

Soledad Salamé on the process of creating the series *Newspaper, Almost Transparent* as discussed with Amy Eva Raehse on Nov 9, 2022

Glass has a relationship to transparency which is integral to the concept of Soledad Salamé's unique series of wall mounted sculptures titled *Newspaper, Almost Transparent*. Glass also creates a shadow as light passes through and is interrupted by surface changes. These shadows mirror the imagery of the glass onto the referent wall, but in a distorted way. Therefore, for Salamé, glass was important in representing and questioning the transparency of news and news reporting, and its misrepresentation. The distortion of the news and the distortion of the environment have been central focuses in the artist's practice since 2011.

**Technique:**

Salamé worked with Maryland glassblowing professional Tim McFadden to accomplish the series *Newspaper, Almost Transparent*. In McFadden's glass atelier, a clay mold [a hollow container used to give shape to molten glass as it cools] was created at the scale of 24 X 12 inches. This size was specific so that, once folded upon itself, the object would reduce to 12 X 12 inches, representative of the average dimensions for a standard newspaper.

The glass mold-- containing glass-- was placed in a Kiln heated to approx. 1600-1900 degrees. Using a special glass that is agreeable to the process of folding, the glass was heated and then placed in the annealer to begin its process toward cooling down to 1080 degrees. The mold was then removed from the kiln and the glass was extracted from the mold and folded using metal tools to assist the process. As each fold is different, each artwork started its journey to uniqueness at this point with the artist manipulating the fold.

The folded glass was then placed back into the annealer, which further set the fold in place and bonds the glass molecules. From there, it was slowly cooled so that internal stresses are removed, and the glass becomes tougher than it initially was. Annealing allows all glass molecules to adjust heat and become the same temperature so gradual cooling may happen at the same rate.

In this case the temperature and the humidity effect the overall appearance of the glass, including how translucent it will appear to the viewer. Again, this adds to the individuality of each work in the series, as each object will therefore have a distinct translucency as a result.

Once the formed glass was cooled, Salamé used a laser engraving tool to engrave the fine line imagery against the glass. Laser engraving achieves greater detail than other processes. It does not create a severely deep etched groove, but it does lend itself to fine features and control.

To attain more dimensional etched channels, Salamé sandblasted areas. To do this, the object was taped completely over. Afterwards, Salamé redrew the image of the newspaper by taping a paper template to the object which was hand cut using an X-ACTO knife. Salamé then sandblasted the areas void of tape on her template, crafting depth variations and a penetration of grooves throughout each work.

It was important to the artist that each work remain unique, despite having a few repeating images. The awareness that no one repeated image would be the same was important to the artist because it further pushes the metaphor of distorted or shifting news, and news reporting.

Since Salamé decided to create glass works that mimic the image of folded newspapers, she took installation inspiration from images of newspaper storage systems and drying and distribution racks. She credits the beautiful imagery found in the 2017 movie *THE POST* with the idea to use a swinging arm rod as her system for installation of these objects. By allowing the arm to swing from side to side, the shadows that the glass projects upon the wall as light passes through the glass may be altered in its resolution, clarity, and level of distortion. As such, the swing arm installation bracket is absolutely a fundamental part of this work of art, and part of how the viewer engages with the object.

There are many important interviews and texts available which help explain Salamé's conceptual philosophies for creating these works. While reviewing those sources, it should be noted that process is very much a driving force in the way Salamé thinks through ideas.