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'Partial Perceptibility' casts glass shadows on white walls

By Jeff Rose, the Shorthorn senior staff Nov 29, 2016



Morgan Chivers, UTA FabLab technician and alumnus, stands behind his exhibit at the Fort Worth Community Arts Center. His exhibit, "Partial Perceptibility," features a single strand of convoluted glass winding throughout the gallery.

Courtesy: Nathalie Houghton

A strand of glass tests the audience's perceptibility.

Morgan Chivers, UTA FabLab technician and glass and intermedia studio alumnus, created an art exhibit titled "Partial Perceptibility." The exhibit features a single strand of glass winding through the Fort Worth Community Arts Center gallery space.

Chivers became interested in glass after working with photography, inspired by lenses to enter the field.

“I just fell in love with glass,” Chivers said.

Chivers switched to the glass and intermedia programs, because video and printmaking were in the same conceptual realms as glass.

Chivers completed the glass graduate courses in four years, taking his time to complete what is normally a three-year graduate program.

“The program’s focus is really, really about experimentation,” Chivers said “It’s a long program. A lot of graduate programs are two years, and that’s not enough time to really, freely experiment.”

The program allowed Chivers to experiment with different ideas, and the exhibit is a result of his experience. The key to experimental success is knowing it is okay to fail, Chivers said.

“What I was really interested in was a symbiotic relationship with the glass,” Chivers said. “Rather than strictly controlling its shape, I kind of allowed it to take its own shape.”

The process of glass making traditionally involves using a steel rod to turn molten glass, Chivers said, with a core rule being to never stop turning the glass.

“One of the things I was interested in was seeing how I could break those rules,” Chivers said.

Chivers experimented with molten glass by allowing gravity to work against it while not turning the rod, forming strands of glass.

“Glass has been a uniquely useful tool for humans to be able to see the world around us in a new way,” Chivers said.

One of Chivers’ influences was Jackson Pollock, an American painter known for his splatter paintings. Pollock’s artwork represented the visual motions of the brush and his arm as an artist, and Chivers thought glass was an appropriate similarity. His strands of glass represented his own visual motions as an artist, he said.

Chivers created individual strands of glass, carefully picking them up and arranging them into a continuous woven strand without a beginning or an end, then used a torch to weld pieces together.

“One of the things I really like about it is that it’s clear glass on a white wall,” Chivers said. “It’s kind of difficult to see the glass itself, you mostly see the shadow.”

Chivers described the shadows like a drawing, catching people’s eyes.

“The work becomes very much a drawing in space,” gallery manager Elaine Taylor said in an email.

The exhibit is almost like a painting with clear glass, curator Lauren Cross said.

Cross helped Chivers through the process of organizing the installation.

It took a few weeks, the majority of the time was used testing the glass strands to see if they could bear their weight, Chivers said.

Once the show closes, he will break the glass down and melt it into a solid egg-shaped mass of all the glass he used for the exhibit, Chivers said. It not much bigger than a chicken egg.

The Fort Worth Community Arts Center is a 77,000 square foot performing and visual arts venue, Taylor said.

“The building used to be the Fort Worth Modern Art Museum, and when they moved to their new building in 2002, the City of Fort Worth awarded a contract to the Arts Council of Fort Worth to create an arts center,” Taylor said. “We currently have over 70 exhibits per year and provide services to over 800 artists per year.”

The center and exhibit are free to the public and are open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday.

The exhibit will be open until Dec. 22.

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