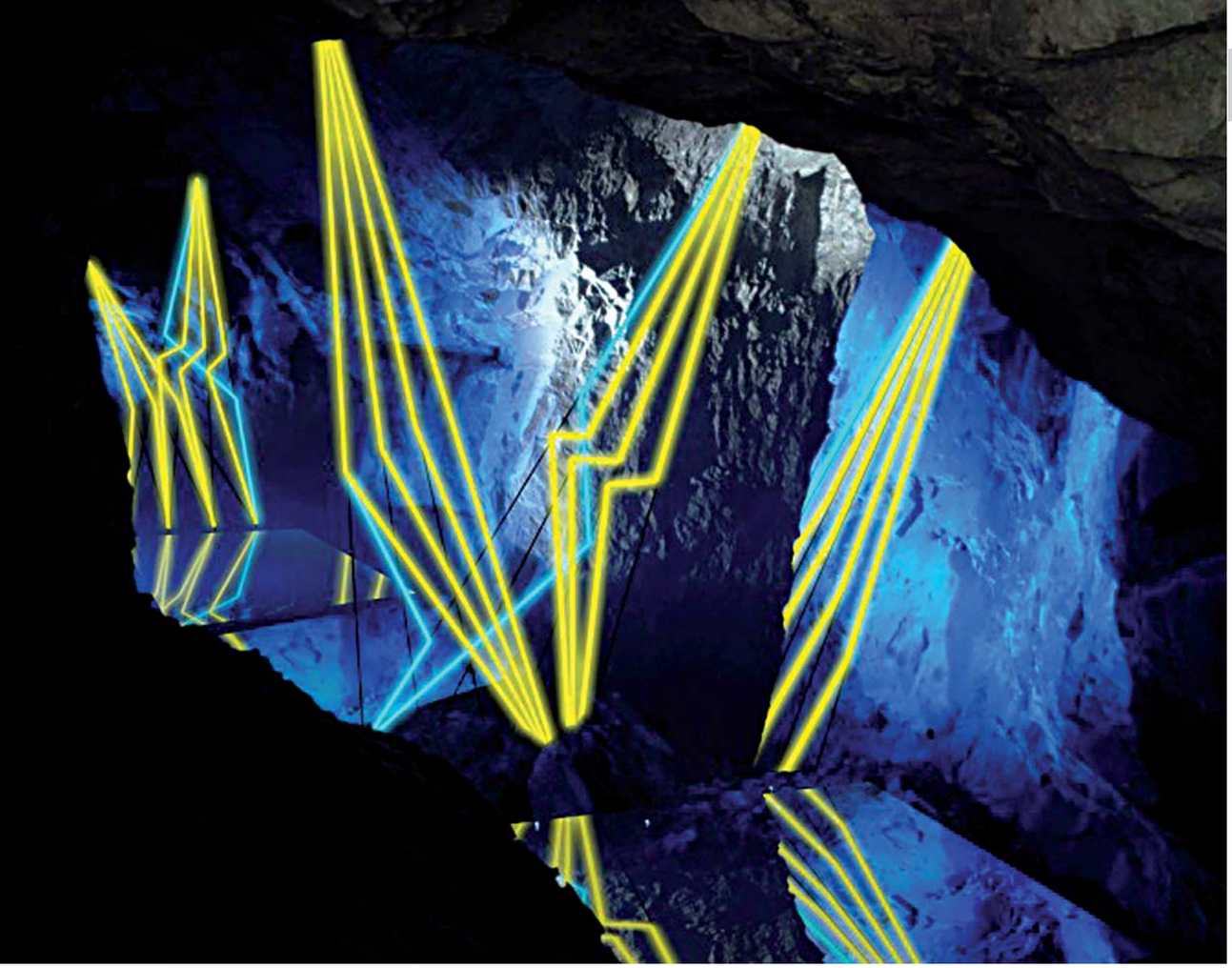


MEELI KOIVA aka MERY CRYSTAL RA



Education and Work

1979-1984 Tallinn Art University; diploma in glass art;
1988-2008 Freelance artist in Estonia, Finland, USA and Belgium. Training at lighting companies and at stained glass and glass studios in Finland and the US.
Currently she is working on different projects on both sidesof the Atlantic Ocean. In the US she is investigating the technological possibilities of fiber-optics and the emphasis is on monumental work. In Europe, where she has workshops in Frankfurt and in Helsinki, she is experimenting with modern glass paintings and lighting sculptures.

