

Art: Design: Culture

Glass

The UrbanGlass
Art Quarterly

Beverly Fishman's
Foray

Andrew Erdos
Emerging

Outsider Artists'
Visions

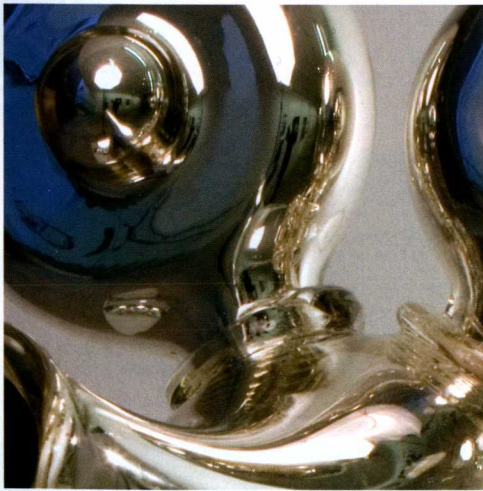
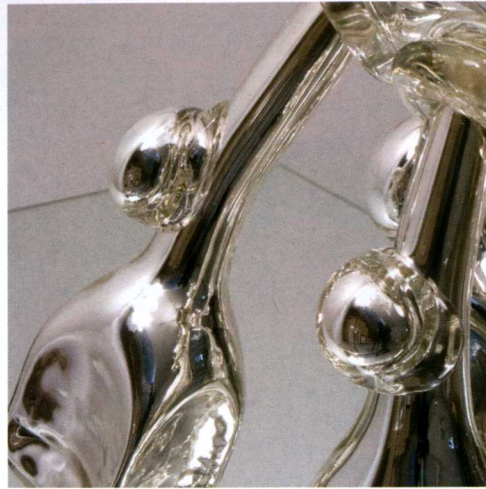
Chihuly
Uncolored



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Reflect: Refract: Redact

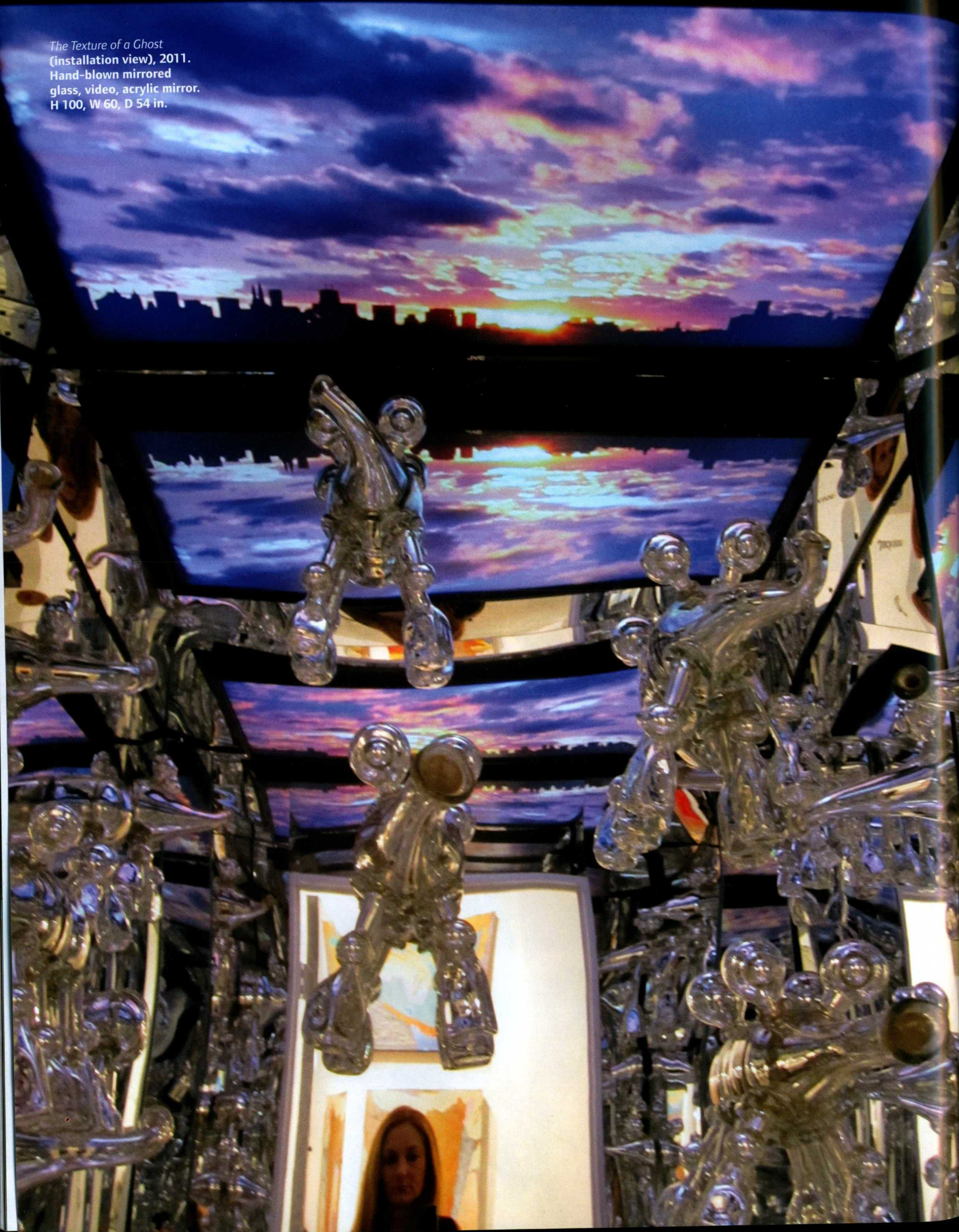
Emerging artist Andrew Erdos uses dystopian silvered-glass objects, blown by hand and animated by the light from video screens, to create an unsettling collision of nature and technology that confounds a clear reading of any of its discreet elements.

