

Immensities within

To see a world in a grain of sand, writes the poet William Blake, is to have the ability to perceive the essence of a larger concept within a particle of its being. Maureen Williams's glass sculptural objects are not miniatures. They range in size from 14cm to 39cm in height. Yet they are minuscule in regard to the immensity and the spirit of the landscape that Williams has tried to suggest within their glass forms. She notes that each of these glass objects becomes a three-dimensional canvas on which she "paints" her schematic landscapes. In a sense her forms echo traditional glass paperweights that also contain within them patterns and designs caught mysteriously, or so it seems, under layers of clear glass.

In the exhibition these egg-shaped domes from the *Within and Without* series are complemented by other works, such as the rounded glass forms in the *Larapinta* series and three works, *Altered State nos. 5, 6, 7* that depict a bust-like glass form of a featureless head and shoulders.

Williams creates these works by beginning with a white blown glass blank. She then works on this form by engraving it and wheel-cutting it. She then paints on the glass using enamel paint and allowing her brush strokes to

Maureen Williams - Altered Views: New Works in Studio Glass

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remain clearly visible. This gives the works a very painterly effect which is reinforced by the artist's use of chiaroscuro to achieve a three-dimensional effect. The ornamented blank is reheated, then encased in layers of clear glass that entrap the landscape and the imagery. In the four works from the *Within and Without* series, the landscape is a schematic suggestion of a panorama of hills, boulders, bushes and blue skies. In some works the landscape is green and fertile. In others it is brown, with the blue sky a constant element. A disembodied picture or window frame floats across the landscape, as if to frame and contain the view. I liked the use of this framing device. It suggests our presence as part of the landscape, even though we view it through the "frame" of our experience. It also suggests multiple viewpoints, both aerial and terrestrial, from which we attempt to read the landscape. The image of the viewer in the form of a featureless symbolic shape becomes a pictorial device that appears in many of



the works. It can be read as a symbol of our attempt to define our relationship with the landscape and of our attempts to alter it. In the work *Within and Without, 21*, the grey featureless bust of the viewer is seen in the framing device. In the *Altered State* works, this featureless bust takes actual glass form and is ornamented by the linear rings of an aerial landscape.

In *Obscured Landscape Rock 4* and *Obscured View 1* the linear designs predominate, making pleasing layered patterns that trace over the glass form. These forms have been slightly indented to add a sensuous tactile dimension to their surface. In all these works the artist achieves a pleasing interaction between the object and its decoration. However, the artist's reiteration of certain symbolic devices alerts us to the more serious intent that lies encoded within, waiting to be discovered.



Maureen Williams' *Within & without, 21*, above, a series, 28, above left, blown glass and paint.