

Oliphant's glass works tell a 'unique' Canberra story

November 15, 2019
citynews.com.au

Craft / "From the ground up", Ruth Oliphant, at Beaver Galleries, until November 24. Reviewed by MEREDITH HINCHLIFFE.



"Kiln 2" by Ruth Oliphant, fused and coldworked glass, 30 x 41 x 3cm

IN this exhibition, Ruth Oliphant's hot and cold glass working techniques, such as carving and fusing, captures the empty spaces of the Yarralumla Brickworks kilns and tells the viewer of her interest in architectural spaces.

My eyes are drawn to the bright white light emanating from open doorways, appearing variously on the floor, on the ceilings and on the opposite walls. In several works the same light appears at the end of the tunnels.

The kilns tell a unique Canberra story. They were constructed to Walter Burley Griffin's designs with fan-forced short chimneys intended to stay below the height of the surrounding pine trees.



"Kiln 1" by Ruth Oliphant, fused and coldworked glass, 67 x 45 x 0.6cm.

Several works are enigmatic, for example "Light study 1" (Catalogue No. 1), shows the ethereal light streaming in through a shortened doorway. The image is not immediately recognisable. "Kiln 3" (Catalogue No. 4) is abstracted, and the light reflected on the ceiling highlights the construction of the bricks.

The three-dimensional spaces are flattened and disappear into the distance. Several works are curved at the top edges, reflecting the roofs and ceilings of the buildings. These works capture the atmospheric volumes of these beautiful old buildings.

Many artists working in glass have had difficulties in resolving the problems of mounting free-standing glass panels. Two small works sit unobtrusively in small metal frames placed on a flat surface. These successfully solve the issue in this case.

This is Oliphant's fourth solo show at Beaver Galleries since her graduation from the then Canberra School of Art in 2008 and I find a maturity in the work. I look forward to the next exhibition.