BY RUTH READER



*Psychotropic Swamp Palace
Mouse, 2011. Blown,
silverized glass. H 28,
W 32, D 16 in.*

The Texture of a Ghost
(installation view), 2011.
Hand-blown mirrored
glass, video, acrylic mirror.
H 100, W 60, D 54 in.



The silvered glass skins of a herd of mutant mice pick up the images of a desert sunrise playing on an overhead video screen, warping and distorting the orange-hued scene before sending the bent light careening off mirrored walls, where it reflects into visual infinity. The main character in this disorienting tableau (aside from visual perception itself) is Andrew Erdos's distinctive futuristic animal figure—a cyberpunk mutation of Mickey Mouse, with security-camera-like eyes in place of ears, a wormhole of a snout extending forward like a vacuum hose, and box-like feet for mechanized stability, like something out of *Star Wars*. The saccharine, Disney-esque mouse form has been warped into something vaguely unsettling. Coated in quicksilver, it sheds visual information like water, light dripping off its impermeable exterior and warping into reflected ripples to create an almost drug-induced, kaleidoscopic effect.

The visual overload barely contained in Erdos's installation *The Texture of a Ghost* (2011) was the perfect eye-catching display for the art-world whirl at the dazzling dual December shows of Art Basel Miami Beach and its tamer sister exhibition, Art Miami, where Erdos debuted on the international art scene courtesy of New York gallerist Claire Oliver. *White Hot Magazine* editor Noah Becker highlighted Erdos's work in an article for the Huffington Post web site titled "Letters from Art Basel, Miami Beach," dubbing it "the best booth in Art Miami." Amid his riffs on elite elbow rubbings and celebrity parties, Becker identified Erdos's installation by name, not bad for a 26-year-old Alfred University glass grad.

Silvered glass sculpture encased in an infinity box was defined by Josiah McElheny's work *Endlessly Repeating 20th-Century Modernism* (2007), but McElheny's cool intellectual restraint is nowhere in evidence in Erdos's over-the-top aesthetic. The icy perfection of McElheny's meditations on mechanical reproduction and modernism, contrasts with the more head-spinning and playful take on reflection in Erdos's version, which calls to mind Jeff Koons's *Balloon Dog* (1994–2002), but with the kitsch figuration of a video game rather than a toy. Here the excess is in four dimensions, the hyper-sweetness multiplied and darkened by the mouse form's dystopian mutations and their distorting effect on the video reflections. In his brief career, Erdos is already showing signs of Koonsian ambition, and his *Texture of a Ghost* represents a quick ramp-up in scale. He has expanded the proportions of an infinity box to the size of a small room.

Erdos's installation in Miami, *Soon to Melt From Us, Like the Substance of a Dream*, is an all-encompassing work with mirrored walls in which viewers became a part of the furious reflectivity. In scale it is an intensification of Erdos's earlier works, the apotheosis of his light-bending experiments. The interactivity of the work, which allowed viewers entry into the artwork's space and integrated their own reflection into the visual tableaux, could be experienced as a play on art fair narcissism or as a total immersion in the art experience. A video of the sun rising over the desert in Sedona, Arizona, spliced

A Fantastic and Startling Exit from Reality, 2011. Hand-blown, silverized and sandblasted glass, acrylic mirror. H 23, W 28, D 17 in.



with shots of Hurricane Irene moving in on New York City, played over sleek mirrored surfaces, and introduced the majestic and destructive sides of nature for an overwhelming, disorienting sensory experience.