Fields of Activity:

Glass and light sculptures, stained glasses, monumental public sculptures, video animation installations.

Participation in exhibitions:

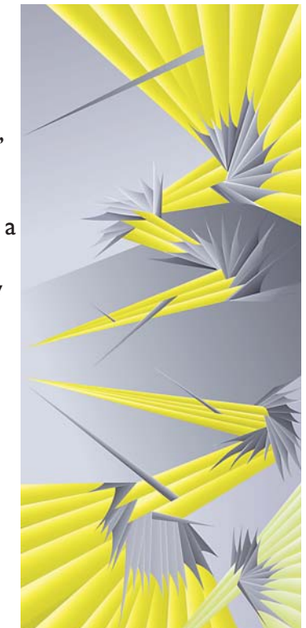
She has given international lectures in academic institutions and at conferences. Designed monumental work and illuminated sculptures for public buildings and for private residences: in Estonia, Finland, Sweden, Belgium and the US. Glass sculptures in private and corporate collections: the US, Finland, Sweden, Belgium, Hungary, Estonia.

MEELI KOIVA - A STUBBORN GLASS MAGICIAN



In the autumn of 1991, Meeli Koiva exhibited her unique luminous objects in the Estonian Exhibition Centre. Some of her exponents have by now become classics - the inner lighted object "Lower Than Grass," the laser lighted object "Trail of Sound" and "Hawaii." At that time the luminous object graze in Estonia was still miles away.

Although the reviews were encouraging, the uniqueness was still hard to appreciate and difficult to classify. But in the US, where novelty is considered to be supreme, the artist's uniqueness, originality and her madness resembling opposition to mainstream fashion soon became appreciated. Today Meeli Koiva is mainly known as cosmopolitan glass and light artist. Her last years most famous innovative monumental glass and lighting sculptures were created for European Parliament main building in Belgium, Brussels 2006 and for Glaston Corporation headquarters in Finland, Tampere 2008. Her distinctive, edgy style monumental glass designs can be seen in the Estonian Supreme Court, in the administrative building of the Port of Tallinn, in banks and private houses in Estonia, Finland, Belgium and the US. In 1997, the US journal "Stained Glass" published a 6-page interview with Meeli Koiva, illustrated by photos of her work. Those photos have also been published in many other journals in Europe and the USA.



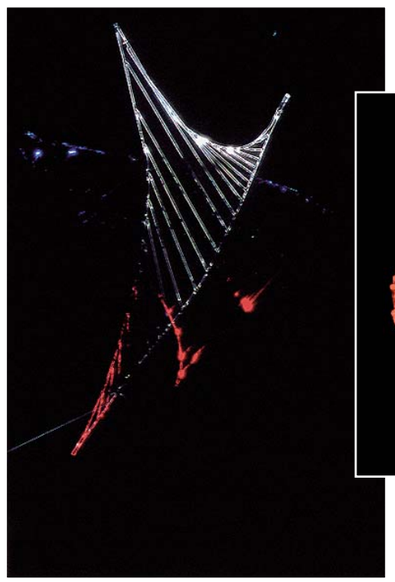


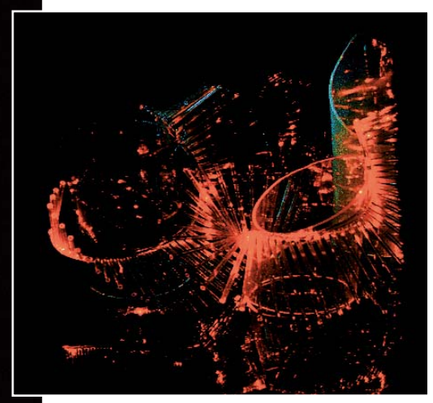
Digital printings on glass panels 3m x 1,3 metres 3 panels in atrium. Animations based on my acrylic paintings incorporated on vertical glass panels. Projected from the backround and from short distance.

