

TOUR DE FORCE

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY BREAK GLASS



FOREWORD

Australian studio glass is internationally acknowledged for its freshness, innovation and diversity. Whilst Australian glass artists are widely acclaimed, the medium is under-represented in Queensland with a noticeable absence of tertiary glass courses and only a few hot-glass studios. The exhibition *Tour De Force : In case of emergency break glass* arose out of a desire to bring this medium to attention particularly the conceptual branch of the practice.

Artisan develops and presents exhibitions that explore the boundaries and relationships between art, craft and design and *Tour de Force* exemplifies this perfectly. The curatorial rationale focuses on creating an experience designed to inspire thought and fuel discussion about glass as a cultural medium. The exhibition features new work (with the exception of the late Neil Roberts inclusion) by eight highly-skilled Australian artists renowned for their resolved conceptual approach. In the words of the curator, Megan Bottari, the exhibitors are artists who 'happen to work with glass'.

Accordingly, the works in *Tour de Force* challenge the traditional ideas, methods, and materials of glass making. A mastery of the medium underpins all the work, infused with elements of performance art, multi-media, installation, drawing, painting and sculpting. The unknowable nature of glass, occupying the territory somewhere between liquid and solid, is reflected through the use of light, sugar, ice, water and states of flux. From the pensive and poetic works of Trish Roan to the wit and humor of Tom Moore, this exhibition is a tour de force in every sense.

Tour De Force evolved from a partnership between **artisan** and Wagga Wagga Regional Art Gallery. Both are dynamic and innovative organisations that are passionate about glass. The outcome is an extraordinary collection of work and an exhibition offering an opportunity to view the pinnacle of Australia's conceptual glass art.

Artisan gratefully acknowledges the generous support of Visions of Australia to develop this exhibition. With special thanks to the talented artists and the Curator Megan Bottari.

Chetana Andary, CEO **artisan – idea:skill:product**

OPPOSITE : Trish Roan, *Falling*, 2009-10, Blown Glass, glass beads, rayon thread, water, 40 x 18 x 18 cm.
Made with the Assistance of Brian Corr.

THE GLASS DARKLY

During my time as Director of Wagga Wagga Art Gallery I have had a wonderful induction into the world of glass. It is a very seductive world whose practitioners and supporters are some of the most passionate I have encountered in any art world. Glass is indeed a lucky medium - naturally seductive and sexy, lustrous and vulnerable, exploiting the interplay of light, form and colour.

My introduction to this silicon-based field came primarily through getting to know and becoming smitten by the extraordinary richness of the National Art Glass Collection as well as helping to facilitate a number of exhibitions by major Australian glass artists in the National Art Glass Gallery. I admit that before taking the Directorship at Wagga Wagga Art Gallery I had only a passing knowledge of art glass. What I knew about was Australian contemporary art, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. My experience with the National Art Glass Collection has been a rich learning curve and I have been truly lucky to have had the opportunity to discover this 'other' world.

By way of background Wagga Wagga Art Gallery has been collecting studio glass since 1979. In 1992, the glass collection was formally named the National Art Glass Collection, in recognition of its national significance. It is the largest public collection of studio art glass in Australia and currently consists of approximately 400 works that represent the history and development of the Australian studio glass movement. It includes work by artists who were invited to Australia in the early years of the movement

to stimulate glass practice, artists-in-residence from overseas and subsequent generations of Australian artists collected over a 40 year period.

The Australian studio glass movement began in the early 1970s, trailing the American movement by a decade. The Studio Glass movement is different from other art glass movements of the 20th century because it emphasises the artist as designer and maker, focuses on the production of original one-off objects and is international in scope. The studio glass movement in Australia now encompasses a huge number of artistic and stylistic responses to the medium and a wide variety of conceptual interests.

Wagga Wagga was the site of one of the earliest hot glass teaching studios in Australia. It was established at Charles Sturt University, Riverina Campus (formerly the Riverina College of Advanced Education) by John Elsegood in 1978, when the studio glass movement was still young. The hot glass workshop was encouraged by visits from international artists such as Sam Herman and Eva Almeberg in the late 1970s. In June 1979, Judy Le Lievre, the then Director of the Wagga Wagga Art Gallery, with the support of the trustees, committed the Gallery to 'develop a nationally important collection of contemporary glass'. In 1999, Wagga Wagga Art Gallery was relocated to a new purpose built facility which included a separate building specifically designed to house the National Art Glass Collection. The design, which references a splinter of glass, perfectly suits the medium that it showcases and has become one of the most prominent tourist attractions in the Riverina region.

