

GLASS

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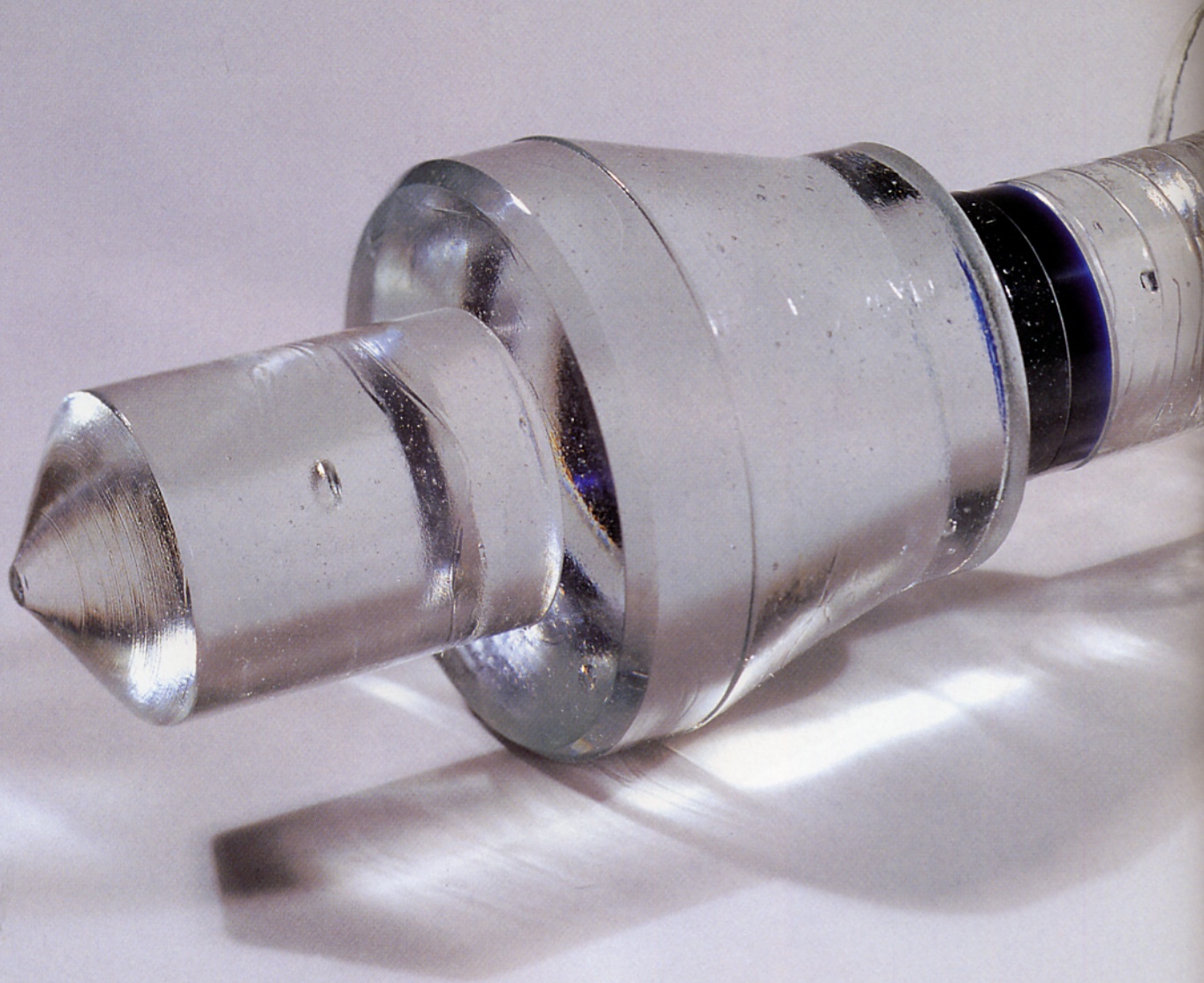
Short Take: Mark Ferguson

by Brett Littman

Mark Ferguson's cast glass works evolve from the exploration of the dynamic between self-imposed limitation and repetition in the creation of an art work. Like John Cage and Jackson MacLow, who use limitation and repetition as the compositional tools for making their scores and poems, Ferguson has chosen a very specific vocabulary of independent forms, a spindle-like axis, a ring or a flared head as the basis for

generating an infinite set of unique and complex interrelated shapes. His *Spiritual Mechanics Series* taken as a whole represents more than just a record of the different formal variations—it acts as a physical delineation of the processes and materials that the artist has employed to fabricate the objects. The most important material in the creation process is graphite. The use of graphite enabled Ferguson to develop the series of independent connectable molds that form these

objects. The molds are the limit of the work determining the length of the axis, the number of rings and the position of the head and also ensure the exact replication of each component regardless of its location on the object. The molds also produce the incredibly prismatic and smooth skin. A very different effect would have been achieved by the more traditional approach of casting glass into sand or