The artist has expressed her ideas through her water colours and acrylic paintings and also in jewellery where she combines leather with glass. Probably that is what inspires her most - unexpected outcomes, for example, combining stained glass with water colours. Couple of years ago Meeli Koiva exhibited her abstract water colour sequence in New York, in Soho.
During the last twenty years Meeli Koiva has continuously worked with lighting, stating the importance of artistic dominants both in architecture and interior design. She started with her light and glass experiments
over 25 years ago in the Physics Institute, while she was studying in the Art Academy. The first experiments
were made with lasers, quartz glass, a unique light conducting plastic and glass fibres.
These experiments were the basis of the magnificent diploma work, which was later installed in the lobby of the Tallinn TV Tower in Estonia.





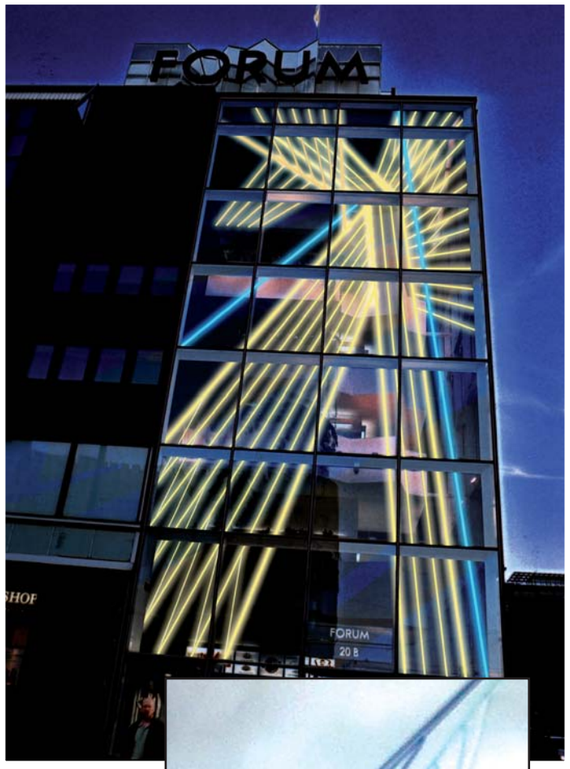


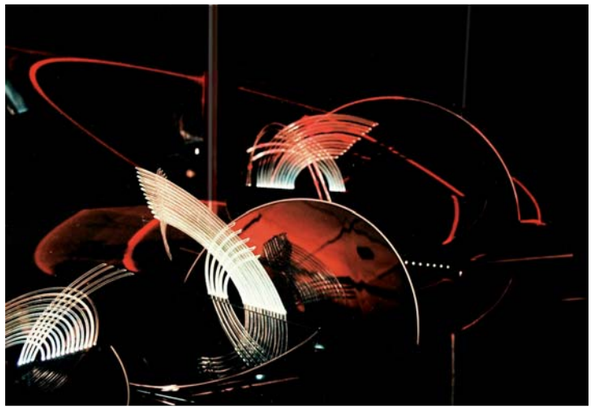


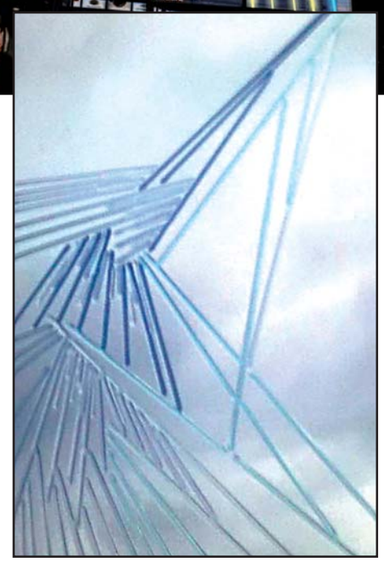
INTERVIEW BY FREELANCE JOURNALIST: OLAVI WALLENIUS

What inspires you?

