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## Wimberley Glassworks' Custom Blown Glass Installations Complement Space and Place

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When asked what drew him to creating large-scale blown glass installations, Canadian-born glass-blower [Tim deJong](#) recalls a wintery visit to Niagara Falls many years ago. As evening fell, the frozen mist that covered the light posts began to refract into myriad colors. "The light shining on those water crystals was coming up fiber optically," deJong remembers. "That's when I knew I wanted to work with glass. It's the closest thing to ice and it lasts forever."



Today, deJong's company [Wimberley Glassworks](#), based in San Marcos, TX, brings that same magic of light and color to commercial spaces and private homes. Collaborating with proprietors, engineers, electricians, and architects, deJong and his team create installations that are formidable and subtle in equal measure. By their sheer size alone (one recent installation required securing a ton and a half of glass onto a wall) Wimberley Glassworks' commissioned pieces are scaled to the architectural features that surround them. At the same time, deJong says, "We work very hard to make sure the installation complements the space." To that end, the delicate glass and ethereal colors appearing overhead or alongside a passageway are designed less to make their own presence known than to seamlessly integrate with the space, turning it all into one large art piece. "All of these installations are not just about the artwork," he says. "It's about what the artwork does for the space."

### It will feel good – light installations on a human scale

"We are very aware of the ratio of space between the bottom of the installation and the ground," deJong says of his team, which includes fellow artisans and [Architectural Lighting Designer Ashley Main](#). Informed by mathematical ratios found in "nature's perfect formulas," he says, "We ask, 'how does this installation relate to the people walking through the space?' If it is too tall, people will feel lost. If it's too low, people will feel cramped." At other times, relying on the Golden Ratio (itself based on a human scale) for example, deJong says, "allows us to know that people will enjoy the space. It will feel good."

With [River of Glass](#), for instance, deJong designed the meandering collection of glass-blown lights suspended in a commercial lobby in downtown Houston to evoke the enchantment of the nearby Blanca River. Consisting of two



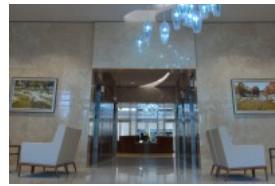
outer shade, textured with hundreds of bubbles, creates a dappling effect “like a sun shower onto the river.” Further suggesting a sparkling river is the iridescent [paint/gel] mixed with slivers of purple, green, and blue mica that deJong and his team painstakingly applied to the recessed ceiling. The effect is an undulating “river” of light and glass that shimmers as it guides visitors through the lobby.

“When you walk in the building, out of your peripheral vision the river is actually moving with you through that current,” deJong says of the impression of movement it creates. “But when you turn around and look at it, all the colors shift to their complement. The lights are depicting raindrops falling in reverse onto that river.”

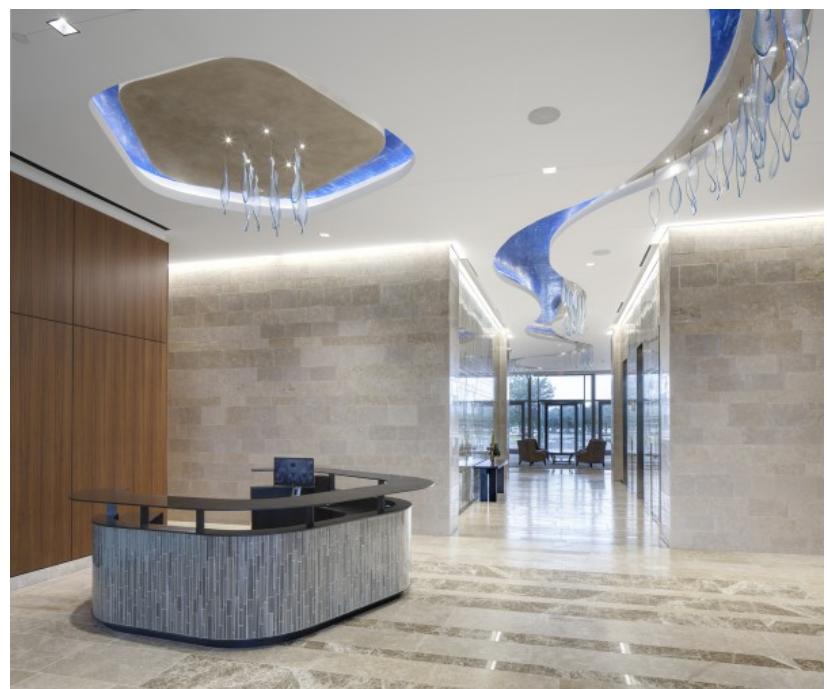
Most of Wimberley Glassworks’ art installations are equally complex and detailed in their design and execution. In fact, it’s the plethora of dimensions that keeps deJong so engaged. “The thing I like about glass is there is so much you can do with it.” Especially when paired with light, he says, “glass can be opaque to create shadows, diffuse all sorts of etched patterns; it can sparkle...you can do almost whatever you want with it.”

### Relying on careful planning—and happenstance

“There are all sorts of different ways we test things before arriving at the final result,” deJong says about the challenge of coordinating his installations’ many features. At times lighting software can lend an accurate sense of how the output of light will alter the space. At other times, early models allow for essential problem-solving.



The River of Glass, 2013  
Houston, TX



Floating Waters, 2017  
Southlake, TX

When designing *Floating Waters* for a building in a particularly windy part of Dallas, for example, they subjected an early mockup of the installation’s handmade ribbons of patterned glass to 35-mph winds. “It was like wind chimes,” deJong laughs. In response, they not only fortified the individual ribbons but also carefully aligned the top of each with the entrance, avoiding the hazard of harmful crosswinds. “The ribbons are twisted and so they look random, but they are actually thoughtfully and carefully placed.” The preliminary model also inspired them to cut a multilayered “stream” into the ceiling, which they then coated with cobalt blue plaster, lending a blue hue and both deeper and shallower aspects to the piece as a whole. “When you make the mockup you see everything. There is always something



Sunrise on Matagorda Bay, 2006  
Houston, TX

Equally valuable to deJong's process, however, are spontaneous observations from unexpected sources. During a recent building tour for the Westchase II project, *Sunrise on Matagorda Bay*, deJong and the building's owner and architect were accompanied by plumbers, electricians, and others involved in the building's construction. As they discussed the challenge of installing the ton-and-a-half glass piece onto the wall, it was, in fact, the plumber who chimed in with a pivotal suggestion. "We were talking about the impact of the lighting on the work," deJong recalls, "and he said, 'you know, you might want to have this stone mason in Brazil cut the waviest pieces and put them behind the glass art piece.'" The effect would allow the light to emphasize that negative space alongside the positive space of the glass piece itself.

"That's the beauty of being able to take your ego and put it aside and just talk," deJong says. "If you work in a collaborative manner it's like synergy, a synergy that finds its way into the ultimate artwork."





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