

Swallows Murmuration

by Andre Stead



A n d r é S t e a d

Swallows Murmuration - 05 09 2014

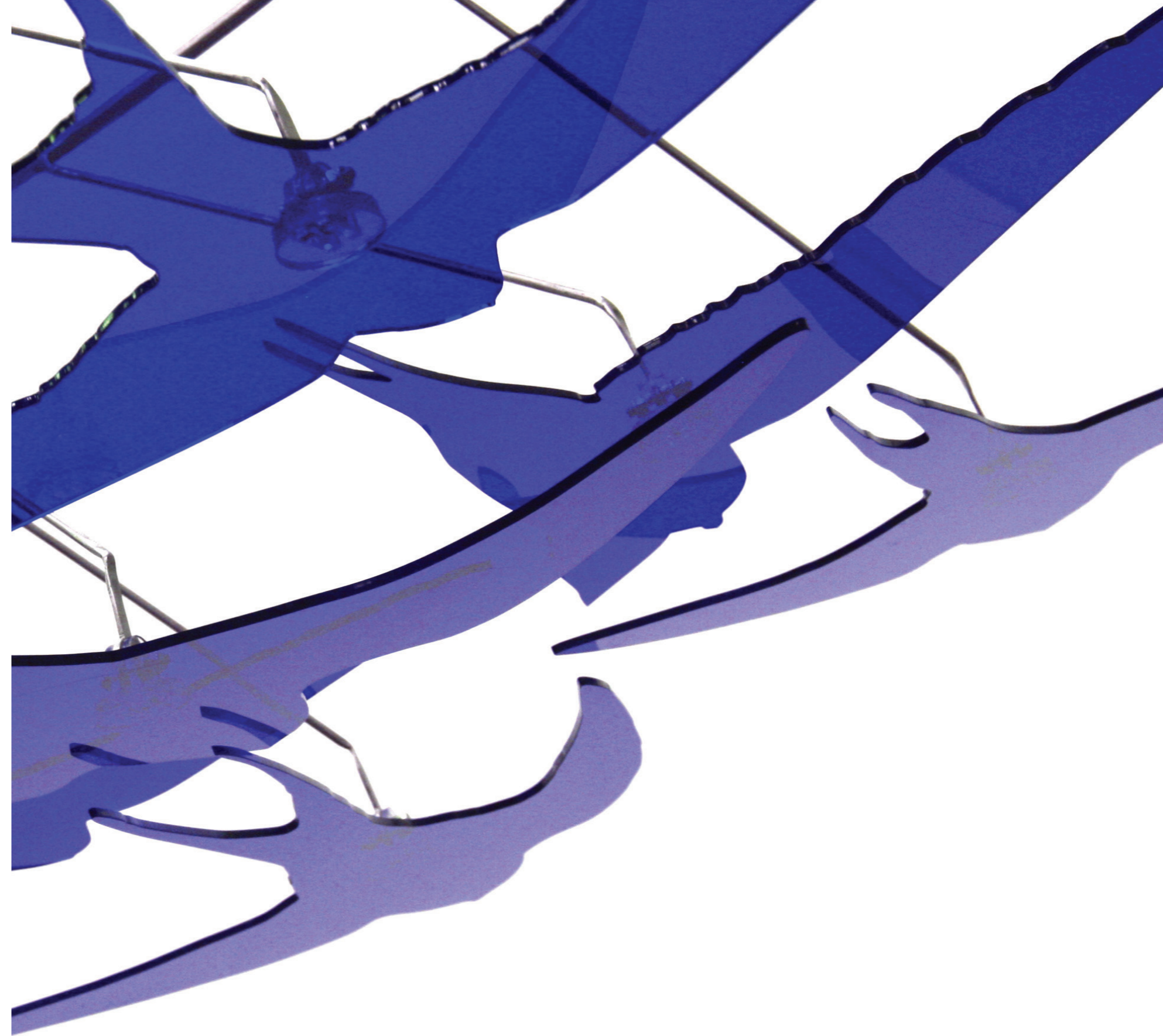
Swallows Murmuration

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A contemporary art installation