The National Art Glass Collection represents a genuine overview of Australian art glass and the many currents that run through the discipline. The Collection includes works that demonstrate extraordinary technical skill and command over the medium, others that are charming and beautiful and some that are conceptually loaded, that inhabit the world of ideas as well as the sensate world of a particularly seductive medium.

For a collecting institution attempting to capture the context of the studio glass movement, it is important to be cognisant and embracing of current trends and changes in the focus of the movement. In the contemporary world of dissolving disciplinary borders, a rigorous and exclusive allegiance to any discipline or medium seems like an idea that has certain limitations, as is the hoary old binary position between the arts and crafts. However there are a number of tightly held and contested positions within the Australian glass movement and *Tour de Force* places itself squarely within this discourse, challenging some prevailing models and creating a platform where the relationship between the medium of glass and contemporary art can be explored.

Kevin Murray, in a recent article¹, postulated about some relationships between the media-bound and skills-driven world of 'crafts' and the world of contemporary art. The boundaries between these two art worlds have been permeable for many years but he noted that the perceived shift of artists whose medium defines them as craftspeople towards the realm of contemporary art, can now be seen as a

more two-way street. Just as a number of artists have challenged the restrictions of their craft-defined media so too a number of contemporary artists have embraced skills, processes and media traditionally associated with crafts. Ricky Swallow, Fiona Hall and Louise Weaver, to name a few, have all embraced labour intensive, skill-based processes in order to realise their artistic conceptions.

Tour De Force highlights this phenomenon. At least three of the artists in the exhibition position their work within contemporary discourses and would not be considered primarily as 'glass' artists. Other artists in the exhibition who do use glass as their primary medium, push at the boundaries of the medium and situate their works within current conceptual, philosophical and political dialogues. They add weight, they go deeper, past the seductive surface lustre into the heart of the matter where the medium is not the only message. There are works in *Tour De Force* that deal with eroticism and death, the environment and science; there are works that employ a pop humour to provoke and entertain; there are works that compel the audience to look thorough the glass darkly.

Tour de Force is an important exhibition with which Wagga Wagga Art Gallery is proud and pleased to be a partner organisation. Give me the idea over the ornament any day... in the best of all possible worlds we have both!

Cath Bowdler, Director Wagga Wagga Art Gallery

¹ Murray, K. 2009 'The party's over, time to do the dishes: Thinking through relational craft' *Art & Australia*, Vol.47 No. 2



TOUR DE FORCE IN CASE OF EMERGENCY BREAK GLASS

It mustn't be imagined that *Tour de Force* is yet another in a long line of group exhibitions purporting to showcase '*the best of*' Australian contemporary glass practice – on the contrary, it is deliberately distanced from such superficial, though standard, hyperbole. What the show does represent, however, is a line of demarcation between the conventional status quo that currently appears to hold the Australian studio glass scene in thrall and our (now ever so slightly flagging) expectations regarding the next wave of creative regeneration. Glass has become disappointingly same-same; and while imitation is clearly considered an acceptable, and often sincere, form of flattery – notwithstanding that appropriation is a post-modern art form in itself – it doesn't, by any stretch of the imagination, enrich the 'gene pool'.

In many ways Australian studio glass is a victim of its own success. A model (even pampered) child of the times, it's been tainted like everything else by the rampant global consumerism of the past decade or so and hooked on that most fateful of homogenizing agents, bourgeois aspiration. The progressive spirit that spawned the pioneer movement in the 1960-70's has been all but suppressed by arch conservatism and the truckling for approbation and (small-f, surely) fame. But patronage has always been a tricky business in the arts, and one suspects that creative integrity will always remain key. So how did we get to the stalemate of derivation and corporate *ennui* that presently characterizes mainstream contemporary glass, and is there a way back to the wonder and the joy? To the magic.

It is rather ironic that the pinnacle of success these days in studio glass appears to be the ability to produce a technically perfect object with the high-street designer cred of, well, of a factory. Because while it's true that skill and craftsmanship are the bones of a successful art practice, the most essential element remains elusive and relatively rare – genuine artistic spark. Talent or gift, call it what you will, it's a difficult quality to define. Perhaps it's visionary in essence, or borne of an innate fearlessness – whatever it is, it's not something that can be fabricated or acquired. It's empyreal, like the soul.

