Dissecting the Visual and Non-Visual Attributes of Glasswork Submitted to an Annual Publication for Fun and Profit

A Thesis

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By

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Abstract

We find ourselves in an age where our cultural preferences can be determined and aligned by computer algorithms. The because-you-like-that-you-will-like-this approach has spanned across areas of music with Pandora, movies and TV shows with Netflix, not to mention our intimate relationships with the multitude of online dating sites. In this context, where inspiration can be reduced down to numbers, I began a project examining whether a similar systematic approach could be applied to the field of glass artwork.

_The New Glass Review_ is an annual publication in which a jury select 100 submitted images of what they feel represents the best work in glass from the past year. The jury is composed of Tina Oldknow, curator of modern glass at the Corning Museum of Glass and three other guest jurors. By taking the New Glass Review as the paramount examples of work in glass, my project began by breaking down every image selected by the jury since 2001 into Excel spreadsheets. Images were deconstructed into 110 categories, ranging from the submitted information of dimensions, artist gender and nationality, to the visual attributes of symmetry, dominant colors, referential imagery, additional materials and photographic setting.

With the help of the Statistics Counseling Service at The Ohio State University, I was able to run a series of analyses to determine favorable attributes of glasswork based on my collected data. From these figures I constructed three artworks and submitted them
to the 2015 *New Glass Review* under a pseudonym. Despite adhering to the precise calculations, my submission was unsuccessful. Partially.
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Greg Khutoryan, Neil Messinger, Josh Messmer, Torrie Rondot, Derek Swinhart, Matt
Tackas -------------------------------------------Assisting with the various aspects of creating a
-----------------------------------------------chandelier-shaped disco ball.
Vita

2009..............................................................B.F.A. Alfred University

Fields of Study

Major Field: Art
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Chapter 1: The Genesis Story

I trace the impetus of this project back to a conversation concerning my B.F.A. show review with one of my former faculty, Fred Tschida at The New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University. During this meeting, Fred mentioned that there seemed to be three distinct personalities present in my exhibition: a glassblower following a traditional Venetian style, a lighting designer utilizing neon and mixed media, and a sarcastic performance artist. As the conversation continued we spoke of how each of these might be developed, as myself, Zac Weinberg, or as alternate personalities, allowing for an extended range of possible actions. Towards the end of the conversation I mentioned, as a joke, that I could develop separate portfolios for all of my alter egos and submit these to the New Glass Review.

Figure 1: Animal Cups for Animal Cans. 2009
Figure 2: Redundancy Lamp. 2009

Figure 3: The Artist in His Natural Environment. 2009
Chapter 2: Fred’s Story

Figure 4: Fred Tschida photographed through the claws of a Maine Lobster. Alfred University, 2008

One story that Fred loved to tell (and there were many) was about a ceramic artist who submitted multiple applications to the ceramics MFA program at Alfred. The university’s program is the top in the nation and although there are some exceptions to this rule, the program generally chose a similar student arrangement based roughly on the techniques the applicants use in their work, i.e. two potters, an abstract sculptor, a figurative sculptor, one slip-caster and a wild card to make things interesting. I believe our artist-provocateur recognized these trends and created his portfolios accordingly. In the end
some or all of our subject’s alter-ego MFA hopefuls were accepted. As far as I know the story ends there, perhaps he accepted as himself, leaving other spaces open for second picks or perhaps the point was made and the artist decided not to accept at all. I have yet to confirm this story with any of the senior ceramics faculty, but this anecdote alone was enough to set a personal project in motion.
Chapter 3: The Idea

*Glassblowing is about eliminating variables.*

-Jesse Bach, from a private conversation.

*Programming is about managing complexity.*


There are many ways one can take to arrive at the same destination; a simple vase may be produced in the glassblowing studio using a variety of different methods. Everyone finds the strategy that works best for them, tweaking learned processes to fit. There are few absolute truths when it comes to achieving form.

The same can be said (and multiplied exponentially) about making art. With no set rules the artist is left to choose their own means to ends. Inspiration may come from anywhere, no material is unusable and validation is provided by a myriad of sources.