Erdos's energetic dealer, Oliver, says that the work has caught the eyes of museum curators. Jutta-Annette Page, curator of glass and decorative art at the Toledo Museum of Art, says that she is tentatively planning to include one of Erdos's works in her upcoming group exhibition "Color Ignited," opening in June 2012, which will survey the use of color in glass from 1962 to 2012. (Another museum said to be interested in acquiring the work denied this when contacted by *GLASS*.)

Not yet 30, Erdos is unusually young to be showing in museum exhibitions. He is the youngest artist to be accepted into the Claire Oliver Gallery stable of artists, which includes stars of the glass art world Judith Schaechter and Beth Lipman, who spent decades building a following among glass collectors at glass-centric galleries before making the move to Oliver's multimedia gallery. But Erdos found an inside track. After graduating from Alfred University in 2007 with a BFA in glass, Erdos found himself staying with a friend in New York City who made the connection with Oliver. She hired him to mop floors and clean windows at her gallery. She also agreed to mentor him, meeting with him for a half-hour each week to discuss his work.

Last year, Erdos asked for Oliver's help in putting together a proposal for Deitch Projects. He explained his idea—a sculpture encased in a mirror box, using one-way glass combined with a video element—to Oliver, who then told him he would need a budget estimate. After doing some equipment research, he came back to Oliver with a sum. According to Oliver, she wrote him a check, and the first collector to view his finished product bought the work.

Erdos's signature mouse form—a psychedelic, knobby-kneed animal that wouldn't look out of place in the film *Yellow Submarine*—appears as a single figure in the tabletop piece *Cartoon Cloud Crusher*. Whether in huge installations or in small sculptures, his works always include these mice, the first iterations of which were created while he was expanding his knowledge of glassblowing at Alfred. He says he wanted a mascot to help him channel his ideas about the relationship between humanity, technology, and nature—a creature that was both approachable and identifiable, but entirely invented.

"You see it and you think 'Oh, it's a baby animal, it's cute,' but there's nothing that exists like this, and if there were, it would be terrifying," says Erdos. Soft-spoken and mild, he speaks with a quiet intensity. When not lit by the shifting colors and reflected images of video, his polished, glossy mice come across as cartoonish and robotic, an army of identical lonely figures in their infinite reflection—like something generated by a video game console, as easy to blow up as to regenerate. But even when naked, their appearance is informed by the memory of the visual assault they can offer. They remain as totems of the experience, a canny way of making artwork that is accessible at a variety of price points. Patrons can explore the epic installation and bring home an element that references the larger experience.

*Cheerfully Rooting Through
Old Vestiges of Time, 2011.
Hand-blown silverized
glass, acrylic mirror. H 20,
W 12, D 20 in.*





Erdos's work reminds his audience that humanity, despite its technological imaginings, represents the briefest of blips in the scope of Earth's history; the planet will outlast humankind. Through the kinetic play of light, the sculptures also offer some of Erdos's fascination with performance art, which began with his interest in the "B Team," a legendary glassblowing troupe with a punk-rock aesthetic that exploited the controlled chaos of glassblowing. At Alfred, Erdos made performance art in absurd works such as *Santalope*. Erdos and his collaborators donned giant Santa Claus masks and interacted with a variety of media, including molten glass, to explore false idolatry.

He sees his latest installations as distillations and expansions of his previous work, which has been redefined. "Not because I got bored," he says, pausing to choose his words carefully, "but because I needed to take it to the next level."

In 2012, Erdos is buckling down, focusing all his energy on creating work in anticipation of his dealer's future success placing him into museums. He is hard at work on an even larger installation than the Art Miami mirror box, which he will debut for the Claire Oliver Gallery's 20th anniversary party and exhibition in May. He says this next installation will host a whole new variety of sculpted glass flora and fauna, expanding his cast of characters.

His futuristic mice could use some friends. Like Erdos, these characters haven't quite hit their stride. They look cold without video, like futuristic taxidermy, or placeholders for the new creatures yet to be generated in his forthcoming, even-larger works. It will be interesting to see how far Erdos takes his room-sized installations, or if he will abandon them for something else. Not because he's gotten bored, but to take it to the next level. ■

RUTH READER is a New York City-based freelance writer who covers the arts and visual culture.

*The Texture of a Ghost
(installation view with
artist present), 2011.
Hand-blown mirrored
glass, video, acrylic mirror.
H 100, W 60, D 54 in.*