The “Swallows Murmuration” was commissioned by Laurence Graff for the Indochine Restaurant at the Graff Delaire Estate in Stellenbosch. The installation containing 1350 swallows is suspended in flight above the restaurant. The progression of colours simulates the directional movement of the flock of birds and the feeling of motion it creates is what makes the piece so successful. In areas, different coloured swallows overlap, resulting in new tonal values. This variation in transparency and colour used throughout the artwork also creates different effects of depth within the mass of birds.

The conceptual development of the piece took two months starting with rough sketches to develop the initial idea. The design had to be beautiful and compliment the interior space while creating a canopy of birds below the roof. The colours used in the artwork were derived from the decor of the restaurant and compliment the mood of the space. The large circular stainless steel framework supports 192 modular branches that suspend each bird in its correct position and alignment. “Swallows Murmuration” is an artistic expression of the freedom of flight.



Swallow profiles
Laser cut plexiglass

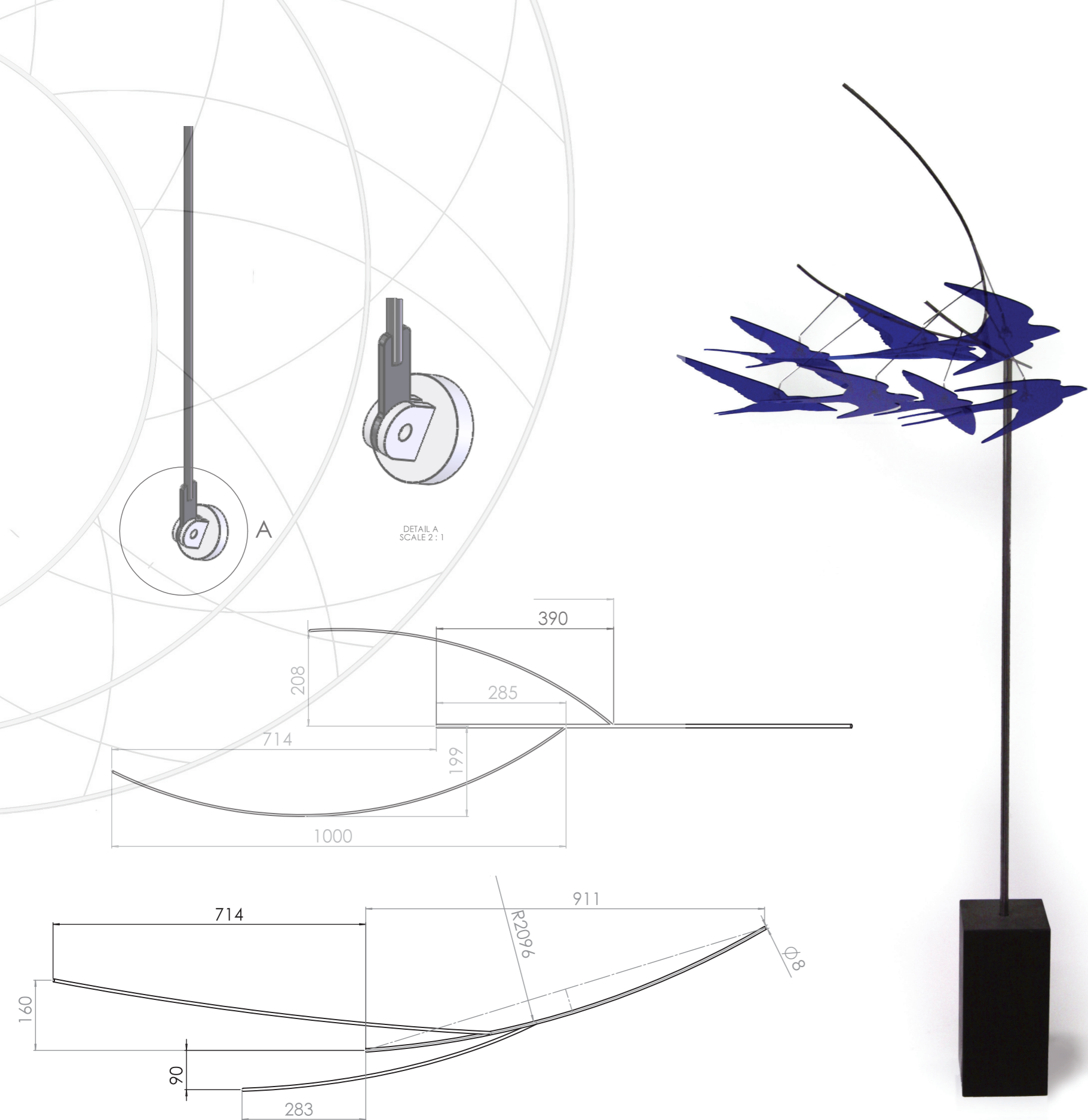


Swallows Murmuration

25 08 2011

Plexiglass and stainless steel

1770 x 9500 x 9000 mm



Design and development

The aerial movement of a flock of swallows was the inspiration for the design. The main structure consists of three circular hoops placed off-centre from one another and mimics the layout of the birds. It minimises the visibility of the supporting structure with optimal support for the swallow profiles below. The armature or framework is fabricated from rolled stainless steel bent to precise diameters before being welded together. Each welded piece is worked and polished to a mirror finish, creating an artwork of the highest standard. The main structure has four parts that were bolted together on site and is suspended from the roof trusses.

The plexiglass swallows are attached to the supporting structure on modular branches that maintain the birds' orientation. The swallows spiral downward and the lighter coloured birds appear to fly in underneath the dark ones creating a layered effect. The modular branches that support the swallows absorb impact from wind by being flexible and able to move independently. The movement is absorbed by the branch and dispersed over the entire installation gently stirring each bird and creating a flutter of movement as light reflects off the birds.

Swallows production

Once the swallow profiles are laser cut, a small plexiglass fitting is attached allowing the bird to be bolted on to the supporting structure. The plexiglass fittings are assembled and attached to the swallow profiles with a permanent bonding agent. The correct position and alignment of each fitting are determined by a mounting template that is unique to each bird shape.

