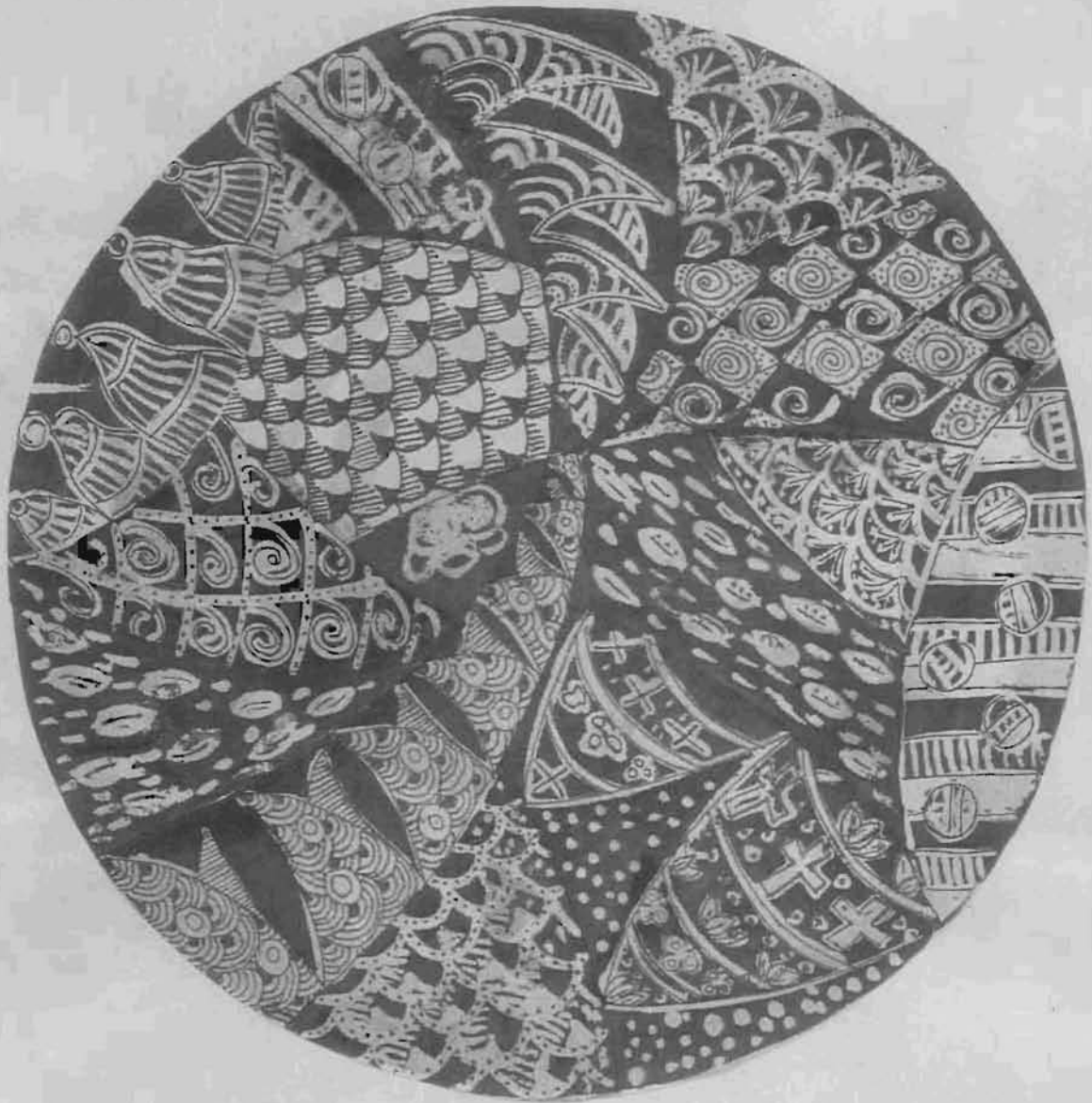


ausglass

MAGAZINE

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION OF GLASS ARTISTS



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**SPRING - SUMMER
EDITION 1993**

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Front Cover : Preliminary bowl drawing by Deb Cocks, winner ACI
Glass Exhibition Award, Meat Market Craft Centre
1993.

P R E S I D E N T ' S L E T T E R

Dear Members,

A lot has been happening!

Richard Marquis & Dante Marioni Tour

In February, Richard Marquis & Dante Marioni conducted workshops at the Jam Factory Craft & Design Centre in Adelaide, the Meat Market Craft Centre in Melbourne and the Canberra School of Art. The tour also featured a slide lecture in Tasmania and Richard opened the "Australia Revisited" exhibition celebrating 20 years of Australian glass at the Meat Market Craft Centre.

Co-ordinated by Nick Mount, the tour was planned to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of Richard Marquis' first tour of Australia in 1974. That tour was sponsored by the Crafts Board of the Australia Council and was an important point of time for the glass art movement of Australia. The purpose of the 1994 tour was to produce a focal point for Ausglass members and to raise the public awareness of our medium. The South Australian Department for the Arts and Cultural Heritage have in part sponsored the 1994 tour, together with private donations.

*Contemporary Australian Glass
published by Craftsmen Press in Sydney*

All financial and un-financial members from as far back as 1990 should have received a long letter from me inviting them to submit material for this publication.

Accompanying this letter was an insert for non financial members encouraging them to re-join our association.

I have been inundated with calls from people who have received a letter stating they are unfinancial but in fact have paid their subs.

I have been sending on this info to Maggie Stuart, our National Members Secretary. If you have problems with not receiving info and you are financial, please give Maggie a call on 042 84 7844. Our data base is only as good as the information our members provide us with so keep us up to date with changes in your address and contact numbers. The response to the request for people to renew their membership has been terrific and lots of people have paid their subs.

Since writing my last letter I attended the Glass Weekend organised by Ausglass Victoria. It was a resounding success. Congratulations Melbourne.

The organisation of the Conference is continuing with the workshops virtually decided and the programming well under way. We would still welcome any feedback or suggestions from members. Give me a call if you need updates on the conference, the poster or the book.

Regards to everyone, Pauline

Pauline Mount
Ausglass President
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Don't miss the "Made in Japan" Exhibition
Works by Ruth Allen & Scott Chaseling
at Glass Artists Gallery until April 31, 1994
70 Glebe Pt Rd Glebe 2037 (02) 552 1552

Attention Canberrans:
Jeffrey Hamilton solo exhibition
now showing at Beaver Galleries

T H E G L A S S W E E K E N D

Ausglass Victoria's *Glass Weekend*, held on the 18th & 19th September 1993 at the Meat Market Craft Centre sought to raise the profile of contemporary Australian glass. The seminal idea came from Pauline Delaney and Mark Brabham, following their experiences in the United States.

Besides alerting the public, we hoped to stimulate people to become glass collectors and make contact with the few Australian ones who already exist. In time, a situation in which collectors are in touch with each other is seen as ideal for the gradual educative process regarding contemporary glass. Collectors, because of their shared passion, are in many ways our greatest advocates and an inherent font of knowledge.

The Glass Weekend featured 3 exhibitions: the *ACI Glass Award*, *Panel Beaters* (hung flat work), and *Glass of the 70's & 80's* (from the State Craft Collection). Demonstrations of slumping, painting & staining, stencil cutting and open casting were held in the Cold Glass Workshop (Dick Stumbles, Anita Lindblom, Tony Hanning & Mick D'Aquino). Glass blowing techniques including the team approach and the opportunity for the public to have a play with hot glass were performed in the Hot Glass Workshop (Janine Toner, Carrie Westcott, Anne Hand, Nick Wirdnam and Richard Morrell to name but a few).

A mini-seminar aimed at explaining various facets of glassmaking and exploring issues facing collectors also took place. Speakers at the seminar included Bronwyn Hughes, David Turner, Tony Hanning, Maureen Williams, Frank Howarth, Rob Knottenbelt, Mark Douglas, Stephen Procter, Robert Bell and Stephen Skillitzi.

The spectacular finale was co-ordinated by Nick Wirdnam & James Thompson and highlighted the fluidity of glass as well as the amount of heat necessary to produce this cold substance.

The Weekend revealed that much more work needs to be done to encourage an "appreciation circle", if I can call it that. Despite the publicity, I felt that there were still enthusiasts who did not know of the event. The reaction from the public, however, was overwhelming. On both days, the Meat Market was packed to capacity and it became obvious that the fascination with this medium extends well beyond our own (practitioner's) addiction.

The ACI Glass Award was the central exhibition around which the other activities were built. Selectors for the show, and judges for the award, were Robert Bell (Art Gallery of Western Australia), Terrence Lane (National Gallery of Victoria) and Elizabeth Cross (Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology). The winner of the award was Deborah Cocks from New South Wales. Congratulations Deb for the new baby as well. Kazuko Eguchi won first prize in the Panel Beaters show sponsored by the Melbourne Glass Centre.

I am grateful to the artists who reacted to the educative concept so positively and supplied us with such tantalising work. It was obvious that some had made a special effort and I believe that the result augers well for the future. I had promised our sponsor, ACI, that the exhibition would feature some of the best Australia had to offer, and that it certainly did. The responses to the show were extremely positive and surprisingly broad.

All in all, a great month for glass and in particular the Weekend that kicked it all off. Countless glass people contributed to its success, but particular thanks to Pauline Delaney, Ede Horton, Bronwyn Hughes, Nick Wirdnam, Ruth Turner and Wayne Burrowes for making it all happen.

Graham Stone

THE REAL VALUE OF AUSTRALIAN GLASS

Tony Hanning

The following is a transcript of Tony's Paper from the Glass Weekend Symposium.

This talk is not as distinctly about the real value of Australian Glass as you might expect.

I am aware that the underlying theme of this weekend is "Collections and Collecting." Without collectors we are stymied, and without artists, so are the collectors. I am therefore addressing this paper to both parties. There is work to do here, as you shall see, and I make no bones about the fact that what I am about to say is less than a P.R. job to convince the collectors that we're Okay, and that their money is safe with us.

Collecting is a responsibility of sorts, and as we go through this topic, I'm hoping that we can team together, artist and collector as one, and that what we do will be of benefit to all of us.

Above all I want to make it clear that this is not a talk about bargains and bargaining, selling and buying, or indeed money at all. Those matters are cheap and easy, largely subjective, and less than positive.

I do not wish to, indeed never intended to, put myself in a situation where I would be the sole arbiter of the value of Australian Glass. In fact, I will make no attempt to value Australian Glass as such, and want only to approach the problem of how we might arrive at a consistent approach, to qualifying a value for our product.

The most obvious way of doing this is to make a comparison of price and quality between my glass and yours, ours and theirs, glass and art glass, and hot dogs and pin wheel hats.

This is a silly way of approaching the problem, but as silliness has never stopped me before, I might as well give it my best shot now and see what we come up with.

The price of the new Honda Accord is \$27.84 per kilo.

The price of a particular Tony Hanning exhibition piece is \$1,500 per kilo.

The price of flying a fat person to Hawaii for seven nights is \$7.50 per kilo in a comfy seat in a pressurised cabin.

The cost of flying a piece of 3 kilo Tony Hanning glass, one way in the same aircraft in a cargo hold is five times that amount at \$400 and it doesn't even get to see the movie.

Fillet steak is on special at Webster's Yinnar butchery this week at \$14.99 a kilo which is just over half the price of the Honda, but you'd lose out

badly if you belted it into a seat on a Qantas flight because price wise it is worth two seats and in the cargo hold it's worth the same as a cricket team flying to Patagonia for a month.

The parcel in the cargo hold is expensive because when a parcel flies, it flies because it needs to be there;

when you fly, it's because the airline wants you to be there.

