



Jessica Loughlin with *traces of light*, 1020 x 1510 x 25mm, kiln formed glass. Photo: Rachel Harris

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FEHILY CONTEMPORARY

7 - 23 December 2016

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Jessica Loughlin's exhibition marks the launch of an exciting collaboration between Caterina Tognon Gallery, Fehily Contemporary, and Sandy Benjamin OAM. In celebrating and fostering glass as a captivating medium for contemporary art, this collaboration plans a program of exhibition exchange between Venice and Melbourne. This will include curated exhibitions to broaden each artist's perspective and expand their practice, whilst creating an essential dialogue and understanding of the artists work on an international platform.

(front cover) *residuum* (detail), 870 x 1200 x 20mm, kiln formed glass. Photo: Rachel Harris

CATERINA TOGNON
arte contemporanea
vetro contemporaneo

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- 6 January 2018**

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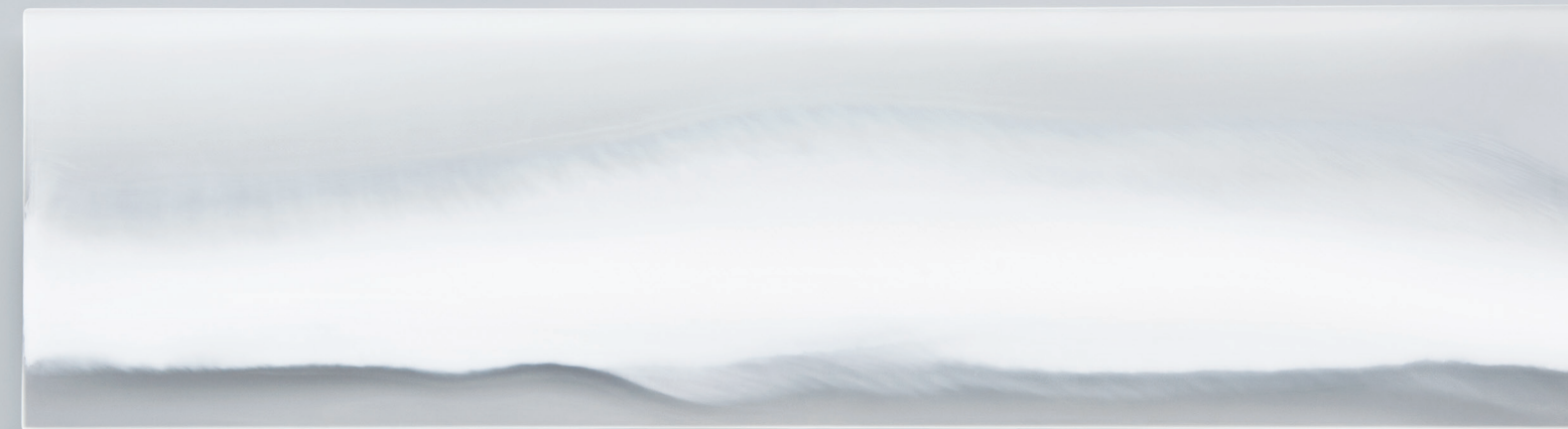
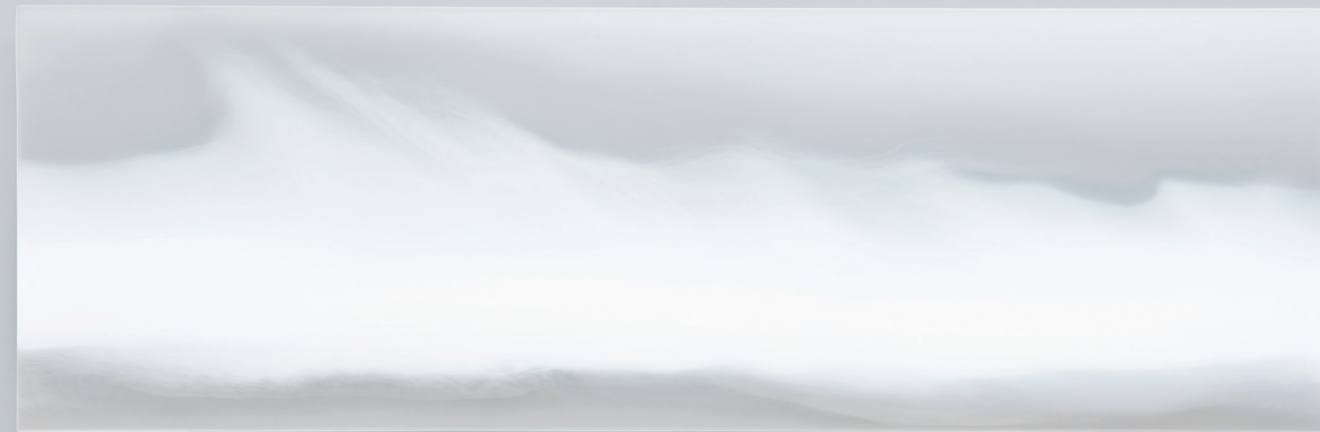
La mostra di Jessica Loughlin inaugura un'entusiasmante collaborazione tra Caterina Tognon Venezia, Fehily Contemporary e Sandy Benjamin OAM. Nel rendere omaggio alla materia vetro e promuoverla come affascinante medium per la produzione artistica contemporanea, questa collaborazione prevede un programma di scambio di mostre tra Venezia e Melbourne, finalizzate ad ampliare le visioni e arricchire le pratiche degli artisti coinvolti, creando un'essenziale discussione e conoscenza del loro lavoro a livello internazionale.



