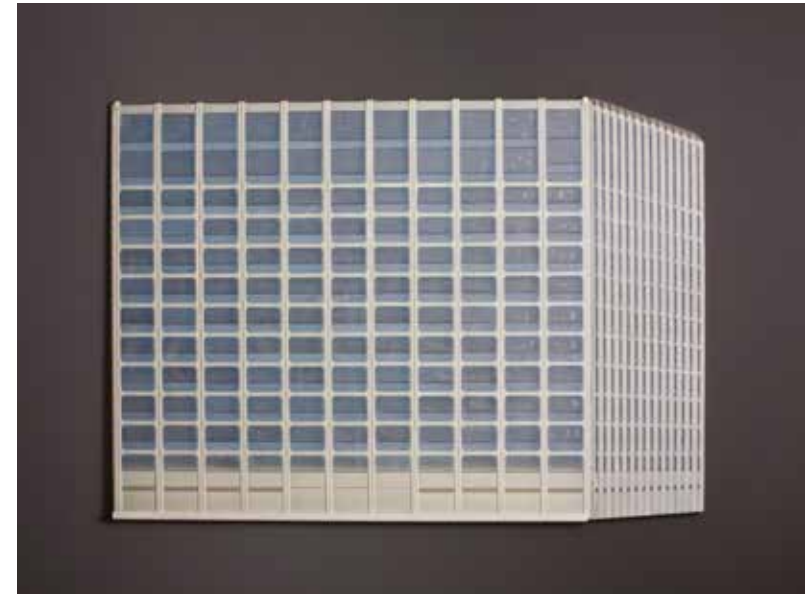
Sarmiento's is a febrile and somewhat quixotic intellect, and if he senses importance in recreating a scale model — 20 metres in length! — of the mechanics of a old rope factory, then he's off and running. Technology — even that, maybe especially that, of a century or two ago — can appear to us as both poignant and pathetic, the earnestness of its problem

## JAMES YOOD

solving seen against our consciousness of its unintended inefficiency and rapid redundancy. How to braid and make taut the extremely long ropes needed for shipping and new industries led European rope firms to design extremely long sheds where, when needed, rope could be spun into one enormous piece hundreds of feet in length. This required a rather bizarre building, still shed-like when seen from its end, but with the contiguous length of dozens, possibly hundreds of such structures. A shed itself is a remarkable simple edifice, a kind of Ur-structure<sup>1</sup>, and in the form of the stilt houses on the lakes of early Europe, has been around for several thousand years. The rope runs through it — here, a glass sheath -- like a colossal intestine, touching nothing, in a kind of horizontal Tower of Babel, the whole thing built because it could be built, absurd but curiously noble, a product of human aspiration.

'Beautiful Flaws', the most recent embodiment of Sarmiento's selective stroll through the musty and often inefficient corridors of our predecessors efforts to make sense of something, is a remarkable piece. Its origins reside in Sarmiento's discovery of an immense cache of low-grade glass, remnants of a defunct greenhouse, while traveling through Norway. Fascinated by the large amount of imperfections within the supposedly clear glass, small stones and bits of matter embedded within its panes, he decided to use those imperfections as the beginning of some geometric embellishment, and then build for 100 pieces of such stuff a complex display apparatus, a monument to its visual curiosities, a perfect container for the geometric play and allusive elements he finds within another's near rubbish.

<sup>1</sup>Reference Ziggurat of Ur



'Communication Center', 2013. Waterjet Cut and Kiln Formed Bullseye Glass, 128 x 90 x 5 cm

(It all looks as if you took Duchamp's 'The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors', Even -- oddly enough also known as 'The Large Glass'-- and mated it with Vladimir Tatlin's 'Monument to the Third International'.)

And note Sarmiento's tendencies throughout these works: if not the consistency of a visual style, then certainly a pattern to his conceptual attitude. He's inexorably drawn to the past, to his and our heritage, in architecture, culture, technology, knowledge, all bits of the human imprint of which we are heirs, only the most recent players in a long continuum. Sarmiento is one of those artists with a lithe empathy for what we've inherited, the legacies — sometimes noble and heroic, but just as often absurd and irrelevant, the trash and the treasure — that surround us everywhere. Sarmiento sees interesting things in what most of us overlook, and through his concentrated engagement with them makes them extremely pertinent again, offering us an extension of our sense of our collective self.

