

domus

"Pae White: Qwalala"

By Domus

May 19, 2017



Pae White, *Qwalala*, installation view, Le Stanza del Vetro, Venice, 2017. Photo: Enrico Fiorese

In the installation at Le Stanze del Vetro, in Venice, every hand-cast brick is unique, owing much to chance and variation inherent in the manufacturing process. #BiennaleArte2017

Qwalala, a monumental new sculpture by American artist Pae White, opened to the public on the Island of San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice, coinciding with the 57. International Art Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia. *Qwalala* consists of a curving wall made only of solid glass-bricks. 75 metres long and 2,4 metres high, the thousands of glass bricks for *Qwalala* were hand-cast by Poesia Glass Studio in the Veneto region. Each of these hand-cast bricks is unique, owing much to chance and variation inherent in the artisanal manufacturing process.

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Approximately half of the bricks are made of clear glass. The other half span a palette of 26 colours, and are made using a technique where each brick contains a storm-like effect of swirling colour, while remaining transparent. For this project, the individual bricks present the idea of modules of contained chaos. The artist combines these bricks to form an abstract, painterly pattern when viewed from afar, which, upon closer inspection, reveals unexpected worlds of detail. The muted blues, greens, pinks, greys and browns of the palette are drawn from colours used in first century Roman glassmaking created by the presence of sulphur, copper, manganese, and other metals and minerals.

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The title of the piece, *Qwalala*, is a Native American Pomo word meaning "coming down water place." It references the meandering flow of the Gualala river in Northern California, which the work echoes in both its structure and layout. The wall's ever-shifting play of light, recalls the way in which the colour and temperature of the river water changes minute to minute as it meets the Pacific Ocean. Additionally, the name "Qwalala" itself, rolling off the tongue, also mimics the visceral experience of the body as it journeys around and through the curves of the wall.

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