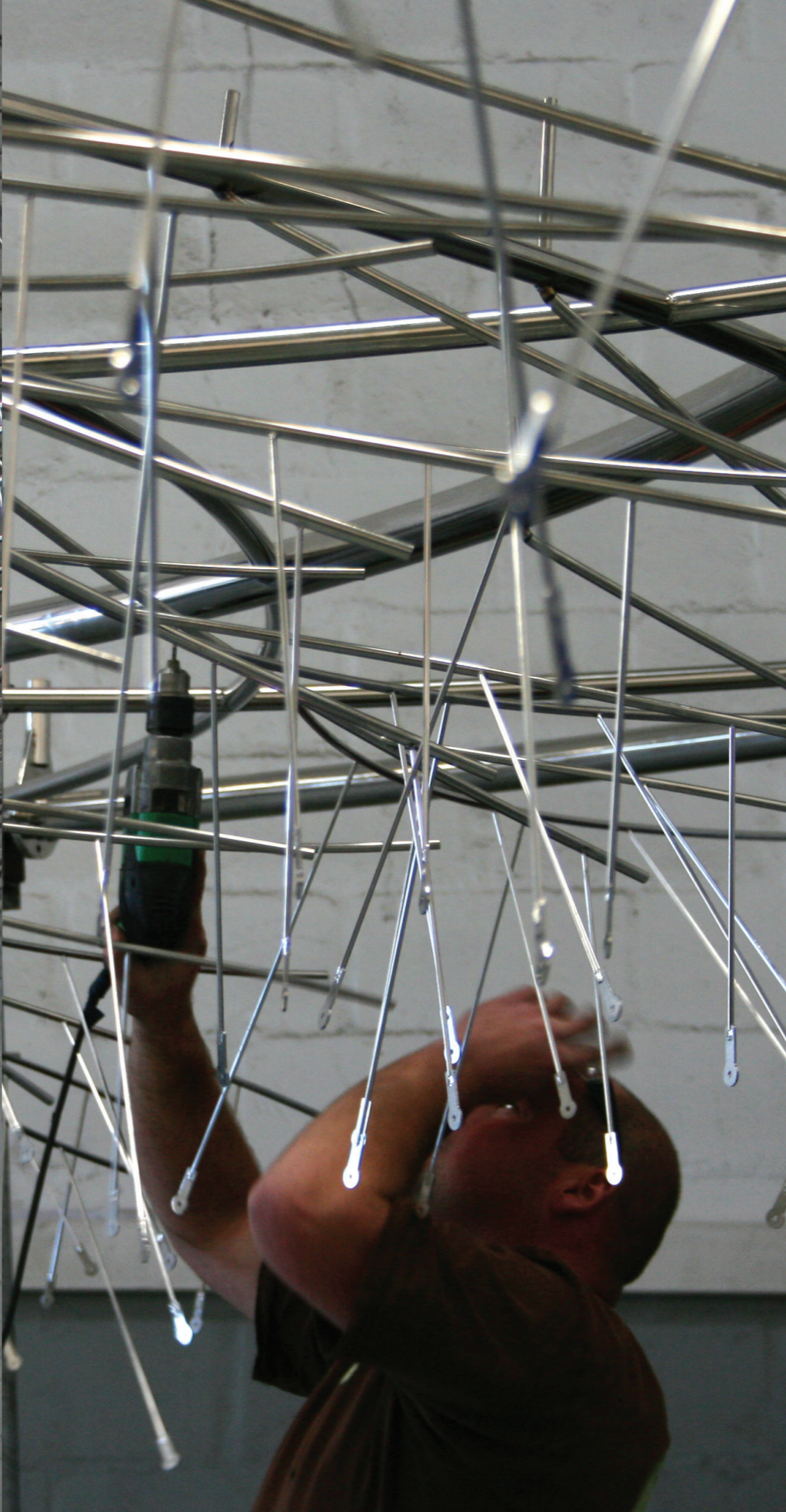