Jessica would like to acknowledge the generous assistance of Chevron Glass and Bit Scribbly Design.

Jessica Loughlin

afar



unfolding continuum (detail of series), dimensions variable, number of panels variable.
Each panel approximately 460 x 1790 x 20mm, kiln formed glass. Photo: Rachel Harris.

Landscapes of light

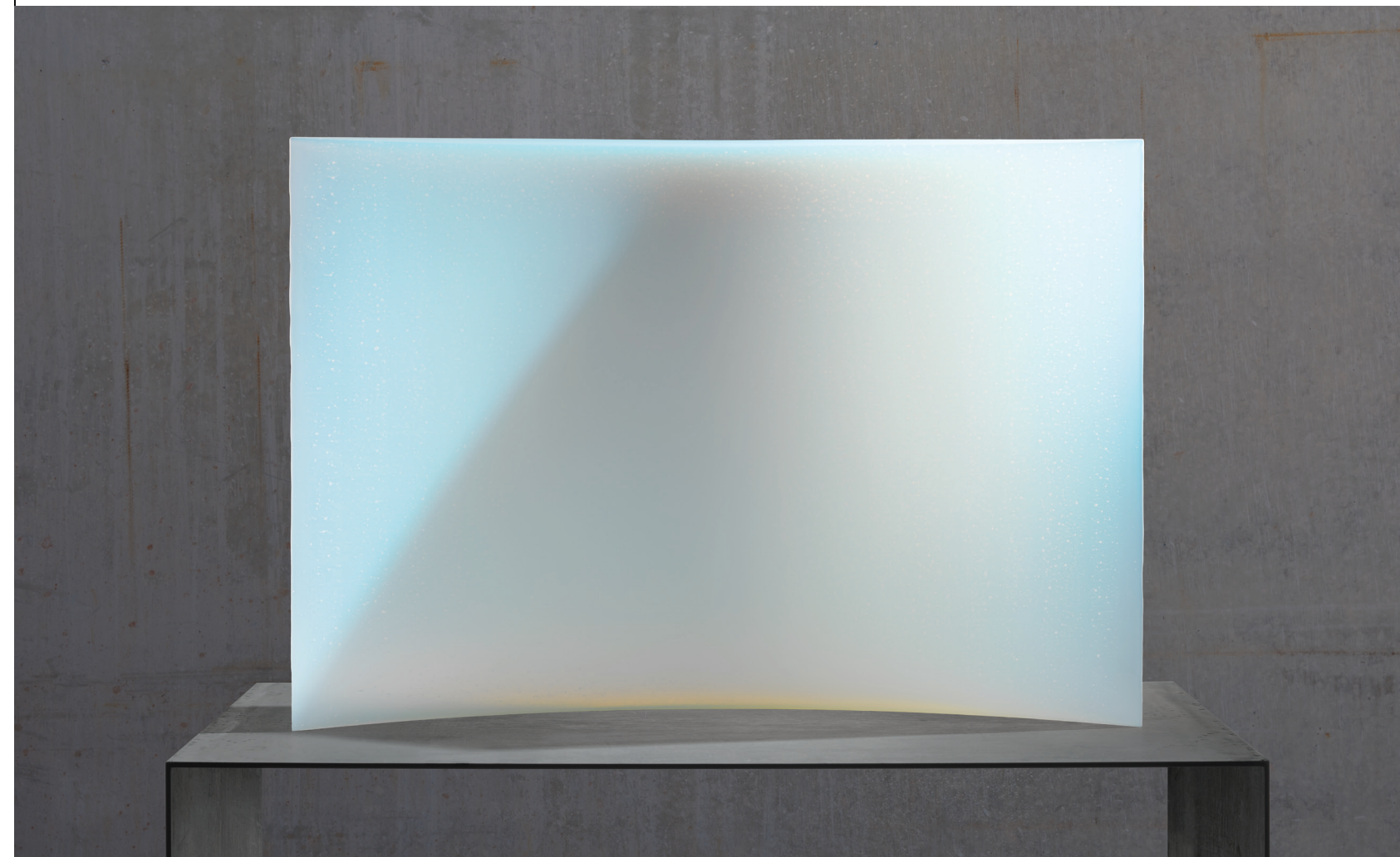
Jessica Loughlin's landscapes are impelled by the experience of walking about in deserts. She is drawn to flat expanses of salt lakes such as Kati Thanda–Lake Eyre in South Australia, which lie dry most of the time and then flood episodically, bursting into life. But she refuses any straightforward representational depiction of these locales. She is more concerned with processes, hints and enigmas in the landscape: movement and traces of water in an arid environment; the blue of distance on the horizon conjuring imagined landscapes forever out of reach; and the effects of the desert on your state of mind.¹

