

Erin Conron's *Arc* in the exhibition *Loop* at Beaver Galleries. Photos: Adam McGrath

When glass becomes the canvas

CRAFT REVIEW

LOOP

Studio glass by Erin Conron. Beaver Galleries. Until March 25.

REVIEWED BY: Kerry-Anne Cousins

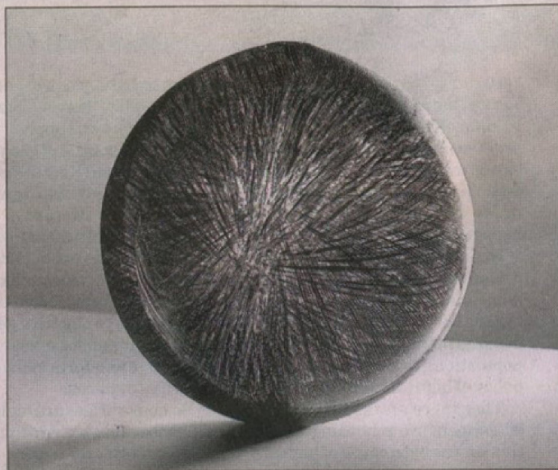
Erin Conron creates glass vessels that are sculptural and classic in form. Although these forms could be made in other materials, it is the artist's choice of glass that is crucial as its translucent quality provides the key to her work. In her glass vessels energy is generated by the multiple viewpoints created by the interplay of both interior and exterior space. A dynamic space is created, defined by layers of inscribed interwoven linear surface patterns.

Conron is a local artist who works from a studio in Queanbeyan. She graduated with honours from the Canberra School of Art in 2008 with an impressive number of awards marking her as an emerging artist of great promise. Since then she has established a successful professional career.

In 2008 she was a finalist in the Ranamok Prize and also in the Hindmarsh Prize in 2017. She was also awarded the Thomas Foundation Residency at the Canberra Foundationworks in 2012.

In Conron's graduating exhibition she included long, narrow glass cylinders in subdued green/brown colourations but since then she has pursued a more restricted dark tonal palette and a repertoire of spherical glass forms and simple open vessels. Sometimes these glass spheres have a flat surface sliced across their top or bottom. The central point of balance is changed creating a sense of visual tension.

Noteworthy is the artist's recent exploration of painting the glass surface of her vessels and incising them with linear patterns. Conron makes these linear marks by painting the lines on the blown glass vessels in black, grey and white enamel paint. She then refires the work to fuse the



In *Flare* the translucent quality provides a "window" into the interior core of the glass vessel where all the lines converge.

enamel on to the glass and then reworks it by hand.

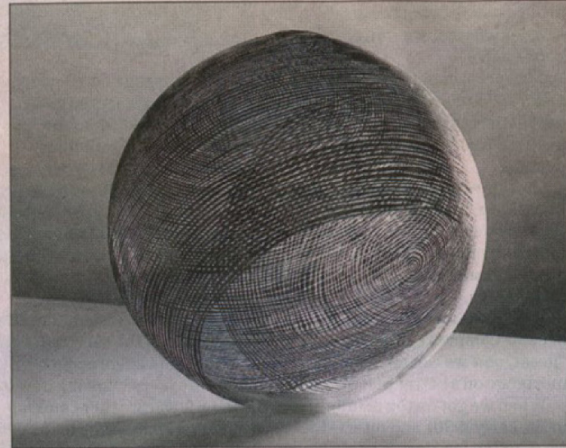
In the current exhibition the lines that cover the vessels are bold and confident. As the artist notes, the glass becomes a canvas. She draws an analogy between brushstrokes and her hand-drawn lines. Glass forms, however, have an advantage over canvas as the transparency of the glass allows the lines to be experienced in three-dimensional space. These lines flow around the glass forms in sensuous rhythms, criss-crossing each other to create dense areas of dark tonal shades of black, greys and even more complex patterning. The graphic quality of these lines has a similarity to the crosshatching used in drawing and etching. Each line has its own individual character, sometimes being broken up into sections and varying in thickness and colour.

I am reminded of the last great paintings of Emily Kame Kngwarreye (c.1910-1996) where she covered her canvas in expressive painted lines that were charged with

powerful emotion. Conron's lines are much more controlled and meditative but they have a similar sense of self-expression in the individuality of each mark. For the artist these complex linear patterns symbolise the multilayers of our human experience interwoven with the daily rituals of life that are stored in our memory.

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Works in the *Loop* series have linear bands encircling their round glass forms. Areas of clear glass are left unadorned so that as well as textural contrast there are



Conron's *Untitled #1*, *Loop* Series where complex linear patterns symbolise the multilayers of our human experience interwoven with the daily rituals of life stored in our memory.

changing interior viewpoints.

In *Flare* no. 7 the translucent quality provides a "window" into the interior core of the glass vessel where all the lines converge. The small spheres and open vessels are beautifully executed but it is the large open vessels (about 40 centimetres in height) where the works are the most impressive.

In *Arc* no. 4 the closely connected lines form a wide band that loops sensuously around the form creating herringbone patterns where the lines intersect at the interior base of the vessel. In *Arc* no. 6 the lines also criss-cross, creating intense areas of dark tonal bands that contrast with the areas of translucent glass. Complex viewpoints are created that provide optical spatial effects that enliven the glass forms.

This is a successful body of work by a confident and highly skilled artist. The larger works and new techniques of mark making the artist has employed indicate promising new ways in which her work can continue to evolve.