



**SHOW-STOPPERS:** Benjamin Edols and Kathy Elliott's *Peacock II*, left, *Swift I*, right, and *Tidal II* and *Tidal I*, bottom.

# Each in their element

**glance** — studio glass by Benjamin Edols and Kathy Elliott. Beaver Galleries, 81 Denison Street, Deakin. On until November 5.  
**Reviewer:** Kerry-Anne Cousins

Ben Edols and Kathy Elliott have enjoyed a very successful creative partnership over the past 19 years.

Their first collaborative exhibition was held at the de Vera Gallery in San Francisco in 1993 when they were both travelling across the United States and working in various glass studios.

Both artists are associated with the ANU Canberra School of Art Glass Workshop, having studied with head of workshop Klaus Moje. Elliott did her visual arts degree at the school and Edols, his post-graduate diploma. Both artists graduated in 1991. They now have a studio and workshop at Brookvale in Sydney.

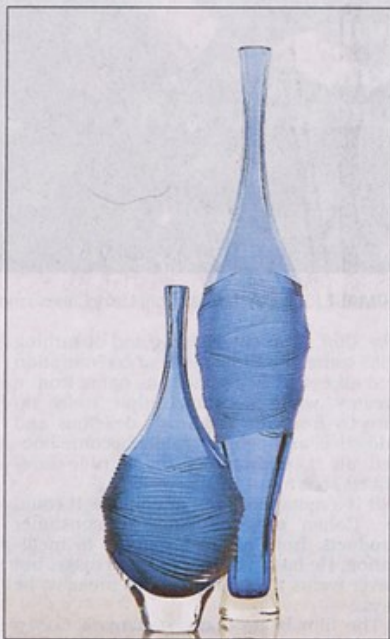
Glass-making, as a highly technical craft, lends itself to collaboration. In this partnership Ben Edols is the glass blower, a highly energetic and demanding vocation, and Kathy Elliott's part is the exacting and precise skill of glass cutting and grinding.

The concept for each work is the outcome of a pooling of ideas from both artists. The result is a seamless body of collaborative work where ideas are continually being developed and explored.

The work of Edols and Elliott keeps looking innovative and fresh but is built on a firm foundation of achievement. Certain forms keep reappearing over the years, such as the tapering flask, the horizontally positioned pod form as well as Edols' continued refinement of Venetian glass-blowing techniques.

Sinuuous elegant forms, accomplished and assured carved surfaces, intense vivid colour and a need to introduce a sense of drama and tension through the use of an unusual axis of balance in their forms have all become characteristic of their pieces. Among their best known works is arguably the series based on the form of the fallen leaf, where beautifully coloured glass forms are gently curved to make graceful sensuous shapes.

In the current exhibition, "glance", both colour and form are seamlessly combined in an eye-catching visual statement. The works are all show-stoppers — works with a dramatic presence and capable of commanding any setting. This is certainly true of a major work called *Poise II*. This large work (109cm x 18cm x 40cm), suggestive of a highly stylised bird perched on a tree, dominates its environment. The bird and



tree are united by a stainless steel bracket that has been especially designed to hold and unite the two forms.

The bracket has been produced to fit the glass shapes seamlessly using new 3D laser sintering that builds up the metal parts from layers of metal powder.

*Poise* is a good example of the skills of these artists. It is certainly impressive and arresting even though for me it is somewhat contrived and lacks the sensuous tensions

of other works in the exhibition. In the *Perch* and *Swift* series a frisson of tension is created by the way the bird-like forms gently balance on a horizontal axis. In *Peacock I* and *Peacock II* the rainbow hues of colour do indeed fan out in linear curving patterns like peacock feathers from the slim neck of the vessels. The swelling forms of these vessels seem to dance on their small bases, giving the works a pleasing sense of rhythm.

The works in the series called variously *Tidal*, *Drape* and *Peel* are elegant and sophisticated upright vessels. Created in a vibrant acidic green glass, the *Drape* series brings to mind the svelte bias-draped evening dresses of the 1930s. In the two works *Tidal I* and *Tidal II* the surface cutting is more textured as it is scored to suggest a ripple effect.

The colour of these latter works is a luminous Mediterranean blue whereas the more intense blue of companion works entitled *Peel I* and *Peel II* is the dark cobalt blue of old apothecary bottles.

All these works look fragile, with their luminous surfaces and tapering forms. In contrast the works in the series called *Emerge* are ovoid forms made from a casing shell of thick textured glass from which half domes emerge as if life is emerging from an egg. In *Emerge I* and *Emerge IV*, the red domes are decorated with coloured and silver leaf whereas in *Emerge III*, the most integrated work of the series, the same intense blue of the *Peel* works is used for both dome and "shell". Whereas the other more fragile works discourage handling, the three *Emerge* works invite tactile contact if only to experience their weight.

"glance" is an attractive exhibition by two artists who at this mature stage of their careers have found a method of working together that obviously suits them both and marries both their skills in works that are assured, elegant and sophisticated.