I grew up in the Estonian wilderness and because of that I have always felt the need to be on the move. I spent my summers on my mothers family farm between forests and fields. My aunt let me and my sister do whatever we wanted. Maybe that's why my suitcases are my most frequent companions. I also get a lot of inspiration and energy from my travels an people. ***Different landscapes and difficult situations are my favourites.*** *Inspirational ideas are born when I see a room where a glass sculpture could fit stylistically well. I desire to intrigue the viewer with active dominants. Sometimes I get afflated when I face the client's caprice or a secret dream.*







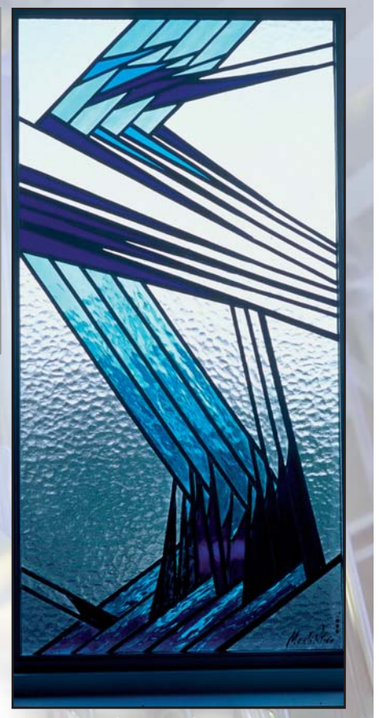


Digital glass paintings for TETRA office building Estonia, Based on my acrylic paintings. 3m x 1,4 metres.









What kind of inspiration do you get from a client-artist relationship?

I have to work with clients. I try to educate them and in order to achieve the best results to accompany them on their long quest. It's necessary to awake the clients' creative senses, so that they themselves will also become aware of them. But rules can differ a lot. For example, I would never give up my artistic intuition. I'd rather give up the client. On the other hand, sometimes clients with their unexpected visions may inspire the artist. This is why I like to work with clients: their unexpected visions could become decisive. There have been lucky occcasions when fantastic results have been achieved thanks to client's contribution: when he attempts to dismantle an abstract work through philosophy. Abstract art provides many interpretations, it feeds the senses and fantasy.

Where are the ideas rooted in?

I think quite a lot of them are rooted in childhood. But there should also be a kind of an inner pressure to change everything. For me, a good idea is something invisible, like a light touch. But a result that would appear just as light is achieved after long testing and experimenting. And I must draw and paint every day - the ideas for glass also start from drawing and painting.

What is of primary importance in the work process?

When creating glass sculptures, it's important that it matches the surroundings, both the interior and the exterior. The colour and the function of the room, furbishing and lights are all vital. And obviously, it matters, whether the glass sculpture will have a dominant function or will serve as a decorative background. By the way, in case of an aggressive dominant, the artist usually has greater creative freedom. When creating glass objects, the artist must also consider the philosophy of the background and the relationship between light and shadows. The architecture should also be taken into account, since the glass can be viewed both from the inside and from the outside. Glass sculptures can also intentionally dominate architecture, especially in the darkness and with lights inside.



How does glass contribute to a room?