The essence of "collecting" is "value"; This explains why you should never trust a person who collects string, but it doesn't help us determine the real value of Australian Glass.

What prompted this topic was a discussion I had with one of the organisers of the Conference, concerning an advertisement I saw in an edition of Belle magazine for a Kosta Boda vase. This vase, in clear glass and approximately 35 centimetres high, was engraved with a design depicting a stylised figure. You could order one of these vases for \$15,000. Indeed you could order ten thousand of them at \$15,000.

This same sum of money could buy you three or four hand engraved Ann Dybkas, each different, and each a one off piece.

It appears that the only difference between a piece of Australian engraved glass, and a piece of Kosta Boda, is that one is Scandinavian.

" The essence of "collecting" is "value"; This explains why you should never trust a person who collects string, but it doesn't help us determine the real value of Australian Glass. "

I would challenge anyone to demonstrate to me that Scandinavia produces better engraved glass than Australia, keeping in mind the work of Helmut Heibl who worked for Steuben as a master engraver for many years and who now lives in a dusty portion of New South Wales.

I recall in the seventies, assisting with the organisation of a touring exhibition, which was celebrating one hundred years of Holmegaard Glass.

The exhibition told the story of how Scandinavian glass came about as a consequence of long bitter winters, where people were forced to stay indoors for days on end, and how in order to keep warm and supplement their incomes, cottage industries took to glass blowing.

Well the Scandinavian winter might be the same now, but glass as we know it has gone through a radical change.

Quite simply, glass isn't what it used to be.

With the advent of what we now call the 'hot glass circumstance' in the 60's, Australian Craft, for the very first time, stood before a window of opportunity. Glass was new, and younger than the country itself. Here was our first opportunity to take part in a new art without having to inherit an aspect of another culture.

The window of opportunity doesn't stay open for very long, and at a Conference in Sydney in 1983, I attempted to convince an audience that here was a chance to be a world leader in a new art form. After all, the history of glass was recent, and though American by birth, the World was now a smaller place than it was when the United States stole our film industry right from under our noses.

Nobody at that Conference seemed to care much for what I was saying, and in hindsight I don't blame them; Nationalism is more a vice than a virtue, but in it, lies the answer to our particular problem of the value of Australian Glass.

To demonstrate this we need to go back to Webster's Butchery where fillet steak is still on special at \$14.99 a kilo. The only thing that a kilo of fillet steak and a kilo of Honda Prelude have in common is their weight.

What certain pieces of Scandinavian Glass have in common with each other is more than the fact that they're Scandinavian. They are, in essence Kosta Bodian. Virtually every major Scandinavian glass artist has at one time or another worked either for or with Kosta Boda or Orrefors.

Virtually every major U.S. Glass artist has at one time or another been associated with Pilchuck, as has every major Venetian glass artist worked on the Island of Murano.

There is more to this than mere geography and to me the essence to the solution lies in the concept of unity.

If Australia is known for anything, it is known for it's fighters. Little is the rest of the world aware, that between ourselves we are very much the same.

Australian Glass is at times a dog eat dog activity.

We are notoriously independent both as a nation and as individuals. We seem to have overcome our 'cultural cringe' to a degree, but still feel isolated from the rest of the world. Glass-wise we don't cut much ice

in the overseas marketplace.

Perhaps we fail to realise that there is a degree of maturity above independence; and that independence is not the end of the line. That degree of maturity which follows independence is called "inter dependence".

As children we are dependent. The child asks YOU for something. You, him, her, they, are the operative words of the dependent. "It's your fault. They did it not me."

Then there is independence and the operative word is "I". "I did." "This is mine." "I had a one person show in New Yr.k."

The operative word for Interdependence is "we". "We can do it. We did it."

I guess what I'm trying to say here is that we all know what the value of Australian Glass is, but we're not sure what the perceived value of Australian Glass is. And I can tell you now, as individuals we're not likely to find out, for as long as we keep

" In short, we are all too busy being independent to realise that the key to success lies in being i n t e r d e p e n d e n t . "

asking ourselves what the perceived value of "my" glass is. Try asking what the perceived value of Mezza Rijdsdik's glass is, and then ask what it should be.

In terms of design and finish, I'd be proud to offer Mezza's work up against anyone of her kind in the world. It's cleverness of design, it's simplicity, it's finish and ingenuity are equal to anything coming out of Europe. But it's not European Glass; it's Australian.

Let's talk about butter. There are two brands of butter available at the dairy. One is King Island Butter, and the other Watson's. They are both the same price; this is because Watson maintains that his butter is as good as the King Island brand. Which one are you to buy? You're going to buy the King Island brand. Unless you buy the Watson's or at least ask if you can read the label, you're never likely to know that Watson's is an independent farm on King Island.

This is a simple, and unlikely hypothesis, but it demonstrates what we know to be true about the whys and wherefores of buying and selling.

One of the wherefores is the fact that there are still only a few people in Australia who realise that Australia produces any glass of its own at all.

In short, we are all too busy being independent to realise that the key to success lies in being interdependent. One of the great delights of this weekend, for me, was to learn that there is offered this weekend, an opportunity for glass collectors to make their own paperweights. Interdependence is the recognition that the collector is as much a part of the team as the artist. And for the collectors, it is within their own interests to continue their interest in others.

To summarise there are two values for Australian Glass. One is a real value, one a perceived value; together they make for what we can get. Before you can change the real value of Australian Glass you must change the perceived value; in essence you must change perception. A shift in the perception of Australian Glass is not something that can be done by an individual; it must come about through working together. This involves being interdependent.

How we do it is open to suggestion. Dale Chihuly might have been the founding artist of Pilchuck, but he wasn't the 'Founding Father'. The collector, John Haupberg was the father of Pilchuck. There are so many possibilities, so many ideas, so much by way of a growing interest in Australian Glass, that it begs to be discussed. If you are a collector of glass, it is within your own best interests to be a member of Ausglass; to be part of the team. If you are a glass artist it is within your best interests to promote Australian Glass as a whole, to work with others and exhibit with others.

I'd like to see the concept of 'unity' become the theme of the next Ausglass Conference but that's a decision to be made by a group of people.

If you came here today wanting to know what you can get for your glass be it by way of your work or by way of your collection, I make no apology for not being able to tell you.

The answer is not to expect any more than the perceived value, and if that's not enough, change the perception.

Tony Hanning

Tony Hanning is a practising glass artist working out of a studio in Yinnar, 150 km SE of Melbourne.

WORLD'S OLDEST GLASS

In 1989, an archaeological team working at Nippur in Iraq found what is still considered to be the oldest sample of glass ever found. Similar claims have been made for other finds, but they have been demonstrated to be either similar material and not true glass, or the items have since been lost and therefore unsubstantiated.

Nippur lies about 80 km south-east of Babylon, and is one of the most impressive ruins in Meso-

potamia. It was a religious centre containing numerous temples including a ziggurat or temple tower measuring 58 x 39 metres at its base.

Found with 5 cuneiform tablets containing accounts, some pottery and bronze pins, the glass was in the form of beads. All the items were from the Akkadian Period, roughly 2,600 years before Christ.

Graham Stone

ART GLASS COLLECTORS : THEIR CARE AND FEEDING

I write on behalf of that forgotten but most important part of the Art Glass Team — the *end buyer, the aficionado*, the art glass collector! As far as I can see, without an end BUYER the Glass Artist is largely without an income.

I have the following ideas for AUSGLASS regarding the care and feeding of its valuable resource, the collectors, as follows:

- **Special Collectors Membership Category and computer file**, at Concession rate (currently \$50 for two years). Send Collector Members a special Ausglass Member's card. You'll get more out of your collectors if you woo them in on a lesser membership fee. You should also probably do this for Gallery Owners who handle art glass.

- **Publish a Collectors and Visitors leaflet** on durable paper listing, by state, name of glass artist, name of studio, address, telephone and details such as: will they allow visitors to view working environment, does one have to book first, is there an exhibition and sales area, etc. This can be done by symbols. Sell it for \$4 and it will pay for production costs. Distribute through galleries that handle art glass or sell direct to Collector Members.

- **Ask Ausglass members to help by identifying collectors to Ausglass State Representatives.**

- **Make a "join Ausglass" leaflet for incipient collectors.** Glass artists do not seem to take much interest in their customers. This is short sighted and absolutely against the principles of the Care and Feeding of Collectors. Collectors are usually very knowledgeable and discerning about Australian (and international) art glass, can often inspire others to become collectors and not only that — they BUY!

- **Have articles in 'Ausglass Magazine' of interest to Collectors.** What's on where, who's doing something new; people who win prizes or interesting commissions, somebody moves his studio etc.

- **Think about organizing area by area 'collection open days' allowing glass artists and other collectors to see collections, hear the collector speak about his collection and discern the intellectual basis on which various collections are based.**

Finally, I would encourage everyone involved in Ausglass to identify collectors and take an interest in their care and feeding. The results should be rewarding.

Yours sincerely,

*Margot Zeiss Oskarsson
South Yarra, Victoria.*

A COLLECTOR'S PERSPECTIVE ON THE GLASS WEEKEND

Frank Howarth

(AND SOME MUSINGS ON COLLECTORS AND MAKERS WORKING TOGETHER)

My initial reaction was surprise. What could I say at the Glass Weekend that could be of interest to anyone?

My friends look upon my glass collection with a sort of mildly amused indulgence and wonder at the beauty (and cost) of some of my pieces, which, they say, can't actually be used for anything. What can you do with a glass pick head? And my Richard Morell vessel isn't deep enough to stick anything in. The Judi Elliot platter really isn't flat enough to put food on. My "post holocaust" steel plinth topped

by with heavily etched bent glass tube (courtesy of Paul Sanders) actually intimidates some people as they walk in the front door. And, to top things off, my "whimsical goblets" would be dangerous to drink from.

When they come around to visit, its with a "what's he bought now" look upon their faces. But I'm also noticing a bit of an awakening among them. They're beginning to realise what contemporary glass art is, and that people in Australia make very good bits of it.

Anyway, back to my surprise when Ede Horton rang me about the Glass Weekend. Would I speak

as a private collector. Sure, I said, not knowing quite what I got myself in for. Who would I be speaking to, I asked? A mixture of artists and collectors. Collectors? I don't know any, and surely others are more knowledgeable than I. But they are all so shy, said Ede, and worried about "coming out" as collectors (I've heard of glass ceilings, but a glass closet?)

So I sat down to decide what I could say that might be of interest. Why do I collect contemporary Australian glass? What do collectors like me look for in a piece (what grabs me)? What sort of dialogue should take place between collectors and artists? How can both groups promote contemporary Australian glass?

Well, I spent the Saturday of the Glass Weekend meeting people and watching demonstrations. In particular, I met artists other than at an exhibition opening. There wasn't the pressure that requires an artist to perform for the collectors at an opening. Then into a range of speakers on Sunday. I learnt an awful lot about glass on that Sunday, for which I am very grateful.

Anyway, to put my collecting in perspective, I have works by Meza Rijdsdijk, Sergio Redegalli and Gerry King, amongst a few others (including those mentioned above) and I picked up two more at the ACI exhibition held in conjunction with the Glass Weekend. My pieces are all Australian and all contemporary (in fact, I have a rule of buying only Australian glass).

What influenced me as a collector? Being an ex-geologist (rocks and glass aren't far apart, especially if you've walked over a new lava field and seen obsidian, or seen the fine basalt glass filaments, called Pele's hair in Hawaii, and formed from explosive cooling of lava in sea water). Seeing International Directions in Glass Art in 84. Discovering some of the Boda exhibitions at DJ's. Most importantly, discovering the Glass Artists Gallery (then in Paddington) where I have been exposed to more glass than anywhere else. Doing a short course at Sydney College of the Arts in glass (fusing, slumping, cutting, etching), which was great for understanding how things are created.