When Harvey Littleton started the studio workshops at the Toledo Museum of Art in 1962, and liberated glass from the functional principles and the in-house aesthetic strictures of the factory floor, there was a great sense of daring-do and creative promise. Glass as a material offered a brilliantly expressive visual vocabulary; a rich vein of the metaphorical and metaphysical, with the provenance of a long and illustrious heritage to boot. It had everything, from scholarly rigour to decorative chic. But more than that, it was a medium almost uncannily custom-made for the era. In the psychedelic decade of Fluxus and Process Art, when primal expression and experimental discovery of the material became paramount, glass couldn't fail to appeal to a generation of international artists switched on to the progressive culture and mercurial social climes of the times. It was sexy and immediate, and primed for a makeover. Indeed, the symbolic tearing down of those hierarchical factory walls was undoubtedly a significant part of the initial attraction.

In later years, when the primacy (and discipline) of craftsmanship was reinstated, the ‘gloopiness’ of the earlier, trailblazing generation was often disparaged amid furious debate ignited by an early observation, made by Littleton himself, that ‘technique is cheap.’ (He’d actually only meant that technique was accessible to all – that it was instead the artist’s idiosyncratic sensitivity to the material that was critical. The craft buffs chose to misinterpret the statement as a goadⁱ.) A retrospective tendency to dismiss the early ‘organic’ work of the studio glass pioneers as merely undisciplined and unskilled cavalierly overlooks, of course, the philosophic and stylistic *milieu* of the period (and the unmistakable playfulness and exuberance that went with the territory.). It was an era of significant political upheaval and socio/cultural revolution, aptly reflected in the typical plasticity of the art of the time. (And if you can’t remember it you probably weren’t there!)

The pendulum has now perhaps swung too far back the other way. From the 1980’s onwards, the concerted push towards technique and professional practice has been a little too successful. Marketability has become the overriding focus of the contemporary scene, and the relentless commodification of the arts has driven the glass sector practically straight back to its manufacturing roots – to a narrow, production-line mentality. High end virtuosity, without doubt, but calculated commercial product nonetheless. This, of course, is not problematic in itself provided that there is a very clear, and realistic, understanding of the art and craft differential. Because, while there is arguably no intrinsic superiority in either, both – though symbiotic – are fundamentally very distinct propositions.

To the wider public, all ‘art glass’ is (almost indiscriminately) fascinating. The seductive power of the material is consummate. But one expects that the practicing artist will have more technical savvy, and therefore ought to be more critically perceptive. Familiarity breeds...discernment. No matter how proficient the imitators of Dante Marioni or Lino Tagliapietro ultimately become, such patently derivative work will always lack the lustre of the genuine article. Not because any less skill is required, or the degree of difficulty is in question, but because the work doesn’t have any real creative integrity of its own. It’s a technical exercise with barely a hint of a personal signature. To make a proper mark these days, studio glass needs an indelible stamp of unmistakable individuality – and the reinvention of this well-worn wheel is becoming an increasingly rare achievement. Part of the problem is the lack of risk. When artists opt for the safety of the shallow, commercial end of the pool there’s not likely to be much splash.

It’s time to redress the balance and re-introduce the development of strong conceptual practices that engage on a broader, humanist level – in a way that pushes the boundaries and intelligently interrogates the art-craft dichotomy. In other words, it’s time to encourage the upcoming generation of glass artists to spread their wings and start considering their work in terms of a serious contemporary art practice. They need to get out and get funky with it. Perhaps this is where things have gone awry. A culture of accelerated maturity has been allowed to develop – resulting in a whole generation of glass artists starting out as ponderous sophisticates. It’s all too artificial. Too stilted.

You are what you make – and artists have an obligation to be faithful to their own true nature.

Which brings us back to the premise of the show; it’s time to break free of the generic mold. Studio glass in Australia has hit a critical watershed, particularly in view of the Global Financial Crisis. The sky has fallen in on the reliable bourse environment that supported the (seemingly invincible) buoyant art market, and the sector now faces the potential of straightened circumstances. This is not to say that the purse is empty, but the good old days of plenty, when literally anything could sell, are over. The market from here on in is likely to be a little less liberally indulgent. Artists will need to reassess their *modus operandi* – apart from anything else, there’s the duty of care to the planet to consider. Studio glass has a carbon footprint that, frankly, wouldn’t bear close scrutiny and in view of the looming environmental-global warming crisis, it behoves practitioners to reconsider very carefully what they make, and why. And, at the very least, make it count. Instead of banging out a succession of predictably vacuous objects, artists should start to think about engaging both empathetically and intelligently with material to produce something a little more enlightening. Something that inspires us to lofty sentiment, that alerts us to diverse ethical imperatives, that expresses the very essence of our being. Because *this* is the role of the arts, is it not? A visual expression of the cultural currency of the day.