JAMES YOOD teaches modern and contemporary art history at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where he also directs its program in New Arts Journalism. He is a contributing editor to GLASS magazine.



## THE FOUNDATIONS OF CONSTRUCTIONS

JULIA STEPHENSON

Had Jeffrey Sarmiento not decided, after four days at the Pennsylvania State University, that a six year pre-med programme was not for him, this text, outlining the background behind his career, would have been published in a medical journal rather than a visual arts publication.

As an established artist Jeffrey Sarmiento has spent the last seven years at the University of Sunderland where he has continued to develop his practice to international critical acclaim.<sup>i</sup> This publication celebrates 'Constructions', an exhibition of new work first shown at National Glass Centre.<sup>ii</sup> Almost without exception the work was very much new, having been created at National Glass Centre in the three months leading to the opening of the exhibition. The concepts behind the works displayed are not new, as from the start of his career in the late 1990s Sarmiento has explored and developed a number of key themes over his career. His work has progressed both in terms of mastery of technique and material and consideration and presentation of concept.

Studying Art History at the University of Illinois marked the first step towards the development of Jeffrey's Sarmiento's passion for the visual arts. However, his use of glass and his conceptual approach to his work started with his time at Rhode Island School of Design (RISD). At RISD, working alongside students from Japan, Korea, Sweden and Denmark encouraged Sarmiento to consider his personal life experiences. This started his exploration of cultural

<sup>i</sup> Jeffrey Sarmiento is Reader in Glass and leads the MA Glass Programme at National Glass Centre at the University of Sunderland.

<sup>ii</sup> 'Jeffrey Sarmiento – Constructions' National Glass Centre at the University of Sunderland. 5 October 2013 – 5 January 2014





identity and what it meant to be Filipino-American, a subject that is still at the heart of his practice.

Early work exploring his cultural identity included a focus on a household ornament owned by many Filipino-American families and a popular souvenir from the Philippines. The 'Barrel Man' was used by Jeffrey Sarmiento as inspiration for a body of work contrasting personal familiarity with a cultural symbol otherwise unknown within his surrounding environment of white American suburbia: 'I made blown glass barrels to compare and contrast ideas of being a savage and a civilized person. What does it mean to be a native, or what does it mean to be an American? And where do I sit on that spectrum?'<sup>iii</sup>

<sup>iii</sup> Jeffrey Sarmiento

52 'Barrel' 1999, Blown Glass and Rice, 18 x 10 x 10 cm



In other work exploring his cultural background Jeffrey Sarmiento combines images and stories that relate directly to his own family history. In 'Machete Wedding' (2005) two family stories are combined in one work. The image of the beautiful Filipino girl, later to be used in 'Muse', shows a photograph taken by Sarmiento's great uncle as part of his work to promote tourism. This photograph was seen by an executive officer of Pepsi Cola who found the girl in the photograph and married her. The machete images running through the piece are a reference to a machete-lined path welcoming Sarmiento's cousin to the home of the father of a pregnant maid.

Supported by a Fulbright Scholarship, Jeffrey Sarmiento spent a year in Denmark allowing his work on cultural identity

53 'Machete Wedding', 2005, Enamelled and Cast Glass, 25 x 20 x 15 cm





to grow out of direct comparisons between American and Filipino backgrounds and influence. By submerging himself in Danish culture Sarmiento explored: 'the idea of trying to express your cultural identity through the filter of another one'.<sup>iv</sup>

Works from this period include a precursor of the 'Encyclopaedia' series included in his exhibition at National Glass Centre. Like the later works this piece is a sketchbook recording Sarmiento's experiences of his time in Denmark including Danish homework, text on acoustic phonetics, maps and Swedish gymnastics.

Other work looked more specifically at Danish cultural heritage. 'Benene' (2003) refers to a Danish folk tale in which tired farmers sit down in a circle to rest. Their legs become entangled and they are unable to tell whose legs belong to whom. The farmers ask for the help of a passing foreigner who, after trying to untangle the legs, hits them with a cane quickly resolving the problem.