And of course collecting itself has changed me as a collector. Becoming aware of a theme running through the things I like, and consciously reflecting that (or trying to) in what I collect. But I think we private collectors approach things differently to an institutional collector (or at least I think I do).

Early on as a collector I based a purchase entirely on how the piece grabbed me, more or less at first viewing. I still rely very much on the impression of the piece by itself, however, I have a better eye for value (current and future) and for the technical elements behind the piece. I am also beginning to get a better feel for "story" (if any) the artist is telling. I have tended to find this out after buying a piece. Now I tend to seek this out beforehand.

I must say that this is one area where collectors and artist could get together more. I find it fascinating to hear an artist talk about their art. This was a great facet of the Glass Weekend and both galleries (in particular) and Ausglass could do more to get collectors and artists together (other than just at exhibition openings).

And this leads me onto the desirability of getting artists and collectors together. This issue came in for some good debate at the Glass Weekend, particularly the role of Ausglass in this. I think the majority of participants felt that collectors should have a greater role to play in Ausglass.

At this point I must make a small confession. I don't actually know any other collectors, or at least I didn't before the Glass Weekend, and those that I met there were wonderful people, but suffered from the fundamental disadvantage of living in Melbourne (given that I live in Sydney). I've met the odd collector at exhibition openings, but that's fleeting at best. As I mentioned before, my friends are largely Philistines when it comes to glass.

What would I get out of talking glass with other collectors? Interesting question, that. It could be just ego boosting (mine's bigger than yours...) but it's much more likely to be a better understanding of the attraction glass holds for others and of the medium itself. And perhaps we collectors could band together to arrange meetings/discussions with artists.

So where does this take us collectors and artists (following the success of the Glass Weekend)? How about we establish a collectors contact list within Ausglass? (I would certainly like to hear from other Sydney based collectors.) Then perhaps we can get some collector oriented activities going. What do you think?

Frank Howarth

PS If any of the above interests you, how about a reply? Alternatively, contact Frank through AUSGLASS, or ring him direct on 02 387 8526 (home).

BOOK REVIEW :

THE ART OF SELF-PROMOTION

Gerie Hermans

THE ART OF SELF-PROMOTION

Successful promotion by visual artists & craftspeople.

Sue Forster

Illustrated by Jenny Coopes

Allen & Unwin / Australia Council 1993

RRP \$11.95 pb

With more and more competition around, and colleagues, sometimes younger than I am, zooming past on their way to fame and fortune, I hesitated to write a review on THE ART OF SELF-PROMOTION. That was selfish of me - to want to keep all the advice given in this book to myself, but I realised that, in the end, an overall professionalism in the arts and crafts can only benefit everyone, including myself. I recommend it to you.

It is written in response to artists' stated needs and it seeks to advise visual artists and craftspeople in a practical way, and to give them the skills and confidence to promote their work and increase their earnings. Fame and fortune for everyone!

If you are serious about finding a place in the market for your product and to receive the price you feel it deserves, you will have to promote yourself because nobody does it for you. As Sue Forster points out in the introduction, "In Australia the majority of visual artists and craftspeople do not have access to dealers or agents who can provide them with promotional and marketing services". So if you want to find yourself a place, or if you want to improve your position you could go through this book systematically and list, point by point, the promotional activities appropriate to your product and situation.

Examples of helpful advice: "Rather than

assuming that your work speaks for itself, a self-promotional campaign will aim to educate the public about why it is unique and different from that of your competitors", from the chapter titled "Communicating your Message"; or in 'Networking' - "Everyone that you meet is a potential customer, or has a friend or colleague who may be a customer one day". The advice is emphasised by Jenny Coopes apt and witty drawings.

My only criticism would be that some of the advice is plain common sense, but at the same time I am thankful that this book is so complete because what appears to be commonsense for one may have been overlooked and a new idea for another. Perusing this book gave me a certain feeling of confidence as I became aware of the self-promotion which I have already been doing, without realising it. This awareness now makes me able to distinguish future promotional activities that I can undertake. So the effect of the book has been extremely positive for me: I can do it, and I can extend it.

The issues discussed in the book range from the creation of a promotional plan to examples of promotional materials; it teaches how to write a media release and how to promote yourself overseas. It also gives lots of suggestions for more reading on related issues, such as this one which made me smile - "When are you going to get a real job?" - another publication of the Australia Council. Well, after reading this important little book, my answer to that question is "Self-promotion is a real job!"

Gerie Hermans is a Dutch-born glass artist residing in Melbourne. She is currently completing a MA by coursework in hot and kiln-formed glass.

ARTSWORKERS REGISTER

An Eastern Suburbs "ARTSWORKERS REGISTER" is currently being compiled. It will be a database of information listing Artists and Craftspeople living in Box Hill, (Melbourne) and surrounding suburbs.

The aim of the register is to help those who are seeking Artists / Craftspeople to teach, design, undertake community art or urban & public art projects. The Artswokers Register will be of use to educational institutions, galleries, municipal councils,

State government departments, neighbourhood houses, corporate business and architectural & landscaping firms.

Artists / Craftspeople who wish to register should contact the Box Hill Community Arts Centre on 244 3480. Enquiries can be directed to Stella Coppola, Jacquie Nichols or Andrew Kyriakopoulos.

The Register is an initiative of the Box Hill Cultural Development Program.

T H E H E R M A N ' S T A P E S

ABOUT SCULPTURE, GLASS, AMERICA AND THE GLASS COLLECTION OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA.

Interview with Geoffrey Edwards

Gerie Hermans

On a warm winter afternoon I cycled to the National Gallery of Victoria on St. Kilda Road to interview the Curator of Sculpture and Glass, Geoffrey Edwards, who thought it was very cosmopolitan of me to come on the bicycle. I decided to first ask some questions about an article Geoffrey wrote for the National Gallery Society Magazine about Dale Chihuly.

Gerie: Why do you rave about Dale Chihuly? Linking his work with mainstream painting and sculpture, breaking away from solely decorative and applied art. Most of his work looks like bowls and vases to me. You even apply John Ruskin's definition of fine art: 'That in which the heart and hand of man go together'...

Geoffrey: Did you object strongly to that?

Gerie: No, I thought it would have been more appropriate to write: 'That in which some one's money and some one else's hand go well together...' Don't get me wrong, I like some of Chihuly's work. I would not call it sculpture. It is a fact that Chihuly is a very clever business man...

Geoffrey: Well, many fine artists are good at business and that's a good thing too. The two skills need not be mutually exclusive. Using Ruskin's words was simply a ploy to have the words of someone interested in Venetian matters in one century applied to the work of another artist also interested in Venetian style but in a later century.

Gerie: O.K., but how do you see Chihuly's work as sculpture?

Geoffrey: Let's say it has sculptural qualities, rather than being sculpture period. Chihuly's work is one of the many species of contemporary art that resist pigeonholing into the old categories. Much contemporary glass - much contemporary

Australian glass - is not art glass in the nineteenth century sense of the term. Chihuly is representative of an established trend away from the making of vessels, although some of his forms clearly allude to vessels. I call his installations sculptural because they aspire to operate comprehensively in three dimensions.

Gerie: Are you saying that the boundaries between the different art forms have become faded?

Geoffrey: It is more that the boundaries are constantly shifting like those proverbial goalposts. When I refer to Chihuly's work as sculptural, I think specifically of instances where the artist takes an entire room - a specific site - and transforms that site. There is always allusion to traditional forms but the work operates in a sculptural idiom. This comment obviously applies to many Australian artists as well. One could say that about your work, for example.

Gerie: If you call a work decorative, I assume it is closer to craft and if you call it sculptural, I assume it is closer to fine art. Can you enlighten the craft/art debate?

Geoffrey: I don't have very much to add to that debate, which has gone on for so long. I guess the debate has as much to do with marketing issues as it does with any other issues. Glass in the National Gallery of Victoria is part of the Decorative Arts department. The word decorative is not intended to describe works that are in some way less worthy or weighty than the paintings on the wall. Many paintings these days as a matter of interest, are founded on what might be best termed, a 'decorative aesthetic'.

Gerie: Let's talk about the policy of collecting at the National Gallery of Victoria.

Geoffrey: In recent years there is less of a division between the Gallery's curatorial departments. The sculpture collection and the glass collection are my dual concerns. The glass collection is substantial and endeavours to be an encyclopedic collection. It aims to represent the whole of western civilisation; from the period of classical antiquity to the present. That is, from that made in ancient Alexandria and Syria, to that made in Moonee Ponds yesterday. So it is one of the few Australian collections that has, for all its strengths

have a limited central fund against which purchases are made for all spheres of the institution's activity. At the moment there is a certain emphasis, for example, on nineteenth century Japanese prints and there certainly has been a notable emphasis on buying Koorie art. To a lesser degree there is an emphasis on buying contemporary international work. Ideally, Australian art remains a constant concern. Under the umbrella of contemporary international art, we have acquired several pieces of studio glass in recent times: some contemporary Czeck pieces, a form



Geoffrey Edwards, National Gallery of Victoria

and weaknesses, this vast chronological sweep and I am very privileged to be associated with such a collection. The fact that it comes within the Decorative Arts area is not to suggest that all works are purely decorative. This is simply a term of global convention; it informs people that within this department one will find collections of ceramics, glass, wood, fibre, metal, jewellery, and so on.

Similarly, in terms of funding, there isn't quite the cut and dried approach that there used to be. Each department once knew that in any given financial year it had a specific budget to spend. At present, we

by Toots Zynsky, a large figurative work by David Hopper. These were on show just before the Dale Chihuly exhibition in the foyer, along with a good selection of Australian and other overseas glass.

It is well known that the Melbourne gallery tries to do what, in the great capitals of Europe, would be done by three or four museums, we have understandable difficulty giving due attention to each facet of the collections. We have historical material as well as contemporary material; we have Australian material, decorative arts, photography, ethnographic material and we mount a large number of temporary

exhibitions. Our funds are spread very thinly indeed.

In glass, at the moment, we buy two or three contemporary works every year. We have also been looking to secure, either through purchase or through presentation, important antique glass. Because there is so much very good British glass in the collection, we have been working to consolidate the continental collection. The various schools of German engraving are of keen interest and one major recent purchase was a fine glass engraved by the Dutchman, Willem van Heemskerck. This was also on display in the foyer.

Gerie: Is the money spent on antique glass the same as that spent on contemporary glass?

Geoffrey: This is more or less the case although this is not a stringent policy decision.

Gerie: What if there were not so many money constraints?

Geoffrey: As we said earlier the collection tries to be encyclopedic. We try to tell a coherent story. So, we need to develop the holdings of seventeenth and eighteenth century European material, specifically the important schools of engraving, and we need striking examples from the Venetian Renaissance. Ancient glass is a further priority. We have some good Roman blown glass but we don't have any Alexandrian luxury glass. It would be good to acquire one or two examples of well-preserved millifiori or mosaic glass and a sequence of those extraordinary figural fragments. We do have a few examples of good Egyptian glass, but we don't tell much about the Islamic involvement with the medium. Of the modern period, we have quite a deal of fine Scandinavian glass together with an excellent pocket of Italian modern. What we don't have is the summit of Art Nouveau. We do represent the general production of the likes of Galle and Daum; we have quite a group by Lalique and, fairly recently, we acquired at auction, two fine pate-de-verre pieces by Argy Rousseau. A major Galle glass is still an outstanding requirement.

Gerie: What about stained glass?

Geoffrey: We don't offer any real facility to show

flat glass, although the collection includes some excellent works in this idiom. It is obvious that we haven't been particularly active in this genre. In general, I don't believe that flat glass has been the strong stream in recent years that it once was. Needless to say, there are several people producing wonderful flat glass. The best flat glass is incorporated within architectural schemes in any case.