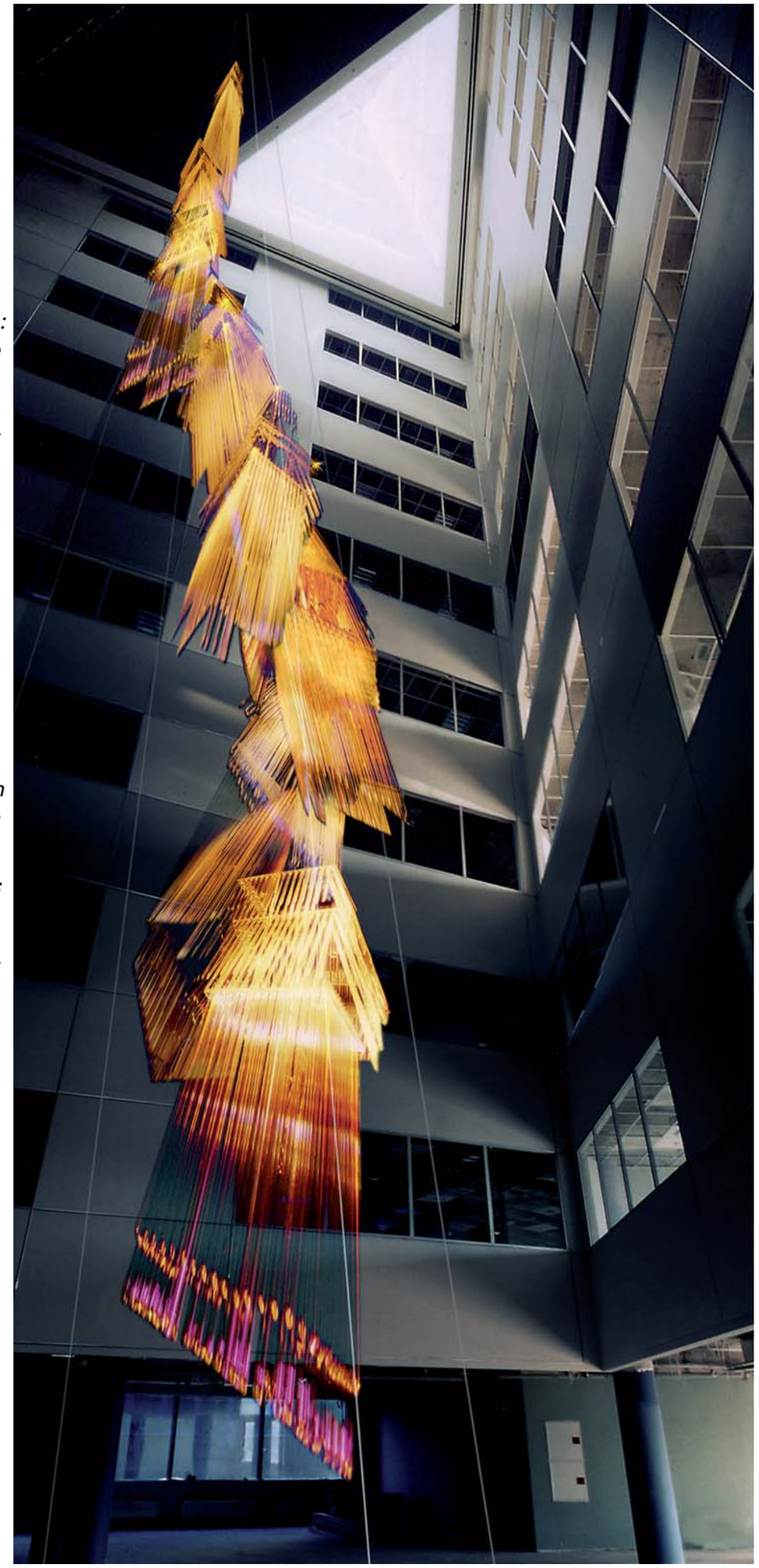
It is sensitive and mysterious. Glass is cosmic and it has special energy and potential. Together with light, they form a new dimension for the modern interior. Glass in cooperation with light also inspires with line graphics and colours. They can also create a world of their own: if colours are used sparingly, the line graphics inspire, if line graphics lack energetics, the spell will not be cast. In this technical era of ours, bringing glass into a room as a spiritual dominant needs careful consideration.

What drives you to search for the new?

Probably situations where I realise that the visual reality does not give me anything. The ultimate goal is always - whether searching for something new or while working with sketches or materials - to reach a level that provides the viewer with an illuminating experience.

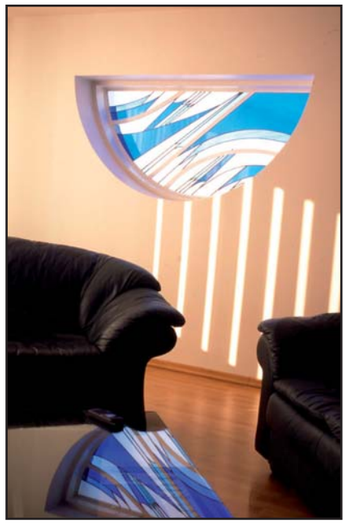
Are you interested in the eternity of your works, their timelessness?