On the other end of the spectrum, there are computer algorithms. These systems of programmed decision-making determine much of the way the world works around us in the 21st century. From the thermostat that turns the heat on if it’s too cold and the A/C
if it’s too warm to the Google search engine, which provides content based on what it knows about your Internet habits, decisions can be reduced to quantifiable explanations that are composed, in their *prima materia*, of a long list of 1’s and 0’s.

We find ourselves in an age where our cultural preferences can be determined and aligned by algorithms. The because-you-like-that-you-will-like-this approach has spanned across areas of music with Pandora, movies and TV shows with Netflix, not to mention our intimate relationships with the multitude of online dating sites. In this context, where numbers can determine choice, I began a project examining whether a similar systematic approach could be applied to the field of glass artwork.

As a microcosm within the microcosm of the “Art World,” glass has the advantage of limited variables. When looked at objectively, the validating sources were composed of a handful of media-specific galleries, a couple of museums, a few curators, two magazines and of course, *The New Glass Review*. Quality, from this vantage point, was held within these pages.

The idea was to break down the *New Glass Review* into Excel spreadsheets, categorizing each selected image by a series of visual factors. Once assembled it would be a seemingly straightforward task to average everything out and thereby reveal what I should make. What’s more is that once finished, my creations could be assessed for validity by submitting them for review by the very system that brought them about.
Chapter 4: The Sexiest Job of the 21st Century

At the time of writing, I am a student The Ohio State University. OSU is known as a “Research One university.” To earn this distinction a university must, among other things, award 50 + doctoral degrees per year, receive at least $40 million in federal support and prioritize research.¹

A year after I started here, it was announced that a new major was being created through the business school: Data Analytics. This field has been called “the sexiest job of the 21st Century,”² which for me begs the question of what occupations held this title in the preceding centuries.³

The phrase “Creative Research” is heard often, and whose definition remains a bit ambiguous. There are many artists who legitimately employ what could be considered academic research in its most traditional form, Josiah McElheny and Mark Dion instantly come to mind, however there remains the other less definable parallels when we start to look at the expanded definitions of this type of research: sketching in its various forms, the physical act of making, thrift store shopping, poetry writing, etc. all present a rather mixed interpretation of what research is in art. With the New Glass Review project I now

³ Some guesses: Hand Axe Fabrication Specialist, 700,000 BC. Plow Operator, 100 AD. Glassblower, 1600 AD.
had the chance to test if these two camps of academic and artistic research could be combined as a justification of means to ends.
Chapter 5: The Music Geonome Project

My methodology for categorization was inspired by the work of the Music Geonome Project. Their website describes it as such:

*Each song in the Music Genome Project is analyzed using up to 450 distinct musical characteristics by a trained music analyst. These attributes capture not only the musical identity of a song, but also the many significant qualities that are relevant to understanding the musical preferences of listeners. The typical music analyst working on the Music Genome Project has a four-year degree in music theory, composition or performance, has passed through a selective screening process and has completed intensive training in the Music Genome's rigorous and precise methodology. To qualify for the work, analysts must have a firm grounding in music theory, including familiarity with a wide range of styles and sounds.\(^4\)*

The premise behind the MGP is that one could find a song to match a particular situation. Songs are all broken down into categories ranging from beats-per-minute to a 1-5 rating of how much a melody dominates a composition. With this information one could potentially select the appropriate song to set the mood. If the mood required a slow

\(^4\) Available at https://www.pandora.com/about/mgp
tempo, deep male vocals and amorous lyrical styling one could search for these attributes and avoid an awkward conversation with a record store employee.

The Pandora music service was hatched in the womb of the MGP. It employed an algorithm to create a playlist of like sounding songs that shared common musical attributes drawn from the collected work of thousands of musical interpreters. It was this facet of the service that I found truly amazing: that at the end of the day I was still listening to the decision of an actual human, despite the digital interface and the automated playlist.