Gerie: What exactly is your budget? Can you give a figure?

Geoffrey: Last year we spent around \$40,000 on glass.

Gerie: You were recently in America, can you share some of your experiences with me?

Geoffrey: I gave several papers on Australian glass while I was there. The first was in Washington D.C. and was part of a series organised by the Smithsonian Institution. I was asked to deal with the applied arts and so not surprisingly I decided to focus on Australian glass. The audience consisted chiefly of collectors. It was a highly educated audience, but an audience with wide ranging interests and so I placed Australian art in the broad context of the history and settlement of the country and the gradual emergence of an indigenous art. Obviously this was a thumb-nail sketch and little more.

Later, for the Creative Glass Centre of America I gave a few papers: one short paper responded to a great Philadelphia collection - the Borowski Collection. On that panel were Michael Glancy, Jeffrey Manocherian, (a New York collector), Doug Heller, Prof. Donald Kuspit and the owners of the collection: Irvin Borowski and Laurie Wagman. Then I gave a second paper on Australian glass; a more pointed one for the specialist audience. I was pleased with the response and delighted when a number of conferees indicated a serious interest to travel to Australia and to look out for glass artists and galleries.

Gerie: Do you think developments in Australian glass at the moment are important?

Geoffrey: There is the continuing strength in kilnworked glass, glass assemblage, glass installations.

Gerie: Does modern Australian glass excite you?

Geoffrey: The best does. The best Australian glass is very exciting. As always, it is really only after many years of work, that you find artists whose work is formally resolved and aesthetically stimulating.

Gerie: You have said that, in general, only the highest quality work is shown in American selected exhibitions and that some of our invitational shows fail because people are not always putting their very best work forward...

Geoffrey: Yes, that is obviously the case. With invitational or 'curated' shows, I often feel that those invited don't always send their best or newest work. In these shows you really want to see people stepping beyond the bounds of what they know they can easily achieve. Not simply sending something along off the shelf in the stockroom.

Gerie: The 'best' people did not exhibit in the last Wagga Wagga show and much of the 'best' Australian glass is sold overseas...

Geoffrey: People should and must treat this forum very seriously. It is, after all, a litmus test of the current state of Australian glass.

Gerie: Would that be your advice to up and coming artists? To only put your best work forward?

Geoffrey: Yes. In the market place, there are outlets for the best production work. And, elsewhere, there are events for the best experimental work. I don't think anyone's cause is advanced by allowing into the public domain, any work that does not aspire to the highest quality. There are so many good art schools now offering glass studies that I don't think I necessarily have any advice that the teaching staff will not already have imparted. However, I think there is still an insularity in many contemporary art streams. People working with just glass, just video or just clay. You see this in the curatorial realm as well - people dealing only within this or that theoretical realm. I think it is important to be aware of what other artists are making and thinking. It is important to be aware of what is in the journals and to be generally aware of

innovations and achievements in disciplines other than one's own immediate field of interest. It is important as always to learn from the past - both distant and recent but not to slavishly replicate or blandly ape these models. Look at exhibitions, visit dealer galleries, visit museums, read or scan the journals, take stock of fields other than your own.

Gerie: Is there any glass in the sculpture department?

Geoffrey: In the next Sculpture Triennial exhibition there will be works that incorporate glass. This event will be in the Murdoch Court from September 11 to late November. The exhibition will consist of few installations.

Gerie: Any other major differences between Australia and America?

Geoffrey: Obviously in America there are so many more makers, dealers, writers and collectors. And there are many artists who can afford to have teams of assistants, producing vast bodies of work often on a big scale. But that doesn't necessarily mean it is good on those counts alone. But it is another obvious difference. What's more there is a more conspicuous corporate character to many studios and there is the interesting team approach to production.

On the dealer front, we think we are short on specialist spaces here. I mean in the U.S. there are, as we all know, a couple of excellent galleries in Chicago, there is Heller in New York, Sally Hansen in Washington D.C., Habitat and Ruth Summers but for the entire U.S. practitioner community that is still a comparatively small number.

In the coming months Geoffrey Edwards will be occupied with research for a substantial book on the Gallery's glass collection. To assist him with this research, he has been awarded a 1994 Churchill Fellowship which, next year, will take him to work at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and at the Cooper-Hewitt and the Corning Museums in New York.

Gerie Hermans.



YOUR FIRST TIME.

Vaughan Bryers is a name that is being mentioned in the Melbourne glass scene. Why? Because he has watched a few hot glass studios develop and sometimes had a hand in there somewhere. So who is Vaughan and what does he do? He builds kilns, furnaces, develops glass batches, you name it he will design it. Originally an industrial glass technologist (with ACI for ten years), he then moved into the field of studio glass batch design and kiln/furnace building and has done so for the last ten years. So this is what Vaughan had to say about starting out with kilns and studios.

ON YOUR FIRST KILN.

Don't worry too much about it, just do it. Your first kiln won't be your last. Don't spend a lot of money, if you were to buy a \$500 kiln and it only lasted six months that isn't such a bad thing. It lays the groundwork and gives you an idea of what you need in your next purchase. All kilns won't do all tasks, so work within the limitations of your kiln, it is not ideal but it teaches you to become resourceful. It would be great to be able to start out with the perfect kiln but in most cases it's unrealistic (in terms of finances!) most people don't have a huge choice so make most of what you've got

TRAPS INVOLVED WITH BUYING A SECONDHAND KILN.

Before buying a kiln make sure that it fires up to reasonable temperature, at least 800. Most people won't mind if you test the kiln first and it will give you an idea of the kiln's ability. The other important thing is to look at the person who is selling the kiln as much as the kiln itself. What have they used the kiln for? Did they buy it for hobby classes or production or work? Generally there are not too many risks in buying a secondhand kiln and most problems can be fixed with ease. Sight the kiln for major faults like damaged elements, spilt glass and probably most importantly the controller. Look out for old controllers, they may need replacing and this can become costly. If you had a choice always go for the kiln with the better controller, even if it does have more body damage. The only other thing that can cause a major problem is the door seal. The door is where a kiln loses most of its heat, so make sure the door fits well. But it is all pretty simple, there are no hidden traps but if you're not sure, get someone more experienced to check it out for you

GETTING A KILN BUILT FOR YOU OR BUILDING YOUR OWN.

The problem with doing this for your first kiln is that you have to have a clear idea of where you're going with your work, will you always want to do platters (or paint, or cast, or ...)? If you are going to build a kiln, work out the design to suit your needs, but if you're not sure it's better to stick to an all purpose kiln. The other thing to consider is the power available and calculating the cost of changing power point and phases to suit the kiln.

ON STARTING OUT.

Don't do it alone, these sorts of things work out much better when you work with other people. On your own, problems can seem overwhelming. When you work with others these things become less serious and it allows you to do what you do best. Of course this all depends on your personality, some people are more than capable of going out on their own but it seems there are many advantages in collaborating. With a group, ideas tend to get bounced around and someone else may be able to refine your ideas, that can be a great help. Know your weakness and work from there and never be afraid to ask for help. There are plenty of organisations like the craft council, small business association etc., that are there to help. Other established artists are usually quite willing to give someone advice, this may be a scary thing to do but it is worthwhile. But basically take it on in an optimistic frame of mind, don't take on too much and just go for it.



SNAP, would like to thank Vaughan for helping us with this information, it was great of him to give us his time and effort. We hope this may be of help to people starting out... Vaughan can be contacted at: **VITRIN GLASSMAKING SERVICES**
7B BELFAST RD MONTROSE 3765.PH:
PH: (03) 728 1482





STUDENT IDENTIKIT.....
MILES JOHNSON ↻

A FRIEND ONCE SAID TO ME, IF THERE WAS NO SUCH THING AS LATERAL THINKING YOU WOULD HAVE INVENTED IT.
 SPRINGING FOURTH FROM THIS THOUGHT I USE MY MIND AND ITS OWN PATHS OF RESOLUTION TO STARE AT THIS WORLD. WITH A MEDIUM SUCH AS GLASS, I AM LUCKY TO BE ABLE TO PUSH AND EXTEND ITS KNOWN CONCIOSNESS AND..... THE INFLUENCE OF MY GENERATION.

MOST PEOPLE IN THEIR LIFE WILL NEVER SEE THE SPHERICAL REFLECTION ON A BUBBLE TRAPPED IN A PIECE OF HOT GLASS. THIS IS PART OF THE SEDUCTIVE AND RE-INSPIRING GIFT OF GLASS.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO TRY AND GAIN AS MUCH SKILL AND KNOWLEDGE TOWARDS YOUR ENDEAVORS BUT IF THIS FAILS YOU CAN ALSO KNOW LOTS OF INTERESTING TRIVIA.

M. J.

DID YOU KNOW...?
 that snap wants the world to know who the "young" Australian glass workers are.
 And to do this we need you, recent graduates or students to write to us about you and your work, along with a photo, slide or diagram of what you're producing. We are also interested in your opinions, ideas, research papers, problems, answers, recipes, knitting patterns, etc. etc... This is a wonderful opportunity for you and looks great on your resume- so get to it and let us know who you are !!

SNAPCRACKLE+POP



BRENDA PAGE
 DOREEN WILLEMS
 DENISE SULLIVAN

SNAPCRACKLE+POP

SNAP 3 SPRING

**NICK MOUNT : PAGLIACCIO PLATES
AND POPOLO GLASS....
THE MOST 'OFFENSIVE' GLASS I'VE EVER SEEN**

Tony Hanning

I believe it was Gandhi who once said, "The same kind of thinking that created a problem, cannot be used to solve it."

In 1992 Nick Mount copped a proper shellacking from a group of 'feminists' at Pilchuck, after showing slides of his recent work, which included a series of blown forms depicting female torsos, seemingly bound by wire and mounted on a single shaft of metal.

Susan Stinsmuelen - Ahmend, and several of her class, took issue with Nick after seeing his slides, with one of them going so far as to publicly declare all Australian men as 'sexist' and 'chauvinistic'. (This generalisation she based on a single conversation with an Australian male on a train.)

Then, in late '92, Nick showed similar pieces in Victoria, at Artworks Gallery in Nungurner. The invitations for that show included a photograph of one of the Torsos from that series. Immediately, complaints came in to the Gallery from a number of women who took offence at the piece photographed for the invitation.

I was saddened to receive an invitation from Nick's Distelfink show, which this time depicted a Torso with 'flattened breasts'; a kind of 'male' version of the previous pieces. It is not so much a 'male' version of the other pieces as a 'deformed' female torso, which appears innocuous, but is deceptively confrontationalist. I use the word 'deceptively' because it is not innocuous.

It is the most offensive piece of glass I have ever seen.

Though I am personally not in any way offended by it, it's history and the statement it makes about the circumstances surrounding it's production, are a powerful offensive on the 'partialism' and 'initial judgement' of 'feminism gone wrong' and the way in which a legitimate cause (feminism) can unwittingly work against the best interests of society when poor thinking and a lack of perception over ride what might otherwise be a 'politically correct' point of view.

What I am arguing here is that no matter how commonplace or widespread a 'misconception' may be, its acceptance, even to the point of 'political propriety', does not mean that it has

anything to do with truth.

Initially, these 'torsos' came about as a consequence of the artist attending life drawing sessions; they were an extension of drawing. They were read by certain people as being about 'bondage'.

This is easy stuff. Most 'critical' thinking is. Poor critical thinking is easier still.

To say "I'm sorry you see it that way. They are not meant to be about bondage. They are about Life Drawing," might initially put the matter to rest, but it seems that neither side were prepared to leave it at that.

