



LEFT, HEIJDENS AT HIS LONDON STUDIO, WITH FOUR OF THE NINE GLASS VESSELS THAT MAKE UP HIS INSTALLATION *PHARE NO. 1-9*

ABOVE, PATTERNS CREATED BY THE INSTALLATION IN ACTION

OPPOSITE, WITHIN A WATER-FILLED VESSEL, PINK LINES ARE CONJURED UP AND PROJECTED BY A LIGHT SHINING THROUGH THEM

**S**imon Heijdens is a designer who harnesses the power of nature and translates it via digital media into heart-stoppingly poetic installations. Over the last decade or so he has grown digital seeds into fields of *Lightweeds* (2006; plant families cast in light on a wall that 'grow' depending on real sunshine and rainfall as measured outside), and captured the wind as a moving projection of shadows on the surface of a window (*Shade*, 2011). In grand old buildings such as the Andaz hotel in London (2011), he has turned ceilings into a canopy of projected branches, which react to movement within the room and weather conditions as recorded outside.

Recently, the Dutch-born, London-based Heijdens – a Design Academy Eindhoven alumnus who has exhibited as widely as Chicago, Doha and Hong Kong – agreed to show us his latest project in the making, a commission he had been working on for months with champagne house Perrier-Jouët. His open brief: to interpret the art nouveau roots of the house through an installation to be shown at Design Miami. His response: to devise a way to write and

draw in water using light. That's 'in' water, not just 'on'.

In his London studio, he showed us nine glass vessels, handblown at the Royal College of Art, where he is a tutor. These were to make up his installation, *Phare No. 1-9*, and would soon be shipped to Miami. As this issue of *Wallpaper\** is published, the work will have been showcased and will be heading to its next showing before becoming a permanent installation at Maison Perrier-Jouët in Épernay, alongside the house's commission of last year, by design duo Glithero.

One of the vessels was suspended in the centre of the studio. Half filled with what looked like dentists' pink rinse water, it was invisibly hooked up to Heijdens' laptop. At his bidding, lines of colour started appearing, as if from nowhere, in the water. Gradually, they evolved to make patterns, which were projected into the surrounding room by the light above the water, before ultimately dissolving, like ink.

In researching the project, Heijdens built up beautiful sketchbooks exploring facets of the art nouveau movement, and cites as influences everything from stained glass

panels to the invention of cinema. 'At the time, there were massive jumps in technology that would become defining forces,' he says. He became interested in the relationship between art nouveau drawings and maths and geometry, and in artists' fascination with nature in an industrialised age.

Much of Heijdens' own work to date has been concerned with nature, in particular the notion that it is lacking in modern urban life. 'Urban spaces are becoming more and more homogenous and controlled,' he says. 'We have air-conditioning, 24-hour lighting and so on, and have cut out the rhythm and unpredictability of nature from our environment. What I try to do is to bring some of this back, to create work that is variable and growing.'

This commission offered a chance for him to explore the possibilities of water. 'Water is amazing, from the sea to the rain, the way it changes shape and form.' And after months of work, his digital palette now includes a new tool. He's grown digital plants, drawn the wind on a window and now he's writing in water. We can't wait to see what's next. ★  
[www.simonheijdens.com](http://www.simonheijdens.com)

# Force of nature

Simon Heijdens' art has already harnessed the sun and wind, now he's working on water

PHOTOGRAPHY: CHARLES EMERSON WRITER: HENRIETTA THOMPSON