<sup>iv</sup> Jeffrey Sarmiento

'Sketchbook II', 2005, Enamelled and Cast Glass, 20 x 15 x 5 cm



'Fighter' (2007) explores contrasting values of American and Filipino cultures. The piece shows an image of a cockerel compiled from overlaid egg-shaped glass disks. The work refers to Sarmiento's awareness of cock fighting in California, illegal in America but highly popular and accepted in the Philippines. The work explores: 'a very interesting idea about how the cultural rules don't play where you are compared to where you are from. It's impossible to impose your cultural rules on another, and that is probably why I'm so fascinated by travelling and being in other places.'<sup>v</sup>

In 2012 Jeffrey Sarmiento was selected as one of three winners of the International Glass Prize. Initiated by the Charlotte van der Seijs Foundation and organized by the Belgian glass centre GlazenHuis, the first triennial competition for art, design and crafts focused on the theme of 'The Object'. The award-winning artwork was 'Comb' (2010), a piece encompassing cultural identity, historical documentation and the finest standards of production:

<sup>v</sup> Jeffrey Sarmiento

'Benene' 2003, Cast and Sand Blasted Glass, 50 x 30 x 10 cm



'Comb' is a biographical object closely related to an ethnographic wooden artifact from the Sunderland Museum. The object is much more than a replica, more than just a glass version of the wooden original. In between the horizontal translucent layers of glass Sarmiento included the hand written curatorial notes on the original museum's acquisition. Although 'Comb' was the smallest and likely the most recognizable object in the competition's exhibition, it was rewarded by the jury for its complexity in simplicity, for the historical references translated into glass through high technological processes.'<sup>vi</sup>

Much of the work in Jeffrey Sarmiento's solo show at National Glass Centre presents the relationship between his background as a Filipino-American and the experiences of life as a foreigner in North-East England. After seven years in Sunderland, Sarmiento admits to becoming embedded into life in England, making it less and less possible to explore cultural contrasts. So where next? Recent travel to the Baltic States and to Norway show that foreign cultures are likely to continue to inspire artistic responses, however other recent new work including 'Emotional Leak' (2011)<sup>vii</sup> and 'Beautiful Flaws' (2013) mark a departure from the direct use of cultural references and explore physical space and broader philosophical values.

Julia Stephenson is Head of Arts at National Glass Centre at the University of Sunderland.

<sup>vi</sup> Jeroen Maes, Curator International Glass Prize 2012, Artistic Coordinator GlazenHuis, Lommel, Belgium

<sup>vii</sup> 'Emotional Leak' is a collaborative work created by Jeffrey Sarmiento and Erin Dickson.



Fig. Jeffrey Sarmiento and Erin Dickson, 'Emotional Leak' (detail), 2011







61 Jeffrey Sarmiento photographed in *Beautiful Flaws*, 2013

## BIOGRAPHY

Born, Chicago, IL, 1974

Currently, Artist and Educator, Sunderland, UK

## EDUCATION

2011 PhD, University of Sunderland, UK

2000 M.F.A. Glass, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI

1998 B.F.A. Crafts/Art History, University of Illinois at  
Urbana-Champaign

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2006-current Reader in Glass, University of Sunderland, UK

2013 Instructor, Pilchuck Glass School, Stanwood, WA

2005 Lecturer, School of Art and Design, San Jose State  
University, CA

## SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2013 'Constructions', National Glass Centre, Sunderland, UK  
/Bullseye Gallery, Portland, OR

2012 'Books and Buildings', SODA Istanbul, Turkey/Ken Saunders  
Gallery, Chicago, IL

2008 'Translations', Bullseye Gallery, Portland, OR

2007 'Encyclopædia', Robert Lehman Gallery at UrbanGlass,  
Brooklyn, NY

## GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2013 'COLLECT, International Art Fair for Contemporary Objects',  
Saatchi Gallery, London, UK

'Composites: Three Views on Glass', S12 Gallery and  
Workshop, Bergen, Norway

2012 'The Object', International Glass Prize, Glazen Huis, Lommel,  
Belgium

2011 'Dual Visions', Wing Luke Asian Museum, Seattle, WA



- 2010 'British Glass Biennale', Ruskin Glass Centre, Stourbridge, UK
- 2008 'Bombay Sapphire Prize 2008', Salone Del Mobile, Milan, Italy
- 2004 'Biennalen 2004', Nordjyllands Kunstmuseum, Aalborg, Denmark