One of the founding ideas behind Pandora is that it would expose the listener to songs and artists they might not otherwise have heard by means of this digital DJ. Having been an active Pandora user for the better part of a decade I can say that this promise was not quite delivered on. While I have learned of a few new artists and heard songs I would not have otherwise, I find the playlists predictable and far less eclectic than one would hope. While Hearing Walk on the Wild Side when tuned in to the Velvet Underground station makes sense, as it is true that Lou Reed played in the Velvet Underground and is largely responsible for their musical styling, this connection is not going to blow any minds, music diversity-wise. When it comes down to it, Pandora is a free (minus commercials) service that, for many people provides ambiance you don’t have to think about. Catering to averages and obvious connections has its benefits as far as attracting a large listening audience. Would the same fate await my statistically generated artwork?
Chapter 6: The Issue

* The crux of the issue, according to some, resided in my identity throughout this project. In one sense there was what I thought I was doing: attempting to get at the core of this mystery, performing “genuine,” quantitative research in an attempt to understand the New Glass Review through an authentically academic means: a way of examining objects through a contemporary and increasingly prevalent system of number-based reasoning.

Figure 5: Venn diagram of The Issue

* The crux of the issue, according to some, resided in my identity throughout this project. In one sense there was what I thought I was doing: attempting to get at the core of this mystery, performing “genuine,” quantitative research in an attempt to understand the New Glass Review through an authentically academic means: a way of examining objects through a contemporary and increasingly prevalent system of number-based reasoning.
Then there was the other camp. Early on, when I presented this project in a critique setting, the phrase “throwing rocks at the castle” was uttered, much to my dismay. Despite my own intentions, I still had a long way to go convincing people that, although it was true that I had never been selected by the jury of the New Glass Review, and was now developing a methodological, maniacal system to get in, I was not doing this (purely) out of spite.
Chapter 7: What People Want

The New Glass Review Project owes a large tip of the hat to Vitaly Komar and Alex Melamid’s *Most Wanted* painting series from 1994 - 1997. In this project the artists, political émigrés from Russia, set out to make a true “people’s art” simply by asking the public what they wanted to see in a painting. Conducted in the United States and ten other countries, A 103 question poll was devised containing questions about the participant’s relationship with art e.g. “[do] you have any works of art displayed in your home? Do you tend to favor paintings with sharp angles or ones with soft curves?

Thinking back to the paintings of people you liked in the past, for the most part were the figures working, at leisure or were they posed portraits? The poll finishes by collecting biographical information including political preferences, income as well as If one of your children wanted to be an artist, would you encourage your child, discourage your child or wouldn’t it matter to you? (Encourage received 79%).

From the collected information of the volunteers, the artists would paint what the information deemed the “Most Wanted” and the “Least Wanted.” Here’s what the people in the US “wanted”:

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Figure 6: A 44% blue, pastoral landscape around the size of a dishwasher, incorporating historical figures (George Washington), wild animals and a family.

On the opposite end, America’s Least Wanted looks like this:

Figure 7: An abstract, thickly textured painting around the size of a postcard containing overlapping, geometric shapes.

As Melamid explains, their project was an attempt “to get in touch with the people of the United States of America: somehow to penetrate their brains, to understand their wishes-to be a real part of this society, of which we’re partially part, partially not” (Wypijewski, 8). And what better way for recent arrivals from a socialist state to understand the
American people? The research-marketing poll is an authentic by-product of capitalism, designed to give companies a better understanding of the populous as to more efficiently sell their products. From a certain perspective, this is a tool to understand the people, it works, and why would it not work to learn about art?

What the paintings revealed was what people wanted in a painting was what art critics disdain and screensavers love. The blue landscape (with slight variances) was favored by all but one country in the study. As Arthur Danto proposes in his essay, *Can it be the "Most Wanted Painting" even if nobody wants it?* this conundrum is “less about what people prefer than what they are most familiar with . . . The 44-percent blue landscape with water and trees must be the a priori aesthetic universal, what everyone who thinks of art first thinks of, as if modernism had never happened” (Wypijewski 137).

In one sense this work by Komar and Melamid is flat-out cynicism: a “this is what you wanted so here it is, dumbass.” While it would be hopeless to read this project without any hint of irony, the implications of this project shed more of a light on the role of an artist in society. One could read the Komar and Melamid’s pursuit of a people’s art as the grandchild of Constructivist ideals. What this project revealed was what people do not want is eerily reminiscent to the geometric styling of Lissitzky, Rodchenko et al, while they favored the antithesis of these movements. The *Most/Least Wanted* project ultimately points to the necessity of art to remain autonomous from a democratic ideal.
Creating categories by which to dissect an image into became the first prerogative. The simplest data to collect was what was printed on the page, the artist’s name (by which I assumed gender), and country of residence as well as the information they chose to submit about the work. Dimensions were typically straightforward minus the odd “dimensions vary.” Materials and techniques employed are entirely dependent on the artist for accurate representation, the best examples including descriptions of all the methods used to bring the piece to fruition, the worst simply saying “glass.”