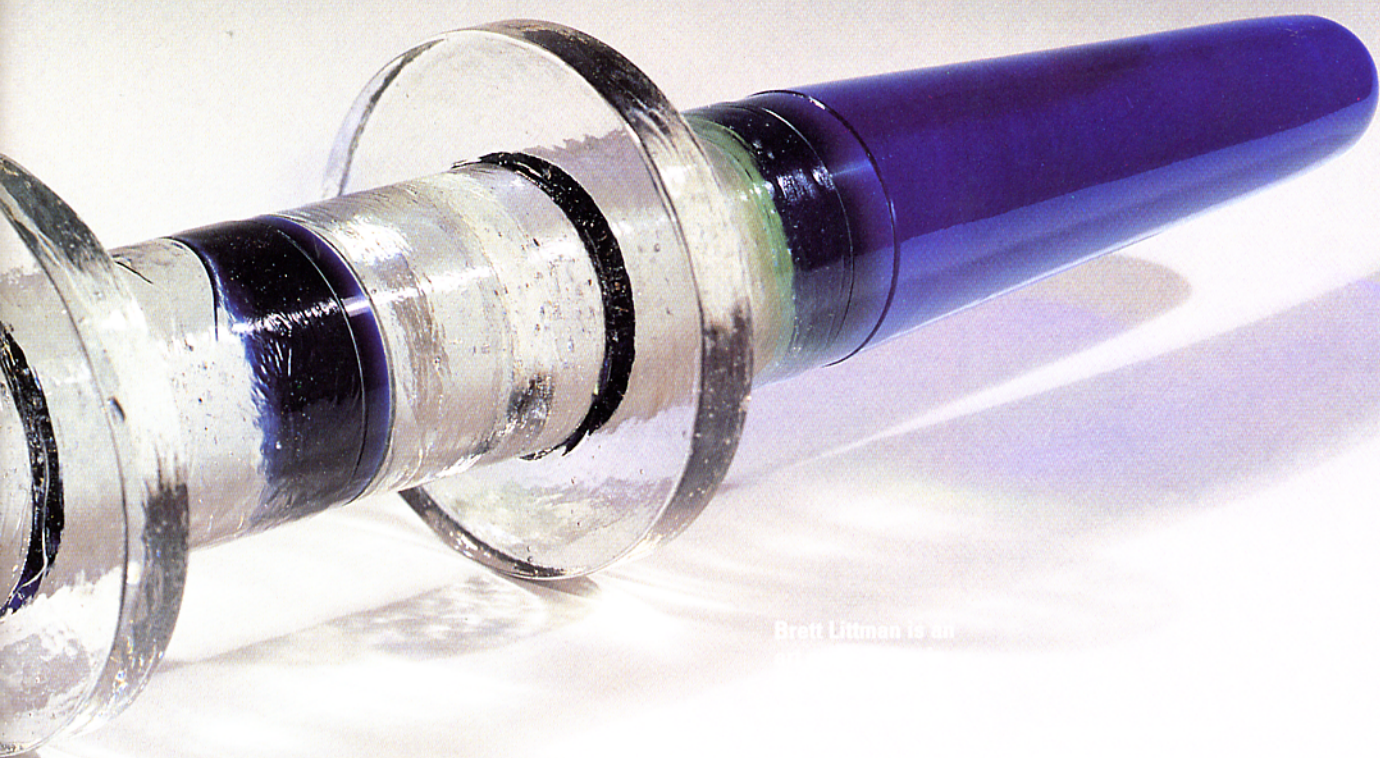


plaster molds which results in an opaque layer of residue that has to be coldworked and polished off the surface of the glass. Even the resemblance of the pieces to drill bits and lathe shafts, which are tools that Ferguson uses to cut his glass castings, are representative of the physical journey

the work has taken. The newer works, *The Tidal Heads*, are grounded in the modernist figurative tradition. This anthropomorphication of the glass inscribes distinct personalities in each piece. The short squat head sitting on a large disk is strong and centered, the tilted cone with a cast glass flashlight head is playful and whimsical and the

tall column with a triangular tip is majestic and intelligent. But why create these things in glass? Glass is an extremely profound material that expresses the dialectic between lucidity and distortion, transparency and opacity. Its ability to

capture and diffuse light adds a spiritual dimension that other materials rarely offer. The glass itself encourages us to look inside, through and beyond the object to experience its full meaning.



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