These vast, open and austere landscapes can induce a state where you become more attentive to both the world around you and to the passage and flicker of your own thoughts, memories, emotions, and associations. They are places that draw you inward and outward simultaneously.² 'Deserts both free and fill the mind,' writes the ethnographer Michael Jackson in a

neat encapsulation of this paradoxical process.³ Because the visual phenomena we're so unconsciously reliant upon to orient ourselves in space are absent, the mind circles back on itself. And yet you notice things more. Tracks of an animal or insect; a sharp tip of grass swivelled so often on its stalk by the wind that it has worn circular grooves into the sand; or the way landforms exist and recede in space, shifting their appearance as light changes.

Loughlin's glassworks distil something of this doubled process. Through paring her medium back to minimal, carefully considered forms and a suite of pale colours, she offers an opportunity for the viewer to notice subtle modulation, to observe, listen, become still. She offers, too, the opportunity to attend to the drift of your own associations and responses, memories and imaginings.

'My material is both glass and light,' Loughlin says. 'I use the glass to sculpt light and shadow.' The result is work that abounds with subtle and lyrical detail. Along the length of the wall, horizontal strips of pale fused glass



drift like cloud, skeins of evaporating mist, or reflections in water. Sculptural pieces of semi-opaque glass almost seem to glow from within. A thin edge of a glass wedge verges toward bluish transparency while the thicker body recedes into denser, yellower opacity whose depths you can almost but not quite glimpse inside. Pitted and pocked surfaces recall the erosive power of desert sandstorms, wearing away solid rock over deep time.

Her current exhibition is comprised of two bodies of work: sculptural pieces concerned with play of light, and wall pieces that respond to the passage of ephemeral water in the desert. Ecologists refer to deserts as 'pulse-and-reserve systems' where surges of plant and animal life are triggered by unpredictable and intermittent (rather than seasonal) rainfall patterns. In arid places, the memory' of water is everywhere evident: marks of rain and deluges after long periods

of absence; networks of ancient and now defunct rivers and streams that, although subterranean, still influence the landscape; flood-outs, dips and hollows all shaped by water.