A distinct quality of the New Glass Review that I have yet to see anywhere else in a juried publication is the voter’s initials at the bottom of the description. One set of initials means that just one juror thought the piece should stay. Four implied a unanimous decision. In this way I was allowed access to an ever-prevalent metric of internet-age merit: The Like.

Introduced into Facebook in 2009, the like button allows users to add their (discreet, non-explanatory, optimistic) opinion to the vortex of this social media site. This serves two functions: the first is that by knowing what users “like,” Facebook’s algorithm...
adjusts what and who appears in your “feed.” The second and perhaps indicative of a shift in the very fabric of the Internet, is the like as a new form of currency. This new economy is “based on collective negotiation and in which economic value creation is related to the quality of social bonds that are generated.”

How much is a like worth? If you happen to be a company with a Facebook presence there is actually a very precise answer to this question: $174.17. Depending on the circumstances a like can mean an acknowledgement of a peer’s approval or a quantifiable means of American currency. In the case of the New Glass Review I chose to ignore the seeming arbitrariness of the juror’s initials and diligently categorize each piece by this ranking system.

7 For an in-depth look at the pitfalls of liking see Honan, Mat. "I Liked Everything I Saw on Facebook for Two Days. Here’s What It Did to Me." Wired.com.
Chapter 9: Tina Oldknow

As to not complicate things more than they were, I chose not to include individual juror names – unless your name is Tina Oldknow. Oldknow has been the Curator of Modern Glass as the Corning Museum of Glass since 2000 and has been on the panel of the New Glass Review since 2001. This gave me both a date to begin collecting data and a control by which to analyze success: Tina said yes or Tina said no. Other jurors come and go, their opinions only valid for that year. Tina’s vote was a sure thing and could now be analyzed as it developed over time.

![Table](image)

Figure 9: My system for cataloging votes

In addition to her work at the museum, Oldknow has authored nine books and numerous articles on the subject of contemporary glass. In 2005, she wrote *25 Years of The New Glass Review*, a survey of the publication up until that point, which she divided
into five sections. The book appropriately begins with *Vessels*, hollow objects that
directly recall historical forms or metaphorically reference containment. *Sculpture*, the
most ambiguous category, contains a diverse selection of objects ranging from large,
solid, cast glass forms to mixed-media assemblages. *Flat/Painted* responded to the
history of stained glass and how those practices and techniques have expanded beyond
windows into autonomous panels. This section largely focused on image making
including enamels, engraving, photographic processes and neon.

*Installation/Architectural* represented a relative newcomer to the glass world, in that
these pieces extended beyond the object into site specificity. In Oldknow’s own words
these works “are not meant to be regarded or contemplated, but experienced.” The final
chapter in the book, *Design* contains objects intended for use, tableware and vases as well
as jewelry and objects intended to be displayed on the body.

While the chapters in *25 Years of the New Glass Review* are of approximately the
same thickness, this is not an accurate measure of the work accepted for the yearly
*Review*. As seen from my research, these archetypes’ distribution is far from even:

![Archetypes Graph](image)

Table 1: *Archetypes as they appear in the 14 years of my study*
Oldknow’s system of categorization began with the task of selecting 200 images out of 2,500. In her introduction to the book she describes the preparatory steps:

“Naturally, I thought at length about the criteria for my selections, and after some preliminary sorting and arranging, I realized that rational behavior would have to be abandoned. My attempts at objective analysis were too limiting, disordered and ultimately not objective. I had to go with my gut, to proceed intuitively on the first selection of images, based on my knowledge of glass and of the artists. My criteria could then be applied” (Oldknow, 6).