#### **PUBLIC COLLECTIONS**

City of Lommel, Belgium; Museum of Liverpool, UK; Speed Museum of Art, Louisville, USA; Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens, UK; Glasmuseet Ebeltoft, Denmark and Museum of American Glass, Millville, USA

#### **AWARDS**

- 2013 Grants for the Arts, Arts Council England  
Honorary Diploma, Jutta Cuny-Franz Glass Prize, Dusseldorf, Germany
- 2012 Winner, International Glass Prize, Glazen Huis, Lommel, Belgium
- 2008 Finalist, Bombay Sapphire Prize
- 2004 Fulbright Fellowship to Denmark, Danish-American Fulbright Commission
- 2002 Fellowship, Creative Glass Center of America

#### **PUBLICATIONS**

'New Glass Review 25, 29, 32, 34'. Corning Museum of Glass 2004-13.  
 Laura Davies and Fiona Shaw, 'Layers of Liverpool – Mapping a Sense of Place, Wordscapes', 2013  
 Vanessa Cutler, *New Technologies in Glass*, A&C Black, 2012,  
 Jeroen Maes, 'International Glass Prize 2012: The Object'. Glazen Huis, Belgium. 2012  
 Blanche, Craig, *Contemporary Glass*, Black Dog Publishing, 2008  
 Lena Vigna, Trinh Nguyen, Emily Benz, 'Encyclopædia', University of Sunderland, 2007

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The artist wishes to thank the following organisations for their financial and in-kind support: National Glass Centre; Arts Council of England; The Beacon Research Area for Creative and Cultural Practices, University of Sunderland and S12 Gallery and Workshop, Bergen, Norway

The artist is grateful for the help and guidance of his colleagues on the Glass and Ceramics staff at the University of Sunderland: Prof Peter Davies; Prof Kevin Petrie and Tim Betterton

An immense amount of labour was required to put this exhibition together, and the following individuals were responsible for helping to realise the artworks.

Project Manager: Erin Dickson

Lead Fabricator: Irena Czepcova

Summer intern team: Tina Webb; Lauren Wilson; Sarah Wafer; Fiona Fawcett and Amber King

Studio assistants: Molly Pattison and Andrew Wood

Engineers: George Dickson and Tom Jordan

Installation volunteers: Connor Garton; Tom Kinally; Jackie Middleton; Zoe Bedford; Michael Emmott; Daniel Gough; Louise Alexander; Richie Oliver; Rachael Heebert; Siobhan Igoe; Daniel Ryan; Kay Hudson and Freya Smith

National Glass Centre staff: Julia Stephenson; Sarah Rothwell; Matt Jobling; Lauren England and Sebastian Trend

Gallery Fabricator: Derek Mahoney, Simon West Interiors

Photographers/Videographers: Robert Carr, RGR Film Productions; David Williams and Colin Davison

**JEFFREY SARMIENTO**  
**CONSTRUCTIONS**

5 October 2013 - 5 January 2014

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5 March – 3 May 2014

Bullseye Gallery, 300 NW 13th Avenue, Portland, OR 97209, US  
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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data /  
A British Library CIP record is available

ISBN 978-1-906832-16-2

Photography © David Williams: pages 4, 6, 9, 13, 17, 19-44, 56;  
Colin Davison: pages 11, 57-60; Kent Rogowski: pages 51, 53  
and Roger Schreiber: 54-55

Editor: Julia Stephenson  
Design: Identity  
Print: Statex, Newcastle

First published in 2013 by Art Editions North  
Art Editions North is an imprint of the University of Sunderland

Distributed by Corner House Publications  
70 Oxford Street, Manchester M1 5NH, England  
tel: +44 (0) 161 200 1503 / fax: +44 (0) 161 200 1504  
email: [Publications@cornerhouse.org](mailto:Publications@cornerhouse.org)  
[www.cornerhouse.org/publications](http://www.cornerhouse.org/publications)



National Glass Centre  
is part of the University  
of Sunderland



Supporting public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

**Sunderland**  
City Council