I can understand how, if the Torsos were in fact about 'women in bondage' they might be offensive. (I am led to believe that 'bondage' is a heterosexual practice and that certain women do indulge in it.) I can understand that as they're not, how an artist might take offence at being told that his or her work was not only offensive but 'politically incorrect'. Moreover, to be told as a consequence of 'partialism' and poor perception, that one's artistic endeavour doesn't meet the criteria of 'political correctness' when the artist's credentials and personal ideals are in accord with those of his or her accusers, is not only frustrating but likely to raise the dander of both parties.

It is akin to suggesting that all the boys in a life drawing class at East Sydney Tech, ought to draw flat chested women irrespective of the model having size 36 breasts, whereas the girls can draw what they like.

It appears that some people are not content with the 'alogical' views of an artist; ('alogical' in the sense that much of the thinking that goes into creative endeavour is incompatible with the logic of semantics, and yet is not 'illogical'.)

For this reason it might be worth pursuing some of the 'semantic' arguments of both sides, if only to put them to rest.

The initial complaint, that the pieces depict women in bondage, is both easy and arrogant.

It is arrogant simply because it implies ill intent

on the part of the artist. It is a negative response based on partialism and initial judgement. That is, were these pieces made by, a known feminist such as Ann Warfe, or Susan Stinsmuelen, the reaction would have been vastly different. As to the concept of 'bondage' itself, the glass is blown into a wire mould which restricts the form as it 'grows' around the wire: the wire is not applied to the already existing female form. Under these circumstances, anyone blessed with a talent for eloquence could wax on about the statements the artist is trying to make about the way in which a male dominated society, (the wire) predetermines the form of the women (the glass) by way of constraint and manipulation. This would subscribe to feminist argument; not oppose it. It is a semantic argument, and one which I know has crossed the mind of the artist, who for as long as I have known him, has shown a genuine concern for feminist ideals. But it is not an argument he would present; quite simply because the pieces are not about any form of 'bondage' whatsoever, they are about Life drawing. At least that's what they were about.

Now they are about something else altogether.

They are the product of an "us and them" mentality, or should I say, the product about the "us and them" mentality which seems to have, rather than waned, taken over virtually every aspect of our lives. It is rampant and totally out of control.

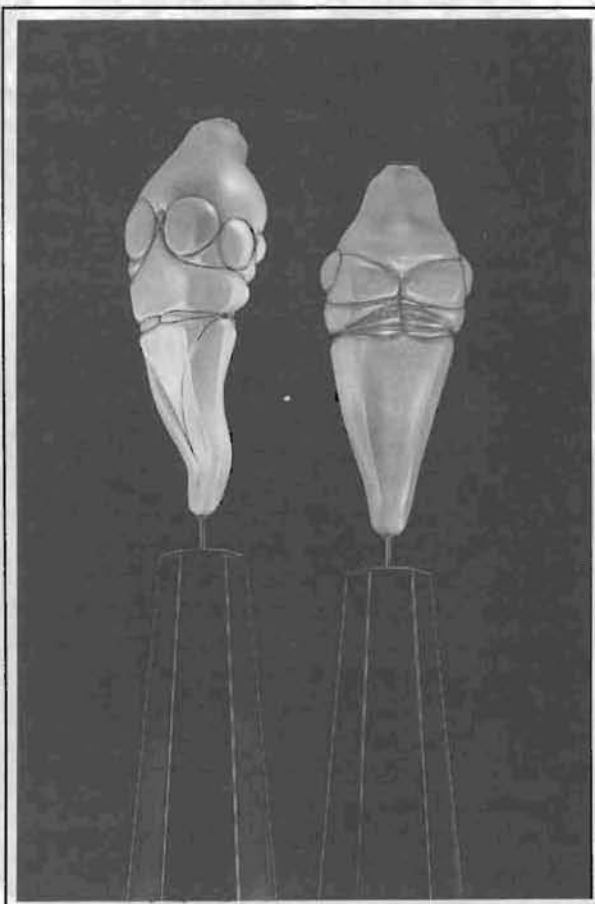
Nick Mount's new pieces are as much about the processes of polarised thinking as they are about anything else. In his exhibition at Distelfink, he has gone to the extent of making a statement to the effect that his newer works are a king of "Androgynous Self Portrait". (Androgynous: having both male and female characteristics.)

But I don't see them that way. I see them as a ploy to confuse that minority of feminist critics who avail themselves of every opportunity to feed their paranoia, irrespective of truth. They are offensive because they have a "shove it up 'em" attitude

behind them. They beg the Fred Nile's of the feminist movement to "have a go at this, then."

They are not 'androgynous'. They are awkward, foolproof things, designed to prevent street gang critics from sinking their boots into art.

It is a long while, if ever, since Australian 'craft' made such a powerful and perplexing statement. We probably try too often, to indulge in a 'glass' that makes some kind of political statement, and up until now I've never thought we've done it very well. Nick Mount has done it exceptionally well, and I suspect it's simply because he feels cornered.



I think it's a pity that someone doesn't corner him into making more of his Fishing Floats and Plates, which to me are 'signature' pieces of his dexterity as a glass blower with a wit and keen eye, but that's a critical comment and about all I'm prepared to say regarding my opinion of the show.

Read this article again. Though I cannot speak for Nick Mount, I am prepared to bet that both he and I are in total agreement with feminist ideals. But I'm also prepared to bet that we share in common, a belief that judgement by any person, based on poor perception should be kept as far away as possible from any artistic endeavour. Indeed, none of us, irrespective of our

personal ideologies, need ever attempt to dictate the content or execution of another's work; even if we believe that our views are those of the majority.

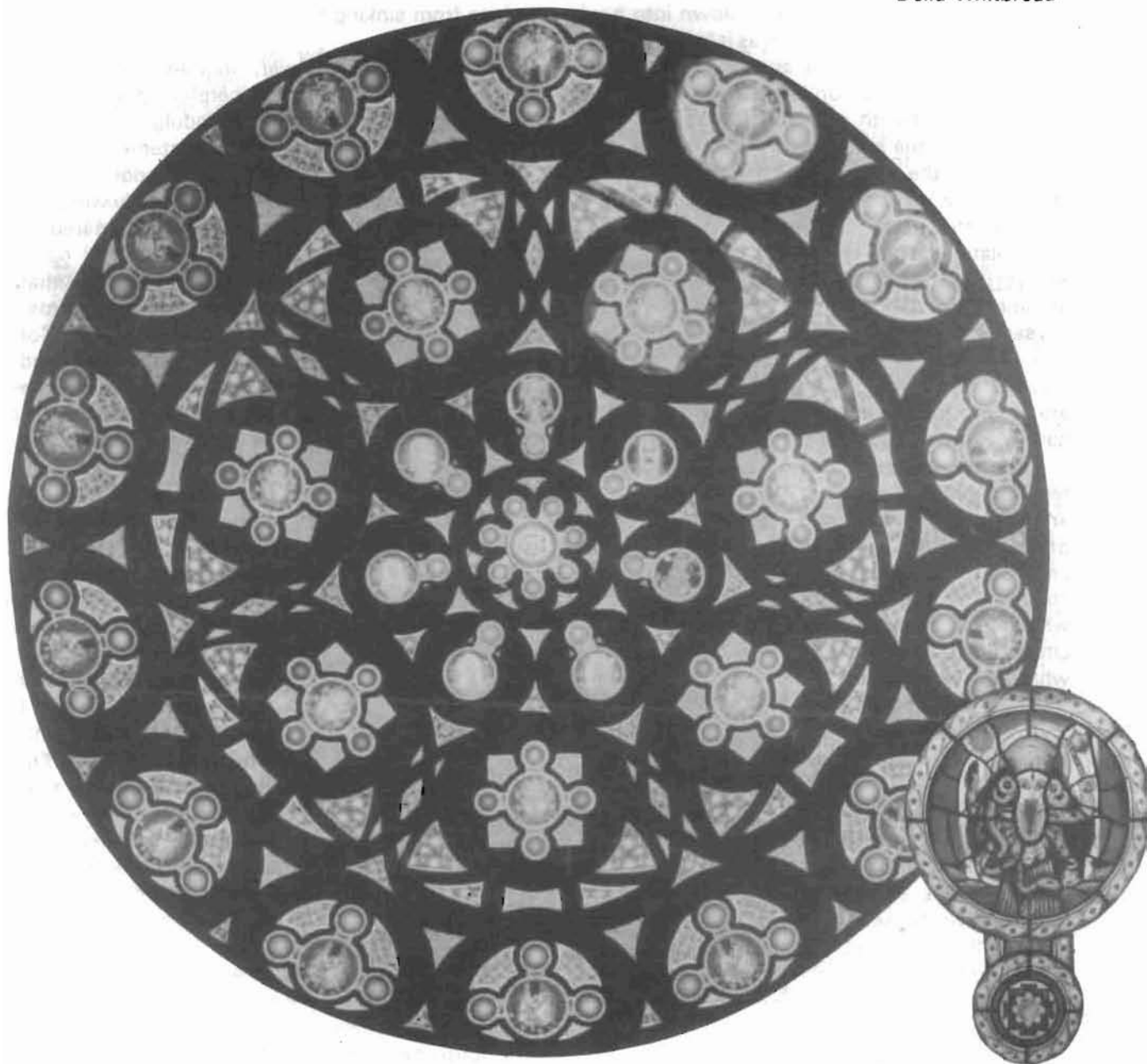
I began this article with a quote from Gandhi which suggests that we all ought look to the possibility of changing our thinking to overcome this 'polarisation' so I figure I might as well end with the same wise man.

"In matters of conscience, the law of the majority has no place."

Tony Hanning

IN THE WOMB OF THE ROSE

Delia Whitbread



Collage design of computer generated images for a Rose Window on the theme of the feminine principle. Joint first prize Computer Graphics Design Awards 1989. Detail of completed Kali panel

The following information was sent from Delia Whitbread, a London-based glass artist who visited Australia earlier this year. As part of her MA at the Royal College of Art, she completed the first panel of a Rose Window based on the goddess Kalia and has plans to continue the project if there is sufficient interest from women around the world.

Outline for International Stained Glass Project - 'In The Womb of the Rose'.

My Rose Window design was the visual outcome of research I undertook at the Royal College of Art from 1987 to 1989 into the iconographic image of the female in the major religious traditions. It was merely the start of a project that I would now like to continue as a group venture in which icons of the feminine might be reclaimed and seen afresh using the insights gained from modern psychology and feminism. A description of the project and photographs of the visual work completed at the

RCA accompany this outline. A thesis, currently in preparation, will be available for publication and distribution to interested artists at a later date.

In this first stage is to advertise internationally for women stained glass makers interested in participating in the project. Information and template sizes would be sent out and artists asked to submit samples of their previous work, a CV and a design for a particular panel with a supporting statement explaining their choice of subject. Artists would be asked to work within certain restrictions in terms of colour and six of figuration involved. All the designs submitted would eventually be displayed but only 28 of them would be selected for the final piece. Selection would be subject to professional standards and demand a promised degree of commitment. A proven panel of judges would undertake this with me. I expect this to take a year and would envisage 30-50 stained glass artists being involved.

The next stage of the project would involve the computer creation of individual designs for all the separate panels. On being processed through a computer design program they can be rendered artistically compatible by adjusting the colours and hue if necessary. This would require a computer with a sophisticated art program and technical help - also ideally using women specialists. At this time the selected artists would make their panel half scale for eventual display at international venues complimentary to the nationalities of the artists involved. Included in the final stage of the project would be the scaling up of the design, via computer graphics, to full scale if possible. If this could be done on acetate, it could be displayed back lit. This would take another year.

The exhibition of the piece could involve input from dance and drama groups to illuminate aspects of the design and the myths relating to the imagery and meanings. As a multi-cultural venture there is much scope for educational exploitation. I would project a touring exhibition taking one or two years in suitable international venues (not necessarily art galleries). With enough publicity I think people would pay to see such a beautiful and unusual art work.