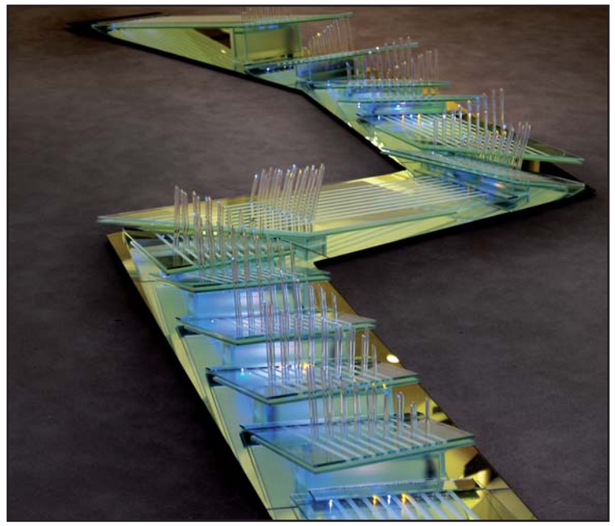
The eternity of things in the context of the 21st century is an intriguing topic. Earlier, the longevity of works of art was a sign of their value. I myself am increasingly interested in timeless things. It has suddenly become clear, that there are not many things left that are eternal. The spaces change rapidly. The efforts of neither the interior designers nor art designed for a specific room are no longer eternal, they often disappear in two or three years. On the other hand, the disappearance of things is an inevitability of the era and this is how it should be taken. Fortunately we have photography and video films that keep the historic record.











What is the best room for your lighting sculptures?

Its modern, its airy and it has a lot of glass surfaces. The room has to have such properties that the shadows and the sensitivity of the glass have maximum ındependence and its possibilities have a chance to intrigue people.

What is the philosophy of your technique?

In every piece of my art, there has to be a message. Sometimes it is the tenseness of the work that expresses my message. The messages of my works also reflect the energy I have put in them. The messages are a substantial part of the pieces of art. It is interesting if the piece of art does not express things directly. Everything unreal is interesting - if you can understand the piece of art in several ways and everybody understands it in a different way. I deal with science to be ahead of our time in art. Something that has not been done yet is exciting. Dealing with scientific innovation offers me a new feeling that helps to develop the entity. These studies have in addition to the creative purpose a rational purpose. All these studies are made for the benefit of the glass industry - cities are becoming more full of glass and it is necessary to lighten the buildings as well as to make them more interesting.

The future for glass architecture? Does it need monumental innovative art?

Modern materials and technologies give us a relatively simple way to set certain features in a space in motion. The constant transformation of motion creates the illusion that the space itself is changing constantly. It is also possible to make such sculptures completely unnoticeable by simply turning off the lights and leaving only the glass and its cold beauty there. Science and technology offer us enormous opportunities in the field of both glass and lighting technology. Why not use them in architecture?

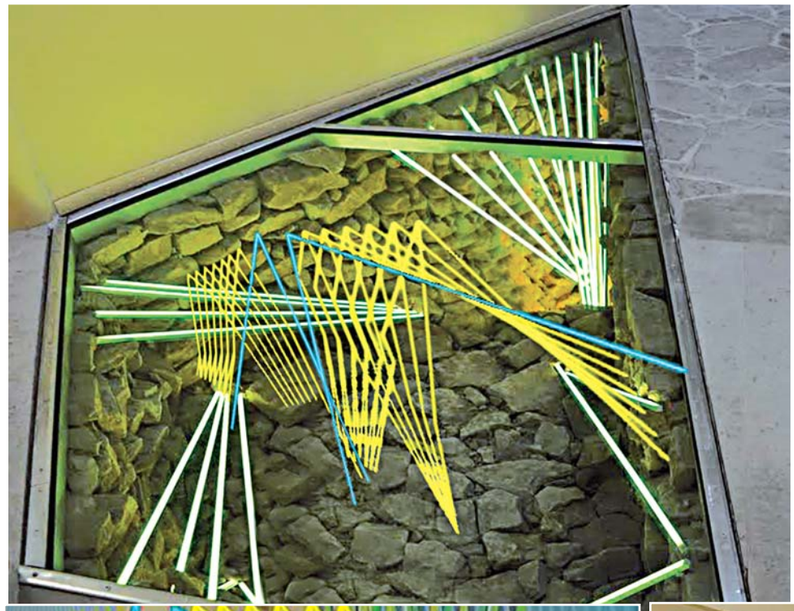
Glaston Corporation headquarters in Finland- Glass and Light sculpture

