

This study in glass is good, not great



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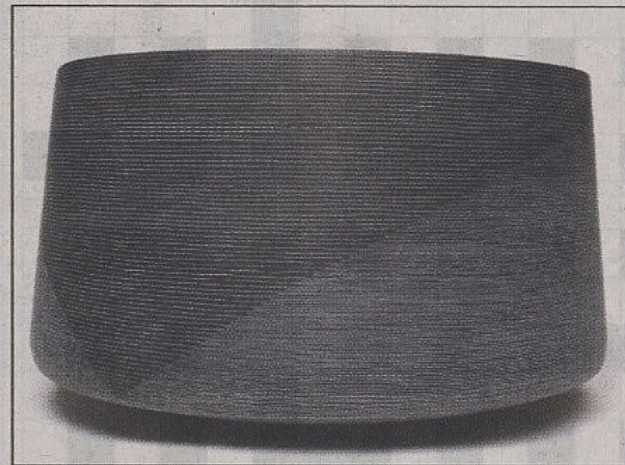
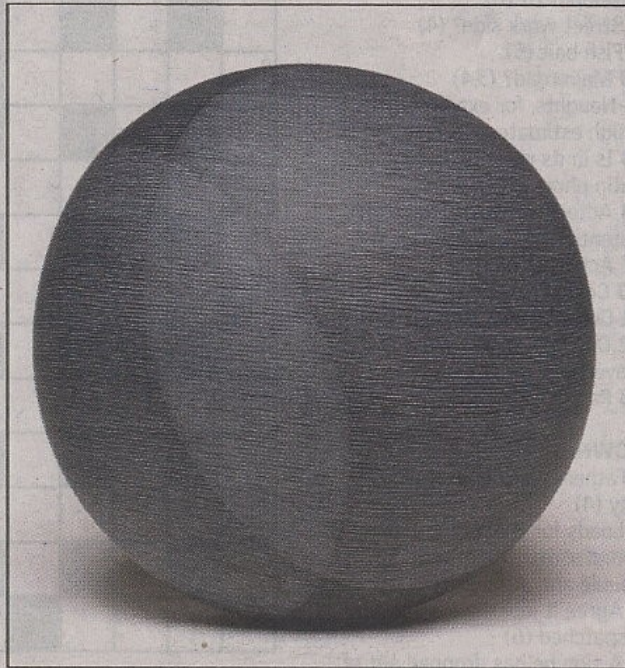
Mel Douglas: Between the lines

Beaver Galleries, 81 Denison Street, Deakin, until February 18. Open daily, 10am-5pm.

Glass is a magical media for artists, and in the last few days there has been a large range of exhibitions exploring its possibilities.

Beaver Galleries has supported Ausglass by holding two exhibitions to coincide with the 14th biennial conference, reflecting the general collaboration that exists within the glass community. It is therefore a little odd that Mel Douglas does not tell us who her gaffer or glass blower is.

Local glass artist Douglas has been exhibiting regularly since she graduated with first-class honours from the ANU Institute of the Arts



Works by Mel Douglas. Left, *Overlay 3*, blown coldworked and engraved glass, 37x37x31cm. Above, *Rise 2*, blown coldworked and engraved glass, 22x39x39cm.

in 2000 and she has received several grants and awards for her work.

She makes marks by engraving and cold working on the surface of simple, elegant glass vessels – these are generally dark, with the engraving creating light and dark

on the surface. More recently she has introduced other colours, including white and pale green, to carry the surface ornamentation. The pale colours reinforce the mediative qualities to her artworks.

Linear patterning is carefully

spaced, overlapping and intersecting, creating rhythm and gentle movement, rather like a soft breeze blowing over the surface of water. The overall effect is one of tranquillity and calm.

In this exhibition Douglas is showing new forms by way of glass

wall panels, and new surface ornamentation by way of feathery, gestural brush strokes. The five vessels that make up *Brushstroke* are dynamic forms with a slight rise at the base that lift off the surface they sit on. *Brushstroke 2* is a tall cylindrical vessel. The engraving appears to have more freedom and less control and I look forward to more works with similar decoration.

Several large vessels lift or rise at the base, giving them life. *Rise 2* is a larger form with engraving that encircles the form while *Crisscross 2* has a tiny chequerboard pattern.

I find the wall panels unsuccessful, particularly *Open Field 3* a set of two, in white. Their siting on the white gallery wall robs them of any life and they may fare better on a coloured wall, but they are devoid of the interest similar engraving on vessels has. *Rise 1* is a set of four wall panels, with engraving creating a predictable, rather uninteresting image.

Douglas is presenting a competent and interesting exhibition but I would like to see a bit more life and variety in the work.