Loughlin has invented a unique technical process that both suggests and embodies the passage of water, flooding and leaving its imprint on the earth's surface, evaporating, condensing again as cloud. She grinds solid glass into fine powder, which she moves across sheet glass with water, leaving imprints of the water's movement across the surface. The water is left to evaporate, creating further watermarks in the glass. The glass is then fused in a kiln. This process is repeated to build up layers of these water imprints, residues and textures. The glass, like the desert, now holds the memory of water as it shape-shifts through phases of the hydrological cycle.

receptor of light i (image 1), 475 x 680 x 110mm (with plinth 1375 x 670 x 290mm), kiln formed and cold worked glass. Photo: Grant Hancock

For her sculptural pieces, Loughlin uses opaline glass with milky, semi-translucent qualities to create what she calls light receptors. Colours work in the glass in a similar way to light in the sky. Fine molecules suspended in the glass reflect blue light with its short wavelengths, while longer wavelengths of warm colours are transmitted through the glass. At first glance, these pieces might appear simply to be white. On closer inspection, though, their colour changes subtly as light shifts throughout the day or as you circle about them.

It is precisely through such careful modulation of her materials – glass, light, water, air – that Loughlin fashions opportunities for the viewer to pause long enough to notice nuance and subtle changefulness. The revelation of her work is the way in which it focuses – insistently, carefully, playfully – upon the capacities and enabling limits of her

receptor of light i (image 2), 475 x 680 x 110mm (with plinth 1375 x 670 x 290mm), kiln formed and cold worked glass. Photo: Grant Hancock

medium while also invoking and evoking the landscapes that are vital to their production. Her works manage to be these two things simultaneously. In the face of the quiet luminescence of these artworks, which suggest rather than represent particular landscapes, you may even begin to attend to the drift in your mental states, conjuring other places across time and space, the mind circling back on itself.⁴

Saskia Beudel

1. Rebecca Solnit, *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*, New York: Penguin, 2006, pp. 29-30.
2. Saskia Beudel, *A Country in Mind: Memoir with Landscape*, Crawley: University of Western Australia Publishing, 2013, pp. 143-44.
3. Michael Jackson, *At Home in the World*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1995, p. 51.
4. William L. Fox, *The Black Rock Desert*, Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2002, pp. 9, 34-35, 41, 51.



Jessica Loughlin is highly regarded for her quiet understated approach to kiln formed glass and the unique way she uses her material. Her artworks prompt a meditative reverie reflecting her fascination with the beauty of emptiness. Loughlin has been practicing for over eighteen years during which she has exhibited in numerous international and national exhibitions, including in the USA, UK, Germany, Italy, and Singapore and Australia. She co-founded, and works from, Gate 8 Workshop, a not-for-profit organisation that provides space for local professional artists. She travels regularly teaching masterclasses and has been the recipient of numerous grants. In Australia her work has been awarded the Tom Malone Art Prize in both 2004 and 2007 and the Ranamok prize. She has been recognised as 'Outstanding New Artist in Glass' Urban Glass, NY, USA. Her work is part of major public collections around the world including National Gallery of Australia, Queensland Art Gallery, Corning Museum of Glass NY, USA, Mobile Museum of Art AL, USA, MUDAC Lausanne, Switzerland and Victoria and Albert Museum, London UK.

Paesaggi di luce

I paesaggi di Jessica Loughlin sono animati dalla personale esperienza del vagabondare in luoghi desertici del suo paese. L'artista è attratta dalle distese piatte dei laghi di sale, come il Kati Chanda-Lake Eyre nel Sud dell'Australia che per lo più convivono con la siccità per poi, di tanto in tanto, straripare esplodendo di vita. Eppure l'artista rifiuta ogni rappresentazione lineare di quei luoghi. Si preoccupa invece dei processi, delle tracce e degli enigmi nel paesaggio: il movimento e i segni del passaggio dell'acqua in ambienti aridi, il blu della distanza sull'orizzonte - responsabile di evocare paesaggi inarrivabili - e gli effetti del deserto sulla nostra mente.¹

Questi paesaggi vasti ed austeri possono indurre una condizione per cui si diventa più attenti al mondo circostante, al passaggio e al luccichio di pensieri, ricordi, emozioni, associazioni. Sono luoghi che invitano a guardare ugualmente dentro e fuori.² "I deserti liberano e riempiono la mente" scrisse l'etnografo

Michael Jackson in un'efficace sintesi di questo paradosso.³ Perché in assenza di quei riferimenti visivi sui quali facciamo inconsciamente affidamento per orientarci nello spazio, la mente si perde. Eppure ci sono cose che notiamo di più: le impronte di animali o insetti, l'estremità affilata di un filo d'erba che ondeggia al vento fino a lasciare tracce circolari sulla sabbia, il modo in cui le forme della natura esistono e scompaiono nello spazio, cambiando aspetto al mutare della luce.

I vetri di Jessica Loughlin sintetizzano parte di questo doppio processo. Riducendo il suo medium a forme minimali e attentamente studiate e ad una serie di colori pallidi, l'artista ci offre l'opportunità di percepire sottili modulazioni, di osservare, ascoltare, rimanere immobili. Ci offre anche l'opportunità di seguire il vagabondare delle nostre associazioni e reazioni, ricordi e fantasie.

"Il mio materiale è sia il vetro che la luce", dice la Loughlin. "Uso il vetro per scolpire la luce e l'ombra". Il risultato è un lavoro



ricco di particolari delicati e poetici. Lungo il muro, fasce orizzontali di pallido vetro fuso fluttuano come nuvole, matasse di nebbia, o riflessi nell'acqua. Sculture di vetro semi-opaco sembrano quasi brillare dall'interno.

Il bordo sottile di un cuneo di vetro vira verso una trasparenza bluastra, mentre il corpo più spesso si allontana verso un'opacità densa e giallastra le cui profondità si possono quasi afferrare. Superfici irregolari evocano il potere erosivo delle tempeste di sabbia nel deserto, capaci di consumare rocce solide.

La mostra riunisce due corpi di lavori: sculture interessate al giocare della luce e lavori da parete che richiamano il passaggio effimero dell'acqua nel deserto. Gli ecologisti si riferiscono ai deserti come 'pulse-and-reserve systems', dove il fiorire di vita animale e vegetale è innescato da ondate di piogge imprevedibili e cicliche, più che stagionali. In luoghi aridi, il 'ricordo' dell'acqua è percepibile ovunque: tracce di pioggia

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e diluvi dopo lunghi periodi di siccità; sistemi di fiumi e torrenti ormai spariti che, nonostante sotterranei, influenzano ancora il paesaggio; esondazioni, avvallamenti plasmati dall'acqua.

Loughlin ha inventato una tecnica unica che contemporaneamente suggerisce e incarna il passaggio dell'acqua, inondando e lasciando la sua impronta sulla superficie terrestre, evaporando e condensandosi di nuovo in una nuvola. L'artista trasforma blocchi di vetro in polvere sottile che con l'acqua sparge su fogli di vetro, lasciando tracce dei suoi movimenti sulla superficie. L'acqua quindi evapora, creando ulteriori segni nel vetro che a quel punto è trasferito in fornace. Questo processo viene ripetuto per stratificare le impronte, i residui e le trame originate dall'acqua. Il vetro, come il deserto, trattiene il ricordo dell'acqua e la sua forma cambia secondo le fasi del ciclo idrologico.

Per le sue sculture Loughlin usa vetro opalino semitrasparente per creare quello che lei stessa chiama ricettori della luce. Nel vetro i colori agiscono come la luce nel cielo. Piccole molecole sospese nel vetro riflettono la luce blu con le sue corte frequenze, mentre le più lunghe frequenze dei colori caldi attraversano il vetro. Ad un primo impatto, le sculture sembrano bianche. Ad uno sguardo più attento però i colori mutano lievemente in base alle fasi della luce o ai nostri movimenti.