A mystery of glass and light

Glaston Corporation headquarters in Finland. Design in cooperation with an architect Yrjo Majamaa and an engineer Aulis Bertin. Lighting design by Hakan Langstedt, Saas Instrumentti OY.

What were your design goals in Glaston - with your glass and light sculpture?

Glass and light mystery I created during last 2 years for a company Glaston Corporation in Finland. Glaston Corporation headquarters is based in a bulding with facades made of blue glass, designed by architect Yrjo Majamaa an exciting backdrop for a glass artwork. The exterior of the new headquarters uses a blue glass called Glaverbel Privablue. This sort of glass building was unprecedented in Finland.



The ground floor lobby

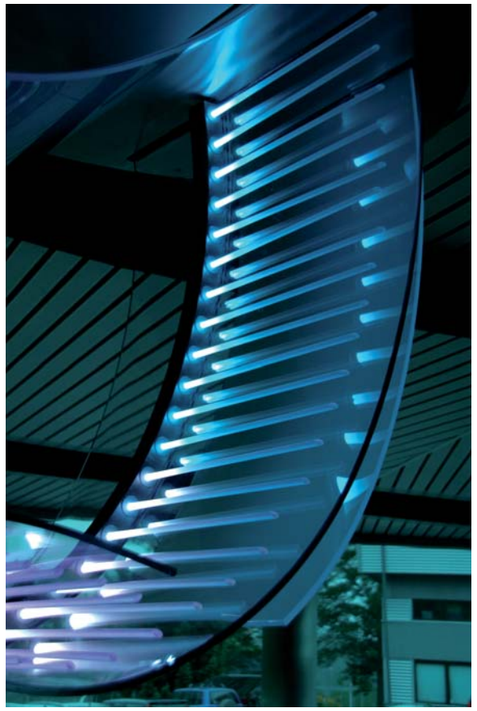
The lobby features a work which creates a special spirit and allows people a respite from their everyday routines. It consists of 3-4 curved pieces of glass at the bottom. Above that, there are 3 more curved pieces that seem to levitate. The supporting structure is held together by an adhesive.
Oval metal surfaces above in the ceiling and below on the floor, underneath lighting systems are installed along with parts of the structure that holds the curved pieces of glass.





Oil shale under glass and under the floor level 2 metres high. Natural oil shale pieces under the flat glass, projected video animation, LED light lines, controlled DMX.





Glaston photographs: KIMMO KUKKONEN

The artwork, an assembly

Made of curved glass sheets and glass. I got the idea from flying paper sheets and we realised the idea in curved glass. The completed glass assembly gives an idea of the future shape and structure of the artwork consisting of curved glass sheets and respective hold retaining arches made of glass, which are in the form of a circular ring sector. The curved glass sheet and the supporting structure are joined together with UV curable adhesive. The gluing technique requires an extremely smooth contact surface to achieve the desired result.

The lighting

The 10mm glass rods breathe life into the work. The glass rods are frosted and pass the light from the LED-s.
The diodes are intense enough so that the frosted glass rods shine in the daytime as well. The blue glass in the background diffuses the light from outside sufficiently for the sculpture`s effect to come to the forefront. The lighting can be controlled by computer: the colours and light dynamics can be modified. The light intensity and dynamics become more intense during the winter darkness. The idea of the work is to give people some energy. The ambient lighting should be is minimal, so the work has more impact this way.

Olavi Wallenius