Like Oldknow, my initial goal was to remain as objective as possible while recording all of this information, simply transmitting the information from one place to another. I soon realized this world result in a very incomplete data set. To get a better idea of the work I had to get subjective and create my own categories:

(next page)
Figure 10: My categories for image dissection
Chapter 10: The Statistics Counseling Service

It soon became apparent that I was out of my league. I could do a few functions in Excel but I was far from being able to get the answers I wanted out of the data I collected. I sent an email to the folks at the recently created Data Analytics department to see if they had any insights on this. They didn’t say yes, but instead referred me to the Statistical Counseling Service. Being a student at a university this large had its benefits. The SCS was an actual class you can take for credit, in which a qualified statistician from the department would help you with your statistics problem. It was now nearing the end of the spring semester of my second year. I wanted to have all the data sorted out soon, as to begin building my counterfeit *New Glass Review* submission. The summer class version of the SCS was full, so I enrolled in the fall, hoping this would still give me enough time to see this project through.

Jeff Gory is a PhD student in the statistics department who was assigned to handle my problem. It had been somewhat difficult to explain what I was doing to some of my faculty in the art department. Questions of why I was spending so much time analytically breaking down an esoteric publication, and what I was ultimately trying to get at were a bit tough in the early days of this project’s formulation. With Jeff it was easier, as he spoke the language I was trying to learn, even if my prerogatives were a bit unusual.
In our first meeting, Jeff looked at my collected figures with modest disdain. While I thought I had been thorough in my collection efforts, it was not up to statistician standards. For accurate analysis, every one of my entries needed to be a binary yes or no, a 1 or a 0. To record an entry with three colors I originally wrote “clear, black, yellow” in a single cell. This was expanded into “clear” 1 or 0, “black” 1 or 0, “yellow” 1 or 0, all in their own cells. My original 41-row spreadsheet grew to 110. With everything now organized it was now possible to generate figures on whatever *New Glass Review* inquiry emerged.

In addition to getting a better idea of my data, working with Jeff allowed me to get a bit of perspective on this project. Up until that point it had been me paging through issues of the *Review*, categorizing each photograph in a process that took around four hours to complete a single volume on a good day. Working with someone else limited my control over the project, which was the intention behind this whole thing from the beginning: a way of giving myself assignments that controlled many of the decisions that are inherently linked with art making. It was no longer a question of why; I did it because the data told me to.
A question arose concerning a feature of my pending submission: How much information do you submit to the New Glass Review? Would it be an application containing titles such as *The Highest Probability of Inclusion for a Flat/Painted Autonomous Panel* or *If You Don’t Like This You are Statistically Wrong*? How much of a clue would be offered to the jurors that what was appearing before them was part of an elaborate hoax? After considering these options I opted for complete anonymity on behalf of my submission as to address the nature of a hoax full on. There is something about working in secret that is simply more exciting.

The lingering question remained: who would I become? I knew it had to be a female from the United States as this demographic far exceeds any other representation in my study (Figure 11). Out of this category, the gold star goes to Katherine Grey with nine accepted pieces. Perhaps I could harness the power of Ms. Grey if I were to use her name - differently. I found an online anagram generator and plugged it in. The results were not quite what I needed, although “Rat Eye Gherkin” was tempting. Kait Rhoads was also a contender with six accepted pieces; the winning anagram for her was “Darkish Oat” which I was enticed by. I ultimately decided to go with something representing of a larger sector. I settled on “Mary Smith” after researching the most common first name for
females in the States and the most common surname. Now I had to figure out where Ms. Smith was from.

![Female/Male Ratio](image)

**Figure 11: Gender ratio in the New Glass Review**

The *New Glass Review* application requires an address where they can send your copy when printed. You can opt to have printed in the publication. For a while this troubled me, after going through the motions of bringing Mary Smith into the world I now had to find a place for her to live. Should I get a PO box in another state? Use a friend’s address? My solution came naturally as I remembered something I had heard about my current location prior to me moving here: Columbus, Ohio served as the guinea pig for multi-national companies wondering if their new product would be a success in the States. With roughly the same demographic as the country surrounding it, Columbus got first dibs when a fast-food chain wanted an opinion on their new combination of processed meat and bread. If it worked here, you could rest assured it would fly with the
rest of America. Obviously the persona of an untested hypothesis should be from the test capital of the country. With this factor in mind I made the logical decision and Mary Smith became my roommate, our addresses being the only connecting evidence.