Delia Anne Whitbread

*May 1993
Art Department
Froebel Institute College
Roehampton Institute
Roehampton Lane
LONDON SW 15 5PJ*

IN THE WOMB OF THE ROSE

A Women's International Stained Glass Project

- WHO:** Women Stained Glass Artists and Makers
- WHAT:** To participate in an International Project to design a multi-cultural Rose Window, 15 metres in diameter on the theme of the 'Feminine'.
- WHEN:** Projected International Touring Exhibition of designs and selected sample panels in 1995.
- DETAILS:** At least 27 individuals needed to design one piece each of a previously designed pattern on a theme of their choice within an accepted framework of ideas and imagery. A willingness to work within certain design guidelines is essential. International sponsorship will be sought when enough artists are involved.

DEADLINE: For initial ideas and commitment: -
1 April 1994
For Designs - 1 June 1994

HOW TO APPLY:

For further information send an A4 Stamped Addressed envelope to:

Bronwyn Hughes
Ausglass (Victoria)
50 Two Bays Road
MOUNT ELIZA VIC 3930

RUBY GLASS LENSES FOR SALE

Importer has approximately 5000 x 3" stepped lenses in Ruby Glass

Made by Wood Bros. Glass Co.
Barnsley
South Yorkshire England

[These lenses were replacements for the old-fashioned red roadside lanterns]

10 cents per lens [ie \$100 for 1000]
Interested glass artists please contact John Petrie
(03) 878 7877

T H E A C I G L A S S A W A R D

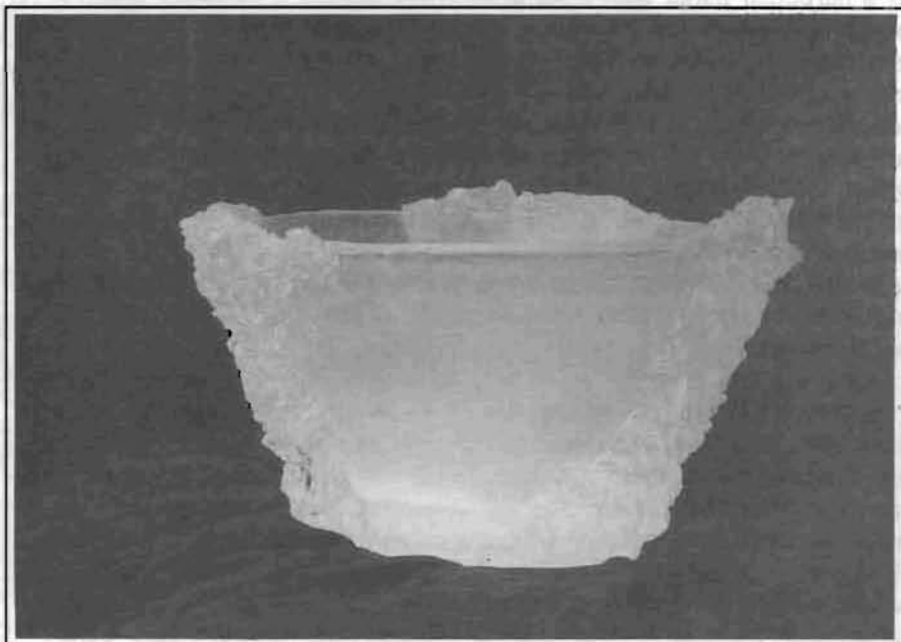
Meat Market Craft Centre

Robert Buckingham

My interest in glass has been stimulated over the last few years by a small, enthusiastic and knowledgeable group of Melbourne antique dealers and collectors who specialise in Italian and Scandinavian glass of the post - 1945 period. These collectors, while knowledgeable about European glass craftspeople and the prices of works from the Vernini or Orrefors factories in the auction rooms of London and Zurich are often ignorant of contemporary Australian glass. They are not disinterested, it is just that there is so little published material and so few opportunities to see local contemporary glass.

For me, this was why the Ausglass Weekend at the Meat Market Craft Centre was so important. It made a serious attempt to bridge the gap between collectors and contemporary craftspeople and work towards building interest in collecting glass. This will undoubtedly be a slow process but one that is essential for the development of a vital glass tradition in Australia. The importance of developing and nurturing collectors is relevant not only as a means of selling work but also extending a practitioners' creative endeavour by drawing upon the stimulation which can arise from a healthy dialogue with critics, writers and collectors.

The lack of serious collectors of contemporary craft in Australia has become obvious to Craft Victoria recently as we have been involved in organising itinerary for the visit of a major American craft collectors. It is a sad reflection on our culture that it is far easier to identify excellent collections of Georgian glass or Chelsea porcelain in Melbourne than contemporary Australian craft.



Cast glass by Bridget Hancock

I believe that part of the problem arises from a lack of historical documentation and I would encourage Ausglass to make this a priority in any future events. I was therefore pleased to hear that Norris Iannou has been commissioned to write a book on Australian glass for 1995 as this will go some way in redressing this situation. Publications of this sort, together with catalogues, articles and magazines form the structure for a strong and vital craft tradition and will build upon the excellent conferences and workshops organised by Ausglass. Ausglass has played the pivotal role in promoting professionalism and artistic experimentation in the field of glass and is a model for all media groups in Australia. One of the highlights of 1993, for instance, was the exhibition of Dale Chihuly's glass in Australia. This was made possible through the efforts of Ausglass. The presence of a craftsman of the stature of Chihuly in Australia also graphically illustrates the importance of creating a "star system", to better market and promote glass to collectors, galleries and the media.

My interest in glass, as I mentioned earlier, is predominantly Italian and Scandinavian glass of the

50's, 60's and 70's. I am drawn to the wonderful colour, technical virtuosity and exuberant shapes of Italian glass as well as the elegant organic forms of cool refinement of Scandinavian work. Both however tend to use glass as a highly expressive translucent material relying on the interaction of light to create its magic.

I found the majority of the work displayed in the ACI Award less reliant on the power of light than concerned with the exploration of the non-transparent potential of glass through experimentation with pate de verre, casting, etching, fusing and applied decoration. These interests mirror an international trend which seeks to redefine the use of glass as an expressive medium.

I have had the opportunity of reading Geoffrey Edwards' very thorough review of the ACI Glass Award in the Craft Victoria December 1993 Newsletter and was interested in the way in which he explored the "marine" imagery present in the work on exhibition. The liquid quality of glass perhaps naturally results in references to water and the sea. What I observed about this theme was the frozen or frosted quality that many of the works expressed. Rather than letting the glass appear in its liquid form, many exhibitors turned to icy, opaque solids.

Anne Hand combined these two elements beautifully with her *Ice Bottles* that appeared to be made of water polished ice. Richard Morrell's impressive objects on the other hand, look as though they are carved from glaciers while Gerie Hermans' delightful miniature glass villages look as though they would melt away if left in the midday sun.

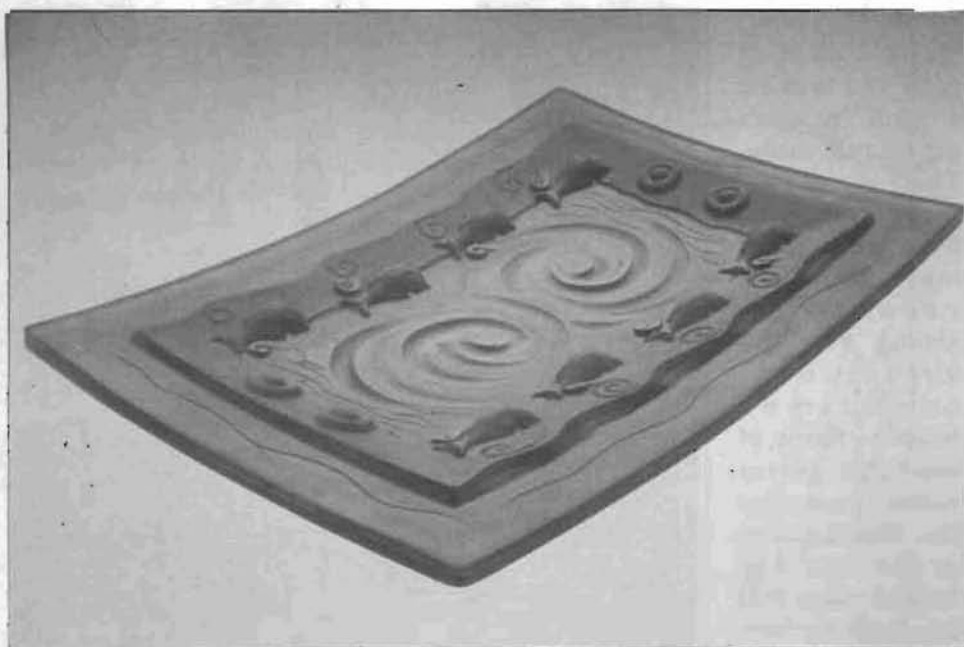
The work of Ede Horton and Ian Mowbray reminded me of souvenir "snow domes" with floating objects encased in glass solids. Mowbray's *Bra* and *Underpants* reminded me of the wonderful scene in Jane Campion's film *The Piano* when Holly

Hunter sank fully dressed into the sea amidst a swirl of bubbles and billowing skirts. These pieces had a charm and sense of humour lacking in most of the "serious" sculptural works that seemed unduly concerned with technical expertise.

The work that impressed me included that of Deborah Cocks, Bridget Hancock, Brian Hirst, Klaus Moje and Dante Marioni. I was attracted in particular to Dick Stumbles' small opaque vessel which encouraged me to believe that the lack of transparency implied a mysterious hidden depth.

I believe that the sign of a good exhibition is one that encourages the viewer to question preconceptions and to expose new ideas to a wider audience. On this basis the ACI Glass Award was a resounding success. It not only provided a chance to see an excellent cross-section of contemporary Australian glass but also provided an opportunity to learn to appreciate work that was outside the parameters of ones existing preferences.

*Robert Buckingham,
Programs & Services Manager, Craft Victoria*



Cast & kiln-formed glass by Michael D'Aquino

RICHARD MORRELL'S EXHIBITION

GLASS ARTISTS GALLERY AUGUST 1993

Jeffrey Hamilton
Review and sketches

Anyone entering the Glass Artists Gallery after having seen Sergio Redegali's work in the preceding exhibition and not knowing what to expect might have said to themselves "Oh, is that all...". Where Sergie's show was a brilliant piece of installation, making specific reference to and full use of the available space, Richard Morrell's show as, basically, a collection of 21 objects on plinths in a room.

But this belies the pithy intensity of the actual pieces. One could perhaps have been forgiven for glancing over the whole show, taking it all in at once and walking on; but we don't get off that easily. The pieces themselves work their own quiet magic on the viewer, the eye sliding over the voluptuous, sometimes feminine forms of the large blown works, arrested by the punctuations of the cast and formed piece that say "Hold on, look at this!" They seem to hold such power that one almost falls into a trance.

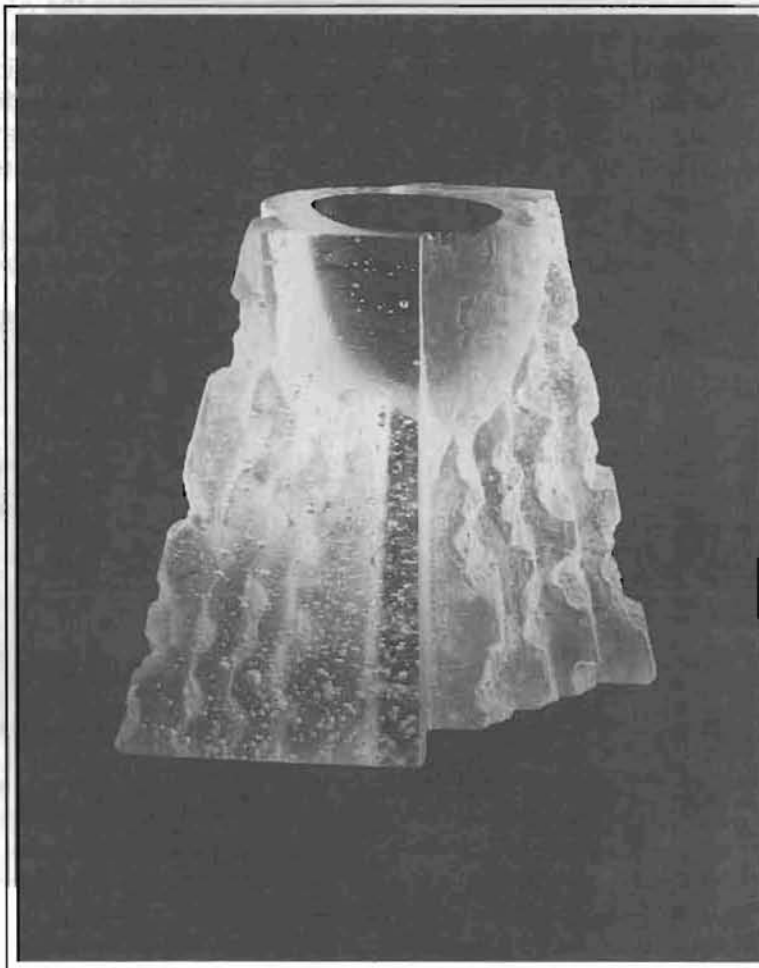
No love hearts here, no gaudy stucco or quirky juxtaposition of dissimilar objects. Not even an errant line or two of poetry inscribed discreetly inside a vessel! In fact nothing at all extraneous in this exploration of the solidity, fluidity and clarity of

glass.

Solid, monolithic forms coolly calculated in their geometry, yet with sections roughly hewn, chiselled and gouged, providing counterpoint to the smooth polished surfaces. Here the clarity of the glass draws the viewer down into the limpid depths to be

momentarily lost in inner worlds of apparent liquid, only to be brought up suddenly by a rough and gutsy chased out wall, channelling the energy back around the outside, climbing the mountain of the form to consider once again the pool of coloured light trapped at the summit.

Is it concave or is it really flat? It beckons you to poke your finger in and find out for sure, teasing you all the time. How deep is that bowl really? Is it tiny, as viewed from above? Or is it pulled and magnified through the depths of the glass mountain.



"Bowl of Choices" Richard Morrell.

Little bits of copper oxides accentuate the crevices, articulating the crags and crannies as one descends from these meditations to lift the eyes and cast them once more over the exhibition at large.

One steps away from these contemplations and is faced with what? Elegant vases of very



satisfying girth, standing some 50cm tall, straight out of ancient Greece or Rome in their classic form, particularly the urns though less so the cylinders, yet all imbued with a modernity that would place them well in the pages of *Arbitare* or *Interior Design*. One could see them on marble or granite slabs in expensive executive suites. I must admit No 19, *Rust Pedestal Bowl*, doesn't really, 'do it' for me. That mass of over-bearing brownish-red, with overtones of 1950's electric light fittings. Still, given the right setting, it could look superb.

But where do they sit, these super-production pieces, viz a viz the more considered sculptural works?

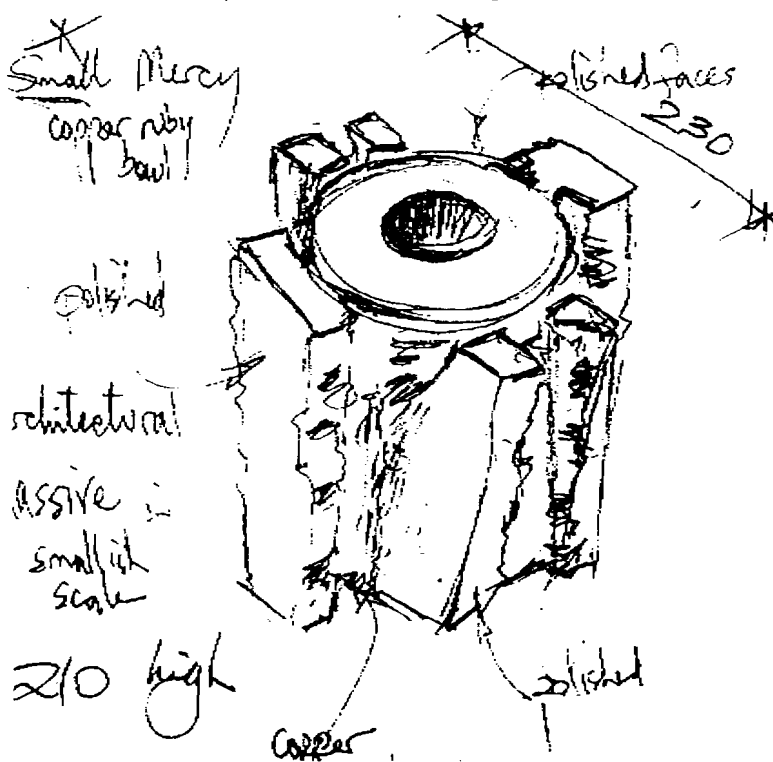
Richard himself comments that he is primarily a glassblower and enjoys being such. He makes no excuse for his production work, and insists on signing it. He in fact took Rob Knottenbelt to task at a recent seminar in Melbourne over just this assumed 'dilemma'. And wasn't it Warren Langley who said at an Ausglass Conference once "when will people stop signing their production work?"

But then when one looks at the objects themselves, they could hardly be called production work in the generally accepted meaning of the term. A 'run' of 5 or 6 a year hardly makes for a production line. When pressed, Richard says dryly "I call them glass vases actually". And they are huge: 515mm in diameter for the *Marble Pedestal Bowl* and 465mm high *Marble Urn*. These are giants in the oeuvre of the vessel.

Then falling somewhere between we find some truly seductive small scale works. Drifts of bubbles writhing through their 25mm - 30mm thick walls encasing a richly coloured little bowl. Weighty when held in the hands. Like a pool of thought. The titles are simple: *Blue Bowl*, *Ruby Bowl*, etc. Morrell has not invested these pieces with other layers of meaning as he has with the major works, such as *Bowl of Small Mercy*, *Bowl of Illusions* and so on. Some of these smaller works have a considerable presence none the less.

A couple of shallower bowls, sitting on an accretion of what are virtually legs, make an effort to bridge the gaps all in acid finish between those 'pools of thought' and the *Chalice* - a truly remarkable Art Nouveau piece which is really out on a limb. If not for the rather elephantine legs of bowls No 11 and No 12, this piece would be lost in a nether world. It is a curious construction of draped walls of glass, all acid finished, supporting a deep cup of green, also acid surfaced.

It's not that I dislike the piece, although there is a disturbing mid-line where I presume the acid didn't quite reach inside the hollow base - no, it is rather that the piece seems to belong elsewhere.



Draped velvet and sequins perhaps. But then, listening to Richard describe the process of making this work one becomes quite excited, picturing the great slabs of molten glass folded and flopped and pushed around, picked up on the bubble (which will become the cup), then back to the glory-hole, bringing the whole mass up to temperature. Needless to say, this rather spontaneous method is

not always successful: were it so, there would have been several more of these rather sensuous, Nouveau forms, perhaps making more sense in a group.

The small articulated bowls, lying somewhere between decorative objective and sculpture, are possibly the most successful of the whole show, and relate to the *Chalice* in a rather interesting way. In their manufacture, the assistant brings to the bubble fat slithers of hot glass which are draped over and then squashed flat onto the side of the vessel. The result is a very tactile, somewhat organic form embracing a pot of intense colour. Very pleasing pieces indeed.

What we have on display here is the collective evidence of consummate skill in glassblowing. Refined forms which feel 'right', that sit on a plinth and look as if they just happened, without effort, without sweat.

And it seems to me that having achieved this level of refinement with his blown forms, Morrell has pushed further on into the realisation of new concepts in physical form. The large vessels have grown out of a practiced art: they speak of many years of blowing glass, to the point where the form is a natural outcome of the skill.

The sculptures however are much more than that. Here we see Art as the theorists would define it. Each piece captures the mind of the viewer (certainly of this viewer) and doesn't let go for long moments.

A good vessel is a good vessel, and bears the stamp of its maker. But with these monoliths, I feel we look into the mind of the maker.

Paul Sanders offered the opinion that "this exhibition places Richard Morrell at the top of the heap". Certainly the Powerhouse Museum saw fit to acquire *Bowl of Choices*, No 1 in the catalogue. When quizzed as to the rationale behind her choice, Grace Cochrane told me that there were a whole range of criteria to be met before an object might be acquired for the Museum collection, and *Bowl of Choices* seemed to answer a great many of them. She positions the piece with Brian Hirst's *Votive Bowl*, of a similar blown-cast technique, and Anne Robertson's cast bowl, as being representative of "the diversity of skills and forms now found in contemporary Australian glass ... and informed by both the history of glass production and contemporary international studio production". It also came at the right time for Morrell in terms of his personal development and for the Museum in terms

of their collection.

One could talk further about technique. About Richard being one of a very few glass artists batching their own glass to their own recipe, the use of 3% barium to produce a glass suitable for both casting and blowing. One could talk of ritual, and the evident need for artists to address that in a society almost bereft of ritual.

Hirst's bowls are *Votive Bowls*. Redegali's exhibition was of *Ritual Weapons*. But there is not room here to enter into a philosophical dissertation on the anomaly apparent in the production of fictitious ritualistic objects - an area that may well provide fruitful research for a Master's thesis.

I haven't even touched upon the geometrical construction of the blown-cast sculptures, and how this enhances their symbolism, nor on Morrell's carving of the polystyrene model and the subsequent investment into a plaster/silica/ceramic fibre mould, with the blown cup in place. Perhaps Richard may deliver a paper on the subject one day: he would certainly have a ready audience.

So now, having reached a point Morrell himself describes as a pinnacle of his career as a glassblower and designer, pushing himself to the limit of his skills as they now stand, it will be interesting indeed to see where he goes next. What other ancient forms he may dig up from his subconscious.

Jeffrey Hamilton

Jeffrey Hamilton is a long time member of Ausglass. and currently the New South Wales representative. He is Director of Hamilton Design Glass Gallery, Lane Cove NSW, and is working towards a solo exhibition at Beaver Galleries, Canberra in April 1994.

DEB COCKS

Reportedly "gorgeous", Deb's new daughter arrived on the 14th November last year and quickly made the ACI Glass Award seem a long way away. Congratulations Deb and Andrew.

AUSGLASS + NETWORK = INTERNATIONAL GLASS INFORMATION (IGI)

Brian Hirst

A new glass networking organisation on a world wide scale has been formed at the May 1993 American GAS Conference, held (suitably) in Toledo, the birthplace of the studio glass movement in USA, if not the world, some thirty years ago.

An informal lunchtime meeting was held, BYO lunch box, coffee supplied, and representatives from Mexico, Canada, Japan, Poland, Italy and Australia balanced the similar numbers of US representatives. The co-ordinator of this gathering, and chairperson for the meeting, was Ana Thiel, Vice President of GAS. Her format was to be as follows:

1. Introduction.
Everyone introduces him / herself and his / her association;
2. Goals to be discussed.
Communication / Publication / Calendar of Activities / Activities of Common Interest;
3. Implementing the Network.
How we could make it work / Flow of information / Specific Projects.

What actually happened was that the first section of the meeting with some twelve parties present took up most of the 45 minutes available for lunch and it was decided that, with so little time before the main conference program resumed, we should do two things: firstly was to list our respective organisations and secondly to formalise the sharing of articles and information from our membership

magazines or newsletters. This was done with the proviso that the source of any re-published material be correctly attributed. I, of course, could only agree to this in principle until officially sanctioned by either the President of Ausglass Pauline Mount and/or the National Executive. This has subsequently been ratified and Ausglass is now officially part of the International Glass Information network. This means that our Magazine can now obtain more articles and information from overseas and other organisations can access material from our membership Magazine.

There was more general discussion about studio exchange, travel, obtaining machinery (second hand lathes for instance), but we concluded by choosing the name of the network-International Glass Information, and a warm invitation was extended to all those present to re-convene at the next GAS Conference in Oakland California in 1994 with the aim of developing the exchange further.

I personally thought it was a very worthwhile project and, if the generosity of spirit shared in this meeting can extend into the exchange program, it will be a highly productive and important network.

Brian Hirst, a delegate to the 1994 GAS Conference, represented the Australian Association of Glass Artists at the inaugural IGI meeting at the request of the National Executive.

ALAN SUMNER EXHIBITION AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA

Alan Sumner, one of Australia's most prolific stained glass artists, has been celebrating his 82nd birthday with an exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria.

While the stained glass may be of primary interest to the readers of this magazine, the exhibition is broad and encapsulates Alan Sumner's life's work as an artist. Comprising of more than forty works it seeks to show the major aspects of Sumner's work as a painter - there are works from his days with George Bell to works completed in the last year; his experimental silk-screen prints from the 1940's; deceptively simple drawings; small,

resolved designs for stained glass; and even a few stained glass panels.

The exhibition is supported by a small and excellent colour catalogue with an introductory essay by Jane Clark, the Curator of Australian Art at the NGV. For those who would like to see more of his extensive stained glass installations, a comprehensive list of locations is included in the catalogue.

The exhibition was opened by Mary Lou Jelbart on October 25 and will run until 7 February 1994.

L I G H T S O F T H E P A S T :

A PROMISE TO THE FUTURE

Bronwyn Hughes

On November 26-27 1993, more than 100 delegates from around Australia, as well as New Zealand and England, gathered at Christ Church, St Kilda to attend a seminar on issues related to the conservation of stained glass. The diverse group included artists, industry representatives, architects and builders, clergy, building owners and managers, historians and researchers.

The seminar was officially opened by the Minister for Planning in Victoria, the Hon Rob Maclellan, who announced the inclusion of this important building on the Historic Buildings Council register, a testament to its architectural, historic and cultural significance. It was the first stone church built south of the Yarra, and is one of a group of historic buildings on the Church Square site.

One could hardly have asked for a more appropriate setting for a seminar on stained glass conservation than Christ Church, with its full complement of stained glass installed over a one hundred year period and including all the major artists and firms of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The two days of the seminar were most informative, productive and enjoyable. The speakers embraced their topics with knowledge and enthusiasm and participants absorbed, debated and questioned; all brought forward many issues from a wide variety of backgrounds and perspectives. The opportunity to climb up into St Patrick's Cathedral to view the windows at close range and the discovery of a wealth of domestic and church installations in St Kilda's buildings were also opportunities for further meeting and exchange of ideas between delegates. The grand men of glass, despite being reduced to only two, kept everyone intently listening as they spoke of matters practical and spiritual before swapping ideas with their audience.

It was generally felt that there are many aspects which require further consideration and action and the following were seen as amongst the important issues to be tackled:

- to undertake a national, co-ordinated survey and full documentation of stained glass;
- to instigate a system of registration and accreditation for conservators and restorers;
- to develop an archive to gather and maintain cartoons and other documentation in trust for stained glass artists and firms;
- to develop a code of practice to provide a basic set of guidelines specifically for stained glass conservation;
- to facilitate formal and informal educational programs to raise public awareness and industry standards of restoration practice.

The hard work, therefore remains to be done, but the seminar was judged to be highly successful in bringing together a diverse group of interested people who overwhelmingly agreed to form an association aimed at furthering the conservation of stained glass.

The seminar was fully documented on tape, (the first deposit in our archive?) and will be published as soon as possible in the new year. It should provide a good basis for future discussion.

Bronwyn Hughes

Lights of Our Past was an initiative of Ausglass (Victoria) Inc and organised jointly with the Historic Buildings Council of Victoria. The steering committee: Bronwyn Hughes, Carrie Westcott and David Turner (Ausglass) Helen Lardner and Lisa Vagg (HBC) would like to thank the sponsors -The Melbourne Glass Centre, Consolidated Alloys, Desag and Peter Foster (English Muffle) for their wholehearted support; Rev Philip and Mrs Virginia Hutchinson for the use of Christ Church St Kilda; and to the speakers and participants who so eloquently showed their appreciation of Australia's stained glass heritage.

Apologies for the lateness of this issue.
Life intervened. *Graham Stone*

THE SIXTEENTH MORNINGTON PENINSULA CRAFT EVENT

INVITATION EXHIBITION
MAY 1994

The Mornington Peninsula Craft Event has been held annually since 1978 when it started from an idea promoted by Eugene Kupsch, the noted ceramist and educator who died tragically in 1984. The Event continues in part as a memorial to his promotion of excellence in the crafts.

The Craft Event is organised by an independent committee with support from Craft Victoria. Since 1990 it has been affiliated with the Mornington Peninsula Arts Centre, a prestigious venue and appropriate for the exhibition of craft objects.

Non-Acquisitive Awards of \$500 are made in each of the following categories

Ceramics
Metalcraft - including Jewellery
Glass - Blown: Cast: Fused: Slumped: or any combination of these. PANELS not accepted due to display limitations.
Fibre -Wearable, Non-wearable
Wood - New category

A Student Encouragement Award of \$300 is selected from one of these categories.

For further information and application forms contact the Convenor:

Lynne Heggie (059) 89 2661

GLASS ARTISTS TOUR OF JAPAN

Planning for the forthcoming "Glass Artists Tour" (postponed from February) is now underway for Oct/Nov 1994. The amended timetable will now take in the "World Glass Now 1994" exhibition in either Tokyo or Shunonoseki. In addition, Fujita Kyohei's annual exhibition in Takashimya Department Store Gallery will co-incide with the itinerary.

ENQUIRIES (cost, bookings, new itinerary) contact Connie Dridan (03) 439 5763, or Joyce Kerfoot (03) 8579118.



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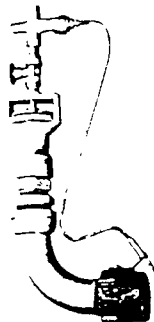
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EDITORIAL

At the 1993 Annual Meeting of Ausglass, held at the conclusion of the Canberra Ausglass Conference, the opinion was expressed, that Ausglass was and should be essentially a loosely-formed social group which gathered periodically to discuss glass. The meeting was left with the understanding that this was an (unwritten) Ausglass position.

I may be quite wrong, but it is my belief that Ausglass has grown considerably since those days, and is far beyond being a cosy gathering of like-minded enthusiasts, and/or professionals.

Within this magazine many views have been expressed which suggest that Ausglass can have considerable influence as a political, cultural, promotional, technological and social vehicle.

In this issue, Frank Howarth and Margo Oskarsson are both, in quite different ways, suggesting that a network of collectors be formed within Ausglass; the Lights of Our Past seminar concluded with a resolution to form a stained glass association to further the interests of conservation; and in his review of Nick Mount's exhibition, Tony Hanning is clearly suggesting that glass can be used (or abused) to promulgate political views.

Surely the development of a diverse organisation which can expand its thinking beyond the mere self-promotion of individual members is an aim worth pursuing? Maybe the inter-dependence which Tony Hanning refers to in his paper to the Glass Weekend Symposium, (printed in this issue), should be extended even further.

Ausglass has an opportunity to provide leadership for a diverse number of interest glass groups. It can be an umbrella organisation, the co-ordinating body, for all sorts of interested glass sub-groups including, for example, collectors and stained glass conservators.

This is as it should be. To aim for less is to deny the potential and influence of a growing, effective organisation, and to fail to pursue vigorously the interests of the whole glass community will ultimately diminish Ausglass' effectiveness as the voice of Australian glass.

Keep those cards and articles rolling in. Photographs are particularly welcome for magazine issues- black and white preferred (see Geoffrey Edwards p.11), but slides, (Richard Morell's 'Bowl of Choices' p.22), colour prints and even colour photocopies (Delia Whitbread, Rose Window) are satisfactory.

Bronwyn Hughes

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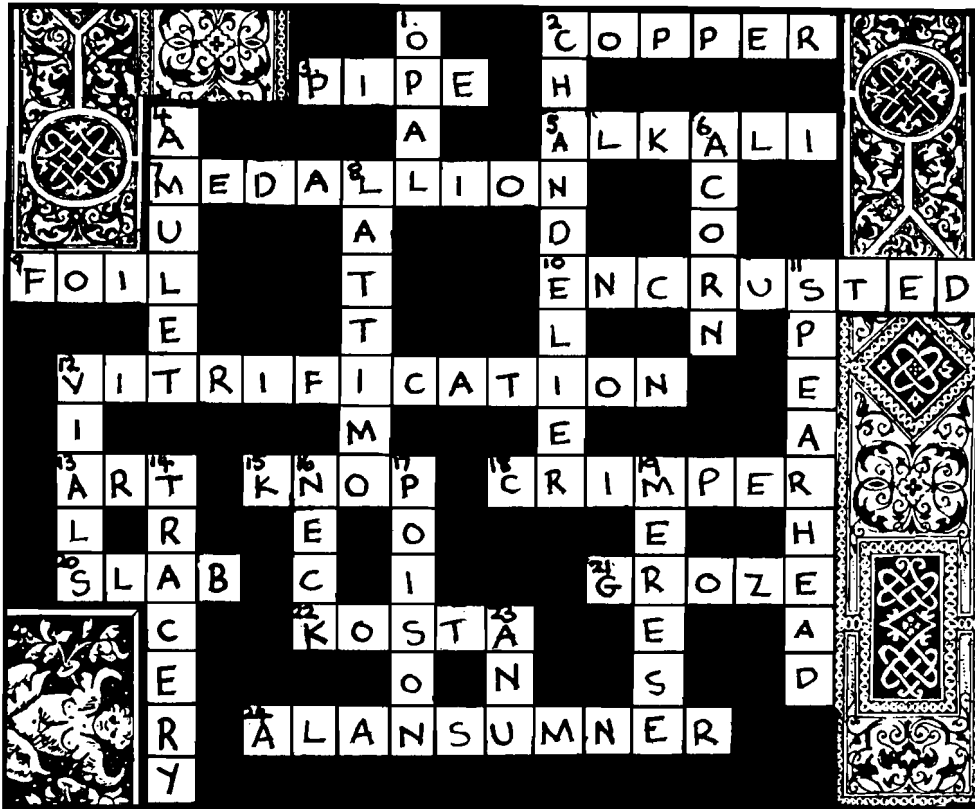
LAMPWORK BEADMAKING WORKSHOP FOR GLASS ARTISTS

Visiting artist Brian Kerkvliet from the U.S. will be conducting a series of workshops in various states, commencing with Sydney in May. Contact Glass Artists Gallery (02) 552 1552 A.S.A.P. to register your interest and provide more information re your state.

SYMPATHY FOR JANET ENGLAND

Janet England is General Manager of the Meat Market Craft Centre. Just before Christmas, her much loved daughter Kate was killed in a car accident. To Janet, Kate's father Phil and the rest of the family, our sympathy for the ordeal they must now endure.

Crossword Solution Winter 1993



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