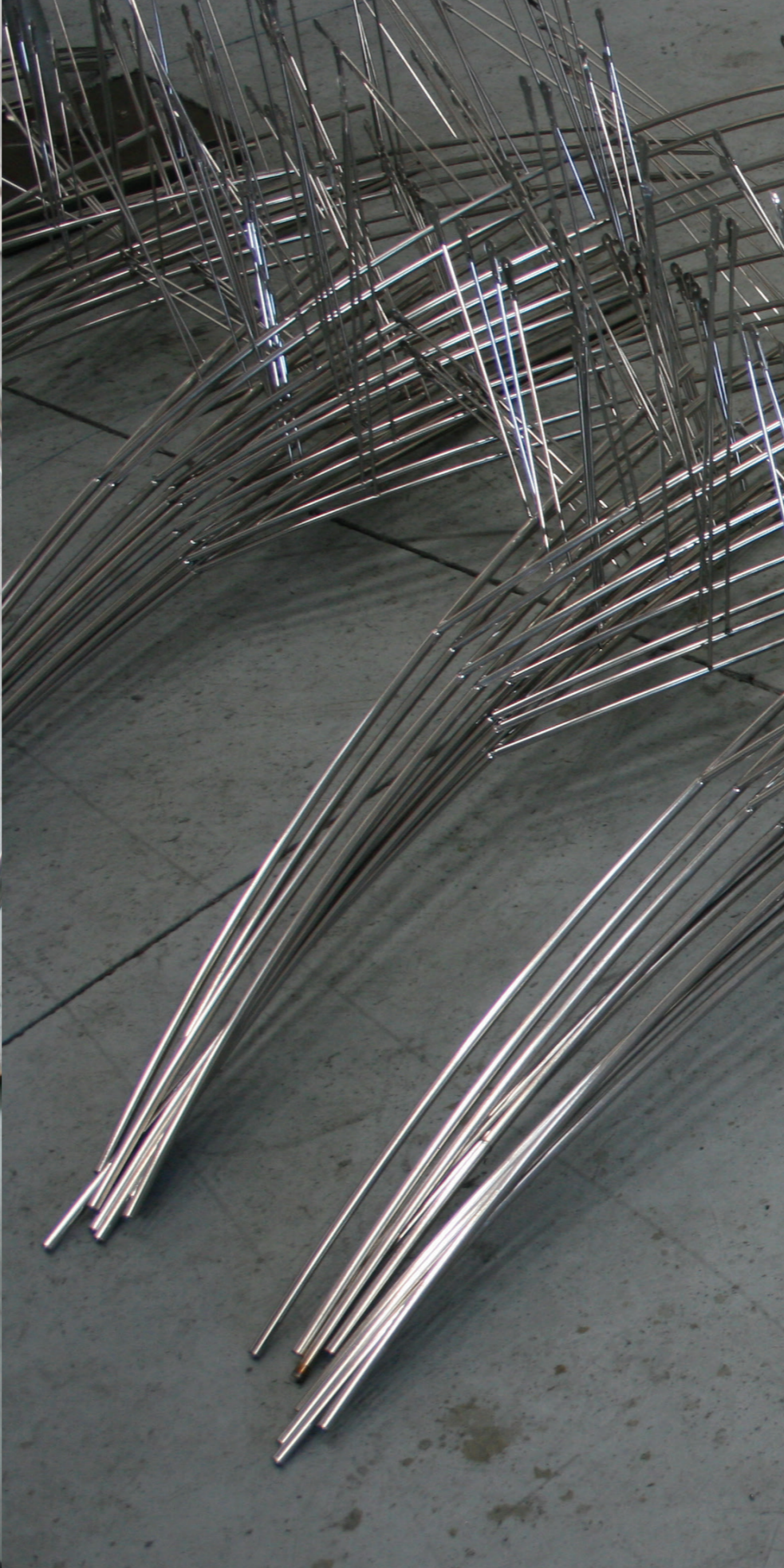