Chapter 12: COGIA

I have formulated a brief hypothesis concerning the condition of the self-conscious glassmaker and its affect on multiple personality generation. It takes a lengthy amount of time to learn how to make something in glass. While the same could be said about any material discipline, I feel this factor is amplified in this particular field. I attribute this to not being able to physically touch the material when shaping it. With the exception of cold cutting, grinding and polishing, every glassmaking operation requires high heat, necessitating a tool between the hand and the material.

I believe it is for this reason you will often find glass as its own department in universities, rather than a facet of a sculpture program. Traditional sculptural materials such as metal, stone, wood, plastic, plaster, and cloth all come with their own requirements of hands-on experience, however it is feasible to know the basics of construction after a few hours of training. The process is often reductive at first; the materials must be cut down in order to begin working. This gives students a concept of scale much sooner than with glass, which must be worked with through additive measures such as molding, gathering and inflation to achieve an idea of size. This factor creates a conflict for the method of glass instruction; does one simply teach technique as to develop the student’s hand-skills, or is emphasis placed on conceptual development leaving technique to be acquired (or not) through student’s personal experiments?
Instructors have their own ratio of these two sectors, ranging from Jens Pfeifer of the Gerrit Rietveld Academie “we don’t teach technique,“\textsuperscript{11} to Lino Tagliapietra, “watch me [blow glass] and you will learn everything you need to know.”\textsuperscript{12}

As a result of this conflict comes a debate of art vs. craft, and the consequences of identifying with either camp. Stray too far in one direction and you become the artisanal artisan, too far the opposite way where “technique is cheap”\textsuperscript{13} and loose all your “maker-cred.” Post-dematerialization, post-de-skilling, it would appear that the contemporary art world values anything but a well-crafted object made by the artists themselves.\textsuperscript{14}

Amplifying this sense of maker-inferiority comes the recent history of the Studio Glass Movement.

Barely over 50 years old, this movement came about as a result of artists building their own small glass studios, effectively transplanting glass from its factory setting where it had resided in almost complete inaccessibility to artists. Having liberated glass from the shackles of industry, the new practitioners were keen to make anything but what would be conceived as a factory-produced item. As time went on it was apparent that the technical skills needed in factory work were also required for personal artistic undertakings. The early 70’s saw the introduction of master glassblowers from Italy and Sweden to the educational roster of the Pilchuck Glass School in Washington. For the

\textsuperscript{11} From a lecture at the Issues in Glass Pedagogy conference, New York, 2013
\textsuperscript{12} This quote is a prime example of the anecdotal methods of knowledge transfer that occur frequently in the glass world. I can’t place where I heard/read this first or where I subsequently herd/read it again and again. Tagliapietra was not being cocky when he said this, he hardly spoke any english when he began teaching in the US, and he had learned to blow glass through the apprentice system as it had been taught for centuries.
\textsuperscript{13} This phrase is attributed to Harvey Littleton, one of the “Founding Fathers” of the Studio Glass Movement
first time, the members of the Studio Glass Movement had the option to follow established systems of making. Those that tried soon found that this path was long and either continued with this practice or found alternative ways to work with the material.

With the increasing popularity of glass over the next few decades, the term “glass artist” emerged. While some use this title with pride, to others it is an almost “scarlet letter,” by which their practice is differentiated from that of an actual “artist.”

Enter the self-conscious glassmaker of the 21st century in an academic setting. From personal experience and conversations with colleagues in the field it is felt that there exists an internal identity crisis, caused by the “wearing of many hats.” In one instance we may be reading art criticism, then an hour later teaching a student how to make a simple vessel form, then an hour after that constructing our own work, which may or may not have anything to do with the art criticism you just read or the simple vessel form you just taught. It is this condition that I have titled Condition of the Glassmaker in Academia or COGIA, to which I partially credit the idea of developing additional versions of myself.
Chapter 13: 1st Piece: The Most Likely to Succeed

Now that I had clear statistical paths to follow it was time to begin making things. The first piece was to be an average of everything, the lowest common denominator. After crunching the numbers, the rules of construction for this “holy grail” emerged:

- It would be a sculpture.
- It would have a height of 84.86 cm, a width of 111.90 cm and a depth of 57.63 cm.
- It would be made of blown glass.
- The glass would be clear.
- It would contain multiple glass objects.
- The piece would contain an additional material (steel).
- It would be referential in its imagery.
- It would be lit by an exterior light source.
- It would be photographed with a white background.
- It would have a transparency of 5.72.
- It would be symmetrical.

