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Jeff Zimmer  
*Interventions  
in Landscape*  
2008  
20 layers of  
enamelled  
& sandblasted  
glass, in glass  
lightbox  
7.5 x 14 x 5"

## Member Profile:

### Jeff Zimmer

By Karen Donnellan

Jeff Zimmer's background in acting retains a strong influence over his work. The series, *Theatres of Glass* (2010-2011) is an obvious offshoot, but even the newest works from the *Whitewash* series feel like a scene, set for action.

After completing a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre Studies, Zimmer realised the vulnerability inherent in acting in the rehearsal stage was too much for a lifetime's pursuit. Conversely, creating an object separate from the artist allowed him to experiment with creative abandon in the privacy of his own studio. Thus began his career as a visual artist and maker. The key moment that redirected his creative energies towards painting in particular, came to pass at an exhibition of cubist art at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. Jeff describes this as "an incredible damascene moment where I suddenly started to see the world rendered in flat planes of three-dimensional stained glass. It was unlike anything I had seen in my life, but I knew then that I was going to work with flat glass." Following several years of researching and solitary experimentation on the kitchen table with a 7" square kiln, Jeff came across a work by Judith Schaechter called *Little Torch* at Renwick Gallery in DC. This pivotal discovery brought about some drastic

technical and visual changes in Zimmer's work and Schaechter later became a mentor. He also recognizes Tim Tate and Michael Janis of the Washington Glass School among those who inspired and supported him early on in his glass career. "Tim Tate was there at the beginning, being able to share a studio with him as he set up the Washington glass school opened so many doors, and the fact that he was so interested in taking glass and pushing it forward in terms of content was significant," Zimmer says.

In 2004, Zimmer began working towards a Master's to allow for a more focused and full-time exploration of the technique. His research of programs on both sides of the Atlantic led him to the Edinburgh College of Art (now part of the University of Edinburgh). The program, then lead by Ray Flavell and Alec Galloway, was one of few that offered Architectural glass on a full time basis. It was here that his ideas on perception and ambiguity developed, which remain strong themes in his work to date. Upon graduation, he was offered a position as Artist in Residence, in addition to teaching architectural and stained glass to part-time students in conjunction with the college's Office of Lifelong Learning Program. Jeff still runs the part-time stained glass course and is presently a Temporary Lecturer in Glass within the main Glass Department.

A residency at North Lands Creative Glass in 2006 brought about another shift in artistic direction for Jeff. Having arrived



Jeff Zimmer  
*We Were All Wrong*  
*(The Rail Bridge)*  
 2011  
 Multiple layers of  
 enameled and sand-  
 blasted glass in lightbox  
 13 x 11 x 5"

in this remote landscape at the Northern tip of Scotland with a very cerebral proposal for new work, it proved difficult to resolve. However, he couldn't help but respond to the 360-degree horizon he found there, which his first landscapes. The impetus of the series was in part, "to capture that elemental feeling of such vast space." Previous to that opportunity, Jeff's work had been strongly figurative, but as I found out, his military father painted landscapes as a hobby. Jeff's work does stem from a very different emotional place, but even so, perhaps it is no surprise that he has been drawn to the genre.

The artist's current series, *Whitewash*, is decidedly political in content. In each of these beautiful snow-scapes, the debris and reminders of death are only partially hidden from view. It is an anti-war statement, but is made in a way that "those who supported the war can look at it and appreciate it." Jeff employs a Taoist approach in the assertions he makes within the work. Being very conscious of the growing polarization of politics and society in the US, his work is an empathetic communication of his ideals. While consciously making them as beautiful as possible, it allows for the ugly message to be put across in a more digestible way. In doing so, he hopes for the audience to appreciate the duality without judgment. In his own words, the work alludes to "the way in which we all try

to whitewash something of ourselves, as individuals and as nations. It's a human need to see oneself as someone who is good on some fundamental level, so that tension between the desire to present ourselves as good, is in conflict with the knowledge we have of the bad things we have done." Despite these references and the suggestive title, *We Were All Wrong*, the work retains an element of ambiguity.

As for the frames, those are scoured from second-hand shops and auctions. The more ostentatious and grandiose, the better. As a classic marker of important and perhaps conservative art, Jeff consciously utilizes them to undermine the cosy nature that the patina of time gives to older art, implying a feeling of safety.

The notions of borders will be explored in Jeff's next body of work, which is particularly relevant as the Scottish Independence Referendum is coming up in 2014. Where, as the artist notes, "We will have the whole country deciding how we define ourselves... Who is in? Who is out?"

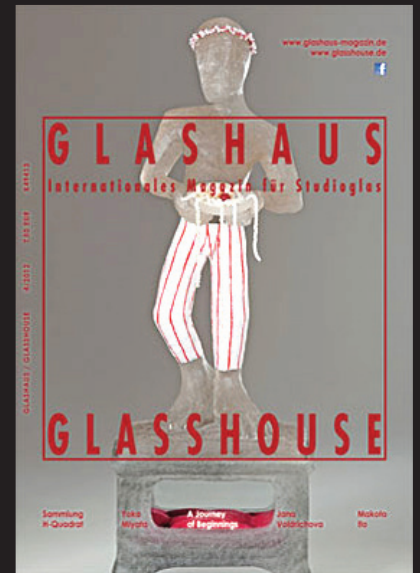
*Jeff is the editor of the Scottish Glass Society Newsletter, which is published on a quarterly basis. His work is represented by The Wexler Gallery in Philadelphia and Maurine Littleton Gallery in Washington, DC.*

## Image Gallery

For more work  
 from Jeff Zimmer,  
 click here.

# GLASHAUS

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