Ed è esattamente attraverso una modulazione così attenta dei materiali - vetro, luce, acqua, aria - che Loughlin crea le occasioni per soffermarci abbastanza da afferrarne le nuances e le sottili trasformazioni. La rivelazione della sua opera è il modo in cui si concentra - con insistenza, attenzione e ironia - sulle capacità e sui limiti del

suo medium, invocando ed evocando contemporaneamente i paesaggi fondamentali per la sua produzione. Davanti alla luminescenza discreta delle opere, che suggeriscono più che rappresentare specifici paesaggi, rischiamo persino di abbandonarci alla deriva dei nostri pensieri, figurandoci tempi e luoghi diversi, lasciando che la mente sia libera di perdersi.⁴

Saskia Beudel

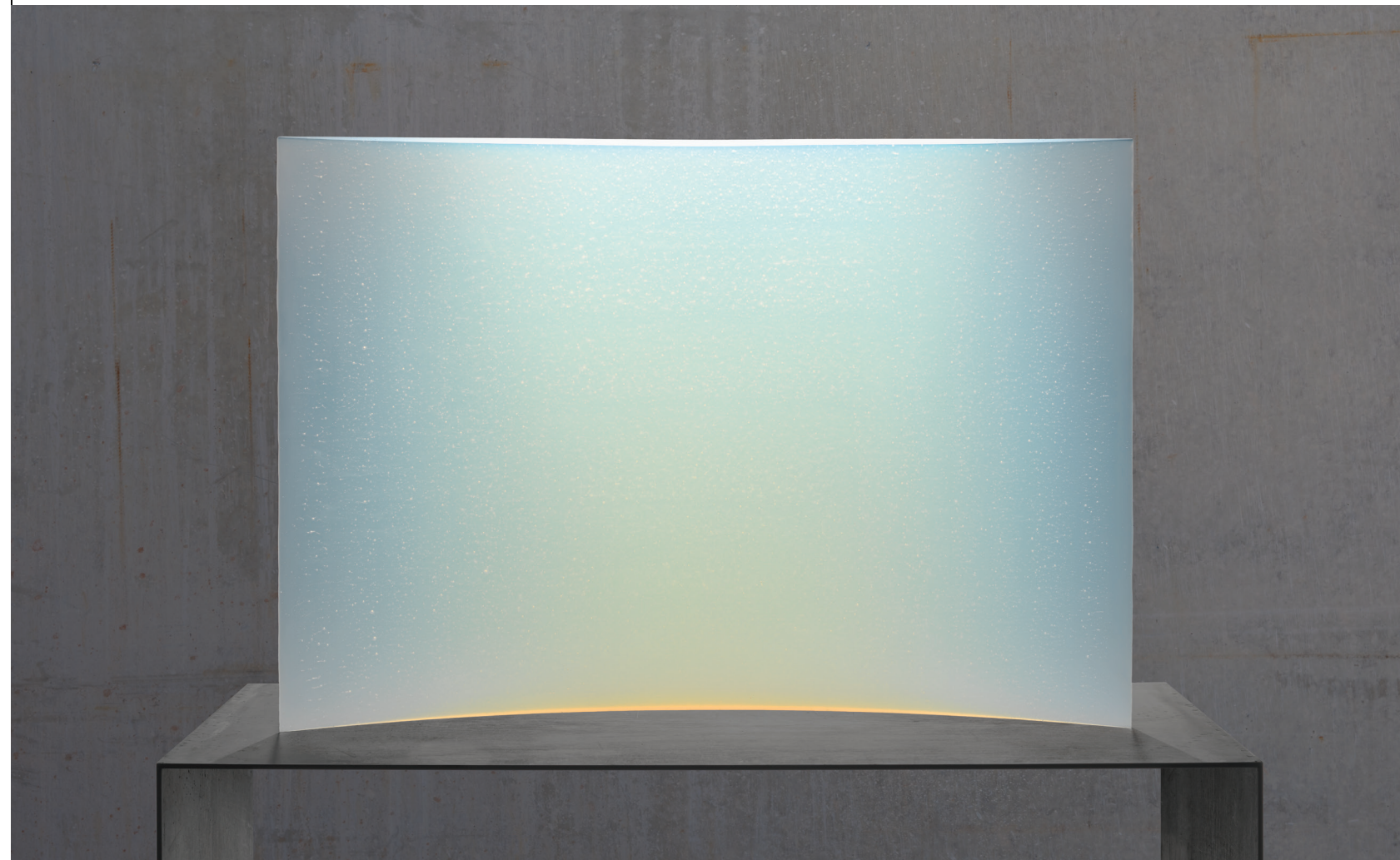
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