Every other attribute was out. The first problem that I ran into was that although it had to contain “referential imagery,” none of the modifying categories (“container,” “blob,” “aqua,” etc.) could be used. Essentially this implied I needed to make my sculpture reference something without actually referencing anything. It was now the middle of September with the submission deadline rapidly approaching.

In the glassblowing studio I tried a multitude of approaches only to be foiled at every step. A pair of glass shoes was out, as they were “domestic.” An asteroid would be listed as “Terra” and would probably resemble a “blob.” Two cylinders with sculpted noses emerging from their sides would end up in the “figurative” designation. Same for
highly ornamented sexual organs. I made a glass bacon cheeseburger, only to be
reminded that this too was a “domestic” object, plus there is already a guy making glass
burgers at large. Finally I caved. I needed to make the most average blown glass objects
but my system was badly impaired. What I settled on was a different reading of average,
addressing perhaps the most commercially successful glass object made by hand: The
Pumpkin.

Glass pumpkins have their own economy. They are 1) easy to make, 2) easy to
sell and, 3) fetch a premium. Many independent glass studios rely on an annual pumpkin
sale for much of their yearly income. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s Glass
Lab annually funds their entire program from a single pumpkin sale in the fall. And so I
made this: (next page)
It was titled *Tracing Affect* as the blue heat scars on the steel could be seen as a visual reminder of the fossil fuels needed to make these glass objects. The table was constructed to meet the required width and depth, and positioned on adjustable steel supports as to place the highest pumpkin stem at 84.86 cm.
Chapter 14: 2nd Piece: Glass of the Future

Table 2: Popularity of glass artwork attributes over time
With the help of Jeff at the Statistics Counseling Service, it was now possible to see the trends of glass over time. Each category was mapped out in line graphs as to get a visual impression of what was happening over the years. Trend lines revealed what was on the rise and fall. In “Referential Imagery” is always a good idea although it has taken a plunge in the last couple years; “Optical” is on the up swing as well as the “Basic Geometries.” In short it seemed like most attributes were on the rise minus “Pattern,” which is flat lining and “Intersection” Which was intersecting the graph in a complete nose-dive.

![Glass Techniques](image)

Table 3: Trends in glass construction methods
Tracing the techniques used in the *Review* revealed a shift from blown glass dominating the *Review* almost 50% in issue #24 to less than 20% in #34 (Table 3). In an almost mirror image increase, kiln-formed glass was steadily increasing in popularity. One theory would be that this is due to increases in oil prices over the years, to which kiln work would offer a cheap alternative to a hot-glass studio. Isolated, these two trends show a striking polarity:

![Graph showing Glass Techniques from New Glass Review #22 to #35](image)

Table 4: *Glass construction methods, simplified to show only “Blown” and “Kiln”*

Continuing to analyze these trends revealed the restraints for the second piece:

- Humans
- Process shots
- Projection
- Referential imagery
- Installations, of which the average dimensions were: H. 259.7 cm/ W. 399.6 cm/ D. 201.6 cm.
- Kiln formed
- Found objects
• White background

The Future of Glass Artwork:

Figure 13: *Untitled* by Mary Smith

Yes, the background is not white in the photograph, but it is a white wall, I assure you.

Many thanks to Nick Fagan for modeling.
Chapter 15: Modification via Data

For the third piece in my submission, I chose to address the potential for an original idea to be modified by my collected data. This could potentially be expanded into a service for the glass community in which you could pay (me) to tell you how to make your creation ready (statistically) for the Review. Hypothetically, let’s say an artist made animals in glass and they wanted to know, probability-wise, how to make and photograph their next piece. Here’s what I would tell them:

- It should be a Sculpture (surprise, surprise).
- It should contain Referential Imagery (it is an animal after all).
- It should be asymmetrical.
- It should contain no additional materials.
- The piece should be lit with an exterior light source on a white background.
- It should be constructed using two glass-forming operations. From these Blown and Cast are the two highest scoring, closely followed by cold-working.

