

ZIEHERSMITH

UrbanGlass

Thursday March 23, 2017 | by [Andrew Page](#)

Rachel Owens' majestic works in cast resin and glass explore globalization and endurance



Rachel Owens, whose previous solo exhibit at ZieherSmith Gallery in New York's Chelsea neighborhood was a pointed critique of consumer culture, turns her sharp eye (and shards of broken glass) to the pre-European American landscape, global glass production, and New York City history in a new body of shattered glass and cast resin sculptures. The exhibition, titled "Mother," is the product of taking molds of a 400-year-old tree in the Queens borough of New York City. Owens uses these molds to render sides of the trunk of the oldest-living being in the city in a wide palette chosen from shattered glass from surplus supplies of cheaply made bottles from China. Her work is an homage to the longevity of the tree, which likely predates the arrival of the first Europeans, and brings an environmental component in its reference to American colonization being driven partly by the overuse of natural resources such as wood in Europe. Owens' glass and resin creations soar skyward in a defiant majesty, limited only by the reach of the artist's arms in making the molds of her arboreal subject.

"The fortitude of the tree to withstand the development of modern society reminds us that there was always someone before and is also symbolic of migration, mothers, and spatial occupation," Owens said in a prepared statement.

The sculptures are to be viewed with an atmospheric soundscape of pulsing clicks and pings, a composition based on research into sound communication of parched trees seeking sources of water. The installation is completed with Owens' signature word art pieces, in this case canvas in which letters have been burned spelling out provocations such as: "WE ARE THE GRANDDAUGHTERS OF ALL THE WITCHES YOU WERE NEVER ABLE TO BURN," or, simply, "MOTHER," from which the exhibition title was derived.

In a feature in the Summer 2015 edition of GLASS (#139), Owens talked about why she uses glass in her work. "I do things with other materials, but this particular material, it makes so much sense with everything I think about. Consumption, consuming the liquid in the bottle, the breaking of the bottles, consuming the bottles, and those physical properties, attraction and repulsion, that are present in it. There's a violence associated with glass: breaking glass and people fighting with glass and Molotov cocktails; you could go on and on."

IF YOU GO:

Rachel Owens
"Mother"
Through April 15, 2017
ZieherSmith
516 West 20th Street - New York, New York