

# Delightful work, a flow of visual and spatial activity

**Andrew Baldwin- Void**  
Beaver Galleries, Deakin. Until  
March 25.

**Reviewer:** Peter Haynes

The works in this exhibition are divided into two series – Void and Murrine. Void is characterised by swathes of delicate linear decoration, Murrine by a meshed network of lozenge-shaped forms. Both series use a lush blue for the decoration, and the artist certainly takes advantage of the innate tonal qualities of this to highlight the stark contrasts with the transparent and opaque glass walls of the vessels which they adorn.

Void 3 is a proud and confident piece. The dense band of lines is wrapped around the centre of the vessel leaving two lateral areas of transparent glass on either side. The band embraces the totality of the base and the rim and flows into the interior space (or does it?). The vessel form is endemic in man's history across millennia and across different cultural manifestations. It is something familiar and holds many associations.

Its use by contemporary artists tacitly acknowledges its history, and indeed overtly accepts this. Baldwin clearly acknowledges the role of the vessel as simultaneously container and contained in the naming of the Void series. Void 9 is both exemplar of the varieties implicit in the vessel form, in the refined articulation of its shape and the dexterous inclusion of decoration into the body of the vessel. Decoration here is veiled by the opacity of the glass walls. The band of lines plays a similar role to that in Void 3. The form is again given definition by the lines but their placement within the opaque walls denies them the same visual clarity as in the previous piece. This is in keeping with the more enclosed character of the shape of Void 9 and is a subtle reference to the spatial activity within the walls.

The nuanced contrasts of muted blues with the opaque glass offer an attractive alternative to the crisp transparency of the clear glass used in other pieces.

In the Murrine series there is less formal variety than in the above. This is not at all detrimental, and in fact asserts the familial characteristics of the series.

The form is simple and not unlike the individual motifs that constitute the decorative network that embellishes it.

Essentially, oval or circular with the tops sliced off, each form, as in the Void series, is a vessel. The



**GLASS ACT:** Andrew Baldwin's *Murrine 1*, top, and *Void 3*.

internal spatial configuration is more enclosed, and decoration here is all-over and does not serve a role in defining form.

Rather it encloses, but it is open enclosure since each element is in itself an open form, a graphic outline clearly two-dimensional.

In Murrine 1 the individual lozenges are somewhat freely delineated so that any notions of uniformity are denied. This individuality means that although they might sometimes gently physically nudge their neighbour, they are invested with a liberating visual autonomy that gives a graceful overall rhythmical flow to the piece. The openness of the individual motifs combined with the transparency of the glass vessel imbues a remarkable sense of lightness to this work, a lightness reinforced by the draped, veil-like quality that the lozenges in their totality hold and by the fact that we see through this work.

Conversely, the latter quality can dissipate the physical presence of the transparent glass to the extent that the impression that one is viewing a freestanding open mesh container is not inescapable.

Whatever, the viewer is constantly moved through and around this delightful work in which visual and spatial activity is unconstrained.