Table 5: Popularity of glass construction methods to create “Fauna”
• The piece should contain two colors. Out of all collected entries under “Fauna,” the highest scoring colors were:

![Chart showing color popularity for “Fauna”]

Table 6: Color popularity for “Fauna”

Another satisfied customer.

The idea that I wanted to subject to data was a concept for a hanging lamp. The concept would be to buy a glass table lamp at a thrift store, break it, and suspend the pieces in a way that would suggest witnessing the moment of impact, or the object exploding. From this idea I determined that my parameters were:

• Lit from an internal light source.
• A found object.
• The glass would be clear.
• There would be multiple objects in the final arrangement.

Plugging these limitations into the spreadsheet narrowed everything down to three pieces:

*Cellular Reliquary* by Charlotte Potter

*Light Container* by Nate Ricciuto

*Subtle Intimacy* by Rui Sasaki.
I would like to mention that I am personally acquainted with all of these people.

From these three pieces I determined my artwork would be:

- Photographed indoors.
- It would have a height of 115.3 cm, a width of 236.9 cm and a depth of 92.35 cm

As with the table in the *Most likely to Succeed* piece, I solved dimensional requirements by constructing a frame to meet the stated width and depth. I suspended this at exactly 111.3 cm off the floor with the broken glass pieces hanging from acrylic rod.

![Figure 14: Psychological Subjective Perception by Mary Smith](image-url)
Chapter 16: What Happened

During the time I was cataloging the *New Glass Reviews* I was becoming painfully aware of being absent in the studio and not making physical objects. It became obvious that although I was following protocol and leaving the inspiration for my pending creations up to numbers, the decisions of how to interpret what the data revealed and the fabrication of the actual objects would be up to me.

As a means of addressing both of these perceived inadequacies I began another project. I began *The Entropic Museum* as a way of highlighting entropy, defined as the amount of randomness in a system. Clearly, this element was manifesting in the undetermined interpretations of the data, for what could be more random than a human making an aesthetic decision? To form the collection of the museum, I devised a system of artwork creation where I would only be responsible for the idea, and have nothing to do with the interpretation of the influence or the actual making of the piece. I concluded that the best way for me to remain out of the picture was to distribute these ideas/instructions via a system I had absolutely no control over.

100-lidded capsules were made in the glassblowing studio. Following construction, they would each get a webbing of manila rope tied around them, resembling the knotted protection encasing fishing floats of the past. Inside each of these would be instructions to complete an unrealized artwork of my own design. Once assembled, these
would be sealed and distributed into Gulf Stream, a powerful current in the Atlantic Ocean, literally to meet their makers. Affectively, this was the opposite of what I was attempting with the Review, supplying the fabrication end of things to inspiration I was not responsible for.

Figure 15: Unsealed capsule showing contents

The three submissions for Mary Smith were set up, photographed and submitted within 24 hours of the deadline. I broke another rule by photographing these myself, which in turn led to the creation of another alter-ego, Felipe Jones, photographer. In addition to Ms. Smith’s application I submitted another entry under my own name.
containing images of the assembled glass capsules and other small projects I had made over the past 12 months. When the letters arrived from the Corning Museum of Glass in January, there were mixed emotions. Despite my long hours compiling research, crunching numbers and turning these into artwork that wasn’t my own, none of Ms. Smith’s works had been accepted. The submission under my own name had been successful. The piece the jury chose was the capsules laid out in a row on a concrete floor.

Figure 16: Photograph of Page 58 of the New Glass Review 36
Perhaps there is something poetic about this, that the quest to make the “perfect” *New Glass Review* entry had failed but the reaction against this quest had succeeded. One possible explanation voiced by a faculty mentor is that perhaps I was successful with this submission due to the amount of psychic energy poured into this project. I like this explanation and would probably use it when describing this project to select, spiritually oriented company. The power of attraction. That’s what it ultimately took to get in to the *Review*.
Making work that is not my own was quite a bit more difficult than anticipated. I view this as the first attempt, the dress rehearsal. In our last meeting, Jeff Gory showed me the way to update the spreadsheets when I catalog the recently published *New Glass Review* 36. I have decided to keep this project going for at least another year. There remain many areas that I have deemed worthy of investigating, such as, *The perfect piece according to the projected trends of Tina Oldknow’s voting habits*, *Design, an Underdog Story*, *Blue*, and probably a few more.
Bibliography