Despite being restricted to eight artists, leading to obvious regrettable exclusions, the line up for *Tour de Force* presented less of a curatorial dilemma than one might have anticipated. Because while many people

certainly make ‘contemporary objects’ in glass, it’s quite a stretch to parlay that into a *bone fide* contemporary art practice. There are surprisingly very few Australian glass artists who even attempt, let alone successfully transcend, the contemporary art-craft divide. The attendant difficulty and confusion surrounding this issue arises partly from the continuing dearth of robust critical objectivity in the sector, and partly from the perennial mud wrestling over definition. But semantics aside, it would be fair to say that the participants in this show are considered by many to be ‘artist’s artists’. All eight have the sort of unique approach to practice that stirs the interest and genuine admiration of their peers – a certain sensibility that unerringly manages to connect all the relevant dots. It’s an indefinable quality that catches our breath and creates a shift, however modest, in the collective consciousness.

The curatorial brief to the artists was...singularly brief. Do what you do. This would be constrained, of course, by considerations of the space and group dynamic - but essentially there was no curatorial interference apropos the work itself. To have exerted any would have been counterproductive, and quite inappropriate given the nature of the project. *Tour de Force* is not a show predicated on commercial considerations. Nor was it the usual curatorial ‘cruise by’ and choice of existing work from the various participants’ studios – because no matter how recent the piece, once it’s been resolved to the satisfaction of the artist, he or she has already mentally moved on. It was somehow important for the tenor of this show, in the interests of authentic contemporary relevance, that the work should be freshly minted, specifically for the exhibition. This presented



ABOVE (L - R) : Deb Jones, *Stop Light*, 2009, Oil and spray enamel on glass, 9.5 x 9.5 cm

Deb Jones, *Chair*, 2009, Oil and spray enamel on glass, 12 x 19 cm

Deb Jones, *Life is Ordinary – Good Ordinary*, 2009, Oil and spray enamel on glass, 14 x 15.5 cm

Deb Jones, *Datsun 1200*, 2009, Oil and spray enamel on glass, 18.5 x 21 cm

Deb Jones, *Smokes*, 2009, Oil and spray enamel on glass, 14.5 x 20 cm

Deb Jones, *Bins*, 2009, Oil and spray enamel on glass, 18.5 x 30.5 cm

Deb Jones, *Puppy*, 2009, Oil and spray enamel on glass, 26.5 x 34 cm

Deb Jones, *Power Switch*, 2009, Oil and spray enamel on glass, 8.5 x 24.5 cm

Deb Jones, *Dentist*, 2009, Oil and spray enamel on glass, 12.3 x 12.5 cm

Deb Jones, *Match Box*, 2009, Oil and spray enamel on glass, 9 x 10 cm

quite a leap of faith for all concerned, not least the organising and funding bodies. The status of the artists brought competing commitments that would, in most cases, mean an eleventh hour start on entirely new work, *sans* safety net. The challenge created an edginess of its own (indeed most of the work was still being finished right up to the arrival of the courier truck!) This show is so *au courant* it has a pulse. The body's still warm. And it's thrillingly familiar. *Tour de Force* is an exhibition that pushes our cognitive buttons. It addresses our daily communion with the world around us.

Timothy Horn was an established sculptor for well over a decade before studying at the ANU School of Art Glass Workshop, so to all intents and purposes he was ensconced in the contemporary art camp long before venturing into glass. His well-honed aesthetic interlaces art historic references with current social mores, and he habitually plays with scale and decorative ornamentation, selecting material appropriate to the nuanced requirements of the piece. Though a departure from his trademark opulence, Horn's *White Death*, like much of his work, is a multi-layered construct of scholarship and personal experience (he's lived in America for the past several years.) Based loosely on the 'claveras de azúcar' (sugar skulls) for the Mexican Day of the Dead, and inspired by the visual lexicon of the Grim Reaper – from ossuaries to the Black Death to the Jolly Roger, even (this last referencing the unprecedented rise in modern piracy) – *White Death* is an allegory for the cyclical self-perpetuating death knell of civilization. Horn's doom comes courtesy of global greed and cultural 'refinement'. Drugs, obesity, the GFC, the warmongering of the Bush/Cheney Administration and the attendant atrocities, all culminate in the

declining hegemony of the American Empire. Mankind metaphorically gorges on itself once more, and the skull and cross-bones remain an ever powerful and perennially apposite symbol of alarm.

