

CASE STUDY (HOUSE OF MIRRORS)

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# House of Mirrors – Menzel Glass

> Photography Chris Court, Text by Tim Roberts



The House of Mirrors, created by Geelong's Menzel Glass, was one of the glittering stars at Mona's Dark Mofo Winter 2016 Arts Festival in Hobart. Geelong-based Menzel Glass was hand-picked for the project by artists Christian Wagstaff and Keith Courtney, who work at Creative Production Services in North Melbourne.

The House of Mirrors is a walk through art installation, composed of a labyrinth, seemingly endless passages of a mirror maze, trapping and reflecting those that meander through. It presents all who enter it with an array of perception-bending illusions – in a similar manner to a fairground funhouse, but far more subtle and imaginative. The House of Mirrors art installation comprises a series of oversized tessellated mirrored panels, introducing the variable of continuously changing natural light, flooding the area with colour when morning gives way to day, dusk, and night.

Installed on Hobart's historic waterfront, the art installation was infused with Hobart's natural beauty, attracting almost 12,000 visitors in just the first week of the exhibition. A first for Menzel Glass, Phil Menzel, together with his team, called on their many years of experience and knowledge to ensure the artist's vision was achieved and completed in time for the festival.

Phil relished the chance to invest energy into such a creative and memorable project as a defining factor. 'Supplying glass for an art installation was a completely new experience for us, a challenging one – but one we also learned a lot from,' he explains.

To manufacture and supply the 80 oversized mirrored panels to exact specifications called for close collaboration. Landson Glass supplied the laminated mirror. It was truly a team effort and exceptionally rewarding, reflects Phil.

'Throughout the project, Landson were professional and meticulous,' he says. 'We had a tight deadline – with no room for error. They worked extremely hard to meet our schedule, and produced laminated mirror of peerless quality. The job and our client demanded that.'

After such an enthusiastic reaction from the art community and the public alike, Phil couldn't be happier. 'Menzel Glass was initially recommended for the job by a local engineer,' he remembers. 'Robert Lange has done a lot of projects for CPS in the past, including casinos, and he felt we could deliver. Working with an artist and delivering on their vision was quite different to our regular day-to-day work with building and construction companies, The House of Mirrors involved extensive research and planning, many discussions and a great deal of collaboration from all parties.'

While it might be hard to believe when looking at the sheer scale of the project, the initial plan for the House of Mirrors was even more grandiose. 'We originally made up huge 5-metre prototypes of the glazed sheets at the beginning,' says Phil. 'But while the artist was delighted, in reality the massive scale including, transport and installation of mirrored glass that size, just wasn't feasible. After revising our original plan, we settled on 3665mm panels, each weighing 180 kg.'

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Phil and the staff at Menzel Glass found the project highly rewarding. 'The artists were very easy to work with, and more than happy to listen to our recommendations,' says Phil. 'The task involved making up massive sheets of 10.38mm mirror (which is not a stock item in Australia) and fabricating a range of sizes to suit the demanding job. Yet even though we were essentially designing on the run within an extremely tight timeframe, everything flowed very well in the end.'

While the job was a major technical challenge, Phil reveals that the process flowed smoothly throughout. 'The project involved pre-glazing the entire job in our factory and packing all the glazed frames into shipping containers, along with the steel structure and timber flooring for the project,' Phil remembers.

That colossal panel size of over three-and-a-half metres gives you a sense of just how huge the House of Mirrors turned out to be – but experiencing this installation first-hand is the best way to appreciate the art installation's sheer magnitude and scope of ambition.

Fortunately, for those who missed the House of Mirrors in Hobart, you will have the chance to see this unique work. Due to the art installation's popularity, discussions are presently underway for House of Mirrors to be exhibited in other major capital cities around Australia. Brisbane is scheduled for early in the New Year, to be followed by Melbourne shortly thereafter. Congratulations to Menzel Glass and all others involved for creating this shimmering tribute to reflected light. <sup>GA</sup>

[menzelglass.com.au](http://menzelglass.com.au)