Ring Structure

The ring structure is made up of stainless steel tubing that has been rolled to a particular diameter and cut to size. Each part is shaped to fit the curvature of the adjoining part, then welded into position, finished off and polished to a mirror finish.

Strand, South Africa
Stainless steel production
650 x 8000 x 8000 mm





Stainless steel production
Rolling stainless steel, branches and structure



The Vision of the Artist

The main structure has a diameter of 8 meters and the whole installation is about 9,5 meters at the widest part. The complete installation weighs 550kg and contains 1350 swallows. The final design has over 16,000 individual parts that were manufactured and assembled in Cape Town, South Africa.

The final artwork was constructed according to the design of the artist and the layout of the swallows are adjusted according to the artist's vision during the assembly of the final artwork. "There will always be differences between the original design and the final artwork. The final assembly is reminiscent of flower arranging and it's when the piece comes to life."

The installation artwork was produced by a team of talented people including engineers, fabricators, coordinators and the artist. The artwork took approximately 8 months to complete and was installed at the Delaire Graff Estate in Stellenbosch in September 2014.

By André Stead
Commissioned by Laurence Graff

Workshop
Fabrication
2014
Stainless steel



On-site installation

The on-site assembly and installation of the artwork took four days to complete. The first part was installed in August 2011 and the last part was installed in September 2014. The first part was completed and hoisted to its final positioning and the second part was installed above the first structure and the birds added after.

Delaire Graff Estate, Stellenbosch
20 - 25 August 2011



Installation
On-site
01 - 05 11 2014



Swallows in flight

05 11 2014

Plexiglass and stainless steel
800 x 9000 x 8500 mm



Swallows at Indochine, Delaire
Stellenbosch, South Africa
2014



Swallows Murmuration

05 11 2014

Plexiglass and stainless steel
800 x 9000 x 9500 mm



Word of thanks

Thanks to Ian Jacobs from TFD Manufacturing for his design and engineering contribution on the project, as well as the stainless steel fabrication team at Lizzies Marine Stainless. Many thanks also to Gareth McArthur and his team from Hot Wired for their laser cutting and fabrication expertise.

Lastly I would like to thank Mr. Laurence Graff for the opportunity to do such a wonderful project.



André Stead

Born in Evander, 1975. Lives and works in Cape Town.

Qualifications and awards

2007 Eight years bronze casting experience, Bronze Age Art Foundry, Simon's town

1997 Metal forging tuition, John Allesandri, Cape Town

1995 Graphic design course, Gunther Komnick, Cape Town

1994 Goldsmith apprenticeship, Pretoria

1993 Pro Arte School of Arts, Distinction with colours for Art, Pretoria

1991 Merit award, Iscor Art Competition, Iscor Permanent Art Collection, Pretoria

Selected Exhibitions and Commissions

2011

Flight of the Swallows, Corporate commission, Delaire Graff Wine Estate, Stellenbosch

Evolution, Solo exhibition, Is Art Gallery, Franschoek

Group exhibition, Christopher Møller Art, Cape Town

Group exhibition, Dawid's Choice Gallery, Johannesburg

Roodt Inc, group exhibition, Dawid's Choice Gallery, Johannesburg

2010

Group exhibition, Dimitrov Art Gallery, Dullstroom

Rooftop exhibition, group show, St. Lorient, Pretoria

Group exhibition, The Upper Deck Gallery, Plettenberg Bay

Group exhibition, Christopher Møller Art Gallery, Cape Town

2009

Group exhibition, Everard Read Gallery, Johannesburg

Identity, group exhibition, Platform on 18th Gallery, Pretoria

Figures, solo exhibition, Northcliff, Johannesburg

Female series launch, Grande Provence Heritage Wine Estate, CTICC

2008

Angels, group exhibition, Grande Provence Gallery, Franschoek

Group exhibition, Everard Read Gallery, Cape Town

Medallions, Corporate Commission, Burj Dubai Development, Dubai

2006

Corporate commission, Graham Beck Wine Estate, Franschoek

Group exhibition, Bronze Age Sculpture House, Cape Town

2000 P 2005

Group exhibition, Seidelberg Wine Estate, Paarl

Miniatures, group exhibition, Bronze Age, Cape Town

Board of Executors, Corporate commission, Cape Town

Group exhibition, Vineyard Gallery, Cape Town

1999

Group exhibition, The Christie Gallery, Cape Town

Group exhibition, Everard Read Gallery, Cape Town

1998

Wooden figures, Solo exhibition, Novalis Institute, Cape Town

Sanlam Restoration - Award, Corporate commission, Sanlam, Cape Town

Group exhibition, Association for Visual Arts, Cape Town

1997

Sanlam Literary Award, Corporate commission, Sanlam, Grahams Town

Group exhibition, Primart Gallery, Cape Town

Collections

Bernard Fontannaz

Laurence Graff

Willy Woestyn

Johnny Walker Stride Awards

Graham Beck Estates

Board of Executives

Hal Shaper

Sanlam

Iscor



Photograph: Adrian Owen

DELAIRE
GRAFF
ESTATE

