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# Glass Act

Kiko López's mirrored installations and crystal forms create an otherworldly effect with light and reflection



Oracle by Kiko López  
In a Paris living room  
designed by Damien  
Langlois-Meurinne.

**S**ummer can be brutal for glass artist Kiko López. Working in an unair-conditioned studio at his home, a 19th-century former silkworm farm in Provence, France, López specializes in mirrored creations whose toxic ingredients require him to wear a mask, a rubber coat, gloves, and boots. "Some days," he says, "I put the cold-water hose in my boots every 15 minutes, because it's so damn hot."

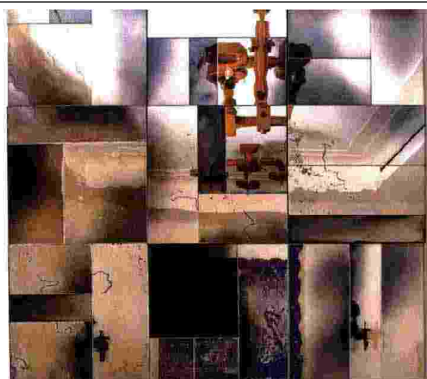
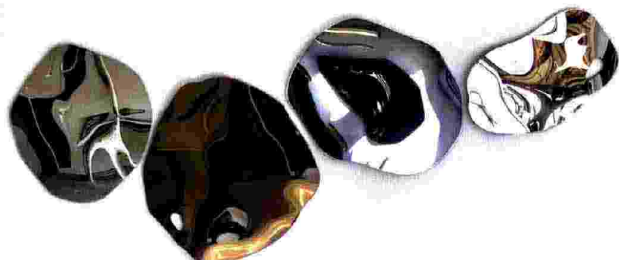
This unglamorous process, which involves manipulating applications of aqueous silver mixtures on glass, is part chemistry, part alchemy, resulting in reflective surfaces with painterly gradations of shadow and color and exquisite patina-like effects. López uses this approach to produce not only a host of decorative mirrors but also tables, lamps, screens, fireplace mantels and surrounds—even entire walls.

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López's Dubai installation *Rolling Stones*, created for Gatsereia Design. RIGHT: The artist in a Maison Gerard New York installation, seated in front of his work *Hammer*. A candle lamp of his own design is on the cocktail table.

Sometimes compared to traditional verre églomisé, López's mirror work has roots in old-world craft, but it also exudes a contemporary, experimental spirit. The same is true of his designs in crystal, mostly lighting and tabletops, which he produces in the Czech Republic. These days he fields commissions from all over the world, including from preeminent designers such as Axel Vervoordt, Joseph Dirand, and David Kleinberg. López also crafts pieces that can be found in top design galleries, such as Jacques Lacoste in Paris and Rossana Orlandi in Milan. In October, he has a show at the London gallery of the furnishings brand Sé and another at Maison Gerard, his first solo presentation in New York. "It's the biggest gathering of his work ever under one roof," says Maison Gerard owner Benoist F. Drut, who is planning an installation with "serious wow factor" that will "definitely go beyond just hanging some mirrors."

Born in Puerto Rico and raised in Miami, López studied architecture at the University of Miami and later worked at the offices of Robert A.M. Stern before enrolling in the Rhode Island School of Design to learn industrial design. Then, 30 years ago, he moved with his wife, Ebba Langenskiöld López, to the Provençal village of Bonnieux, where they set up a business restoring old country houses. When Ebba took a job in the textiles industry, López began building an independent studio practice, creating what he colorfully calls *mouton à cinq pattes*. Literally translated as "sheep with five legs," the term, as López uses it, refers to unique, site-specific pieces that simply don't exist until he imagines them and turns them into reality.

Achieving the sense of movement and depth that López seeks in his mirror works typically requires no fewer than ten layers of silvering. Often he will rub off parts of a layer; other times he



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KIKO LÓPEZ

introduces substances like coffee grinds or cigarette ash, the latter a fortuitous discovery that resulted from his smoking while working.

One can see in some of López's mirrors echoes of the abstract painters he cites as influences: Sean Scully, Mark Rothko, and Yun Hyong-keun, the Korean minimalist whom he calls "my hero at the moment." There's a kinship in the contrasts between light and dark, positive and negative spaces,

the fuzziness between foreground and background.

At Maison Gerard, López will be showing works in this vein as well as some of his largest-to-date Oracles, mirrored concave disks whose sensual forms project an enigmatic quality with their distorted reflections. Also on view will be a mosaic screen partly inspired by Le Corbusier's *Unité d'habitation* housing in Marseille and a couple of his crystal-top tables, whose intricate patterns he based on volcanic eruptions. "I've been able to imitate nature, but it requires a zillion steps," says López.

The Maison Gerard show was nearly two years in the making and, knowing López, Drut says he can count on a few surprises, adding, "Always good surprises." [maison Gerard.com](http://maison Gerard.com) —STEPHEN WALLIS