Deb Jones treads a path much closer to home; gleaning her inspiration from the often overlooked and humble moments of the everyday. Her monuments to 'the little things in life' celebrate the minutiae of day to day existence. In Jones's view, the things that are important are incredibly hard to put a finger on – they are the countless ordinary moments that build into the complexity of our common experience. Making is a means of solidifying a thought, of actualising an idea, and Jones's overriding interest lies in finding ways to convey emotional intelligence – the value of which society, in the main, still struggles to appreciate. *My mother's arm* and *To everyone who ever smiled at me that I didn't know* commemorate dependability and concord. There's a benevolence in the work that's palpable, and comforting. Reminiscent of Victorian alabaster statuary, the casts are unashamedly sentimental – a loving rendition of familiar qualities held dear. The same sensibility extends to the series of paintings on glass – here, by romancing the commonplace she extracts the beauty from the banal. But only through her eyes can we fully appreciate the unlikely charm of the light switch or the wheelie bin – it's as if we needed to have her draw it for us. Jones avoids being restricted to, or defined by, the 'glass object' by maintaining a practice of broad scope. But whether through drawing (her first love) or glasswork or public art projects, her primary concern remains an abiding truth to more than mere material; it's probity to principle.

RIGHT : My Family's Souvenirs: Uncle Barry/Auntie Barbara, 2010, Carved Glass and Glass Jar, 18.5 x 8.5 cm diameter

Nicholas Folland is the wild card in this pack. He's the one inclusion who hasn't had formal affiliation with glass in terms of having trained specifically in the discipline. But like a growing number of contemporary artists he regularly uses glass as a focal narrative prop in his installation work. And he uses it in a way that glass artists don't (probably because he's not distracted by the need to show-off his technical prowess.) Glass is the support character in Folland's habitually dramatic tableaux, never the diva. Invariably embracing potential disaster, his work is often invested with a sense of vertiginous hyperrealism (particularly evident in his bathroom piece *Raft*, and the nihilistic slant of *Anchor* (1-5) recently acquired by the MCA.) There's always a tension between 'civilization' and the natural order, and an enduring fascination with the re-encroachment of nature over the constructed landscape. For the purposes of *Tour de Force*, Folland (like Horn) has had to scale back dramatically. His piece, *Casual Acquaintance: the Sceptic*, packs a quasi-tasteful punch; the veneer of domestic social pretension barely hides the rudimentary mechanisms required to maintain it. There's often an emotional fragility to Folland's work, a sense that the carefully contrived façade of this ad hoc social experiment may yet come apart at the seams. Those superficial accoutrements of middle-class affectation – the pressed crystal bowl from David Jones, the naff reproduction hall table – reveal inner workings of a less than stylish nature, in an overwrought, obsolete and jerry-built system struggling with keeping up appearances.

Neil Roberts (sadly missed since his untimely death in 2002) was the first Australian studio glass artist to break

away from the confines of the contemporary guild. Having originally trained as a glass-blower at the Jam Factory in Adelaide he was soon increasingly drawn to mixed media and, more particularly, to found objects and general detritus. Roberts' abiding interest was the social history of objects; the vestiges of use, of stoic dignity and gritty diligence. In many ways his practice is a continuing series of masculine still life; constructs of the universal man's working life, glued together by the smell of leather and the sweat of blokie emotion. He had genuine veneration for the very exertion that material and objects represented, and the narratives ran deep. He also worked with neon; sometimes as a lyrical accent to a piece, other times as poetic notations writ large across the urban-scape. In the *BA na na BA na na MAN go* series, made during a residency at the Noosa Regional Gallery in 1998, he used fluorescent light for the first (and only) time. These works are a direct response to the sum of the parts of the object itself – the vintage banana lounge – and regardless of the obvious iconic and pop interpretations they will inevitably attract, the artist's primary interest was the woven patterning and formal minimalism of this classic ready-made. *BA na na BA na na MAN go* is a composition of rhythm and light; from the cool fluoro to the title of the piece, which references folk drum rhythms picked up by Roberts during a residency at ART-LAB, Manila, in the Philippines some seven years before.

When Trish Roan, the youngest member of the group, graduated from the ANU School of Art Glass workshop in 2006, she received the school's highly regarded Neil Roberts Award, and it's not difficult to understand why. Like Roberts, Roan is attuned to the resonance

of 'material complexity', though she often chooses more of an alchemist's path; a metaphysical study of perception through elemental experimentation. Indