



Nick Wirdnam's work is on show at Beaver Galleries.

# Private journey's simple success

*Nick Wirdnam - Portraits of a Life* at Beaver Galleries, 81 Denison Street, Deakin, until August 20. Open daily, 10.30am to 5pm.

**N**ICK Wirdnam's serene glass objects whisper "more is less" as you enter the calm, peaceful gallery. The exhibition is relatively small with only 10 works – and simplicity is key.

The work is spare in its form, although not in the concepts it explores. Wirdnam's work is deeply personal and is a private journey that audiences may share. The narrative belongs to him and his family, and he may be the only person to recognise it, with his work inviting viewers to take their own journey.

The narrative is ambiguous. Each work is a portrait of a family event – events common to all families and which are sometimes alluded to in the title, but they are not necessarily sad events. Life is full of wishing, and Wirdnam explores expectations and the



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## Review

reality of outcomes, and urges us to consider these.

Wirdnam uses a limited vocabulary of elements to build his works. Abstracted fish shapes – that often morph into hands, tears, or leaves – are metaphors for wishes or dreams. The fish, supported by metal frames, swim towards narrow vessels with flat, opaque walls and audiences can draw their own conclusions to this repeated motif.

In several works tiny changes in each element show the progression of a wish over time so the first element is significantly

different to the last. The opacity of the vessels gives a sense of time and permanency, which holds its contents closely and secretively.

Wirdnam is also showing tall narrow vessels, titled *Vessel of the conqueror* (Catalogue No 2) and *Vessel of the victorious* (Catalogue No 3). They have pale, matt surfaces with delicate key patterns around the necks and could be ceramics rather than glass.

Two wall pieces demonstrate the effectiveness of tiny changes, with each small piece of glass different to its neighbour. However, a frame from which three fish hang by their tails, *3 Wishes* (Catalogue No 6) exploits the translucent qualities of glass.

The complex concepts behind Wirdnam's work are belied in the seemingly simple forms. This exhibition will give viewers much to dwell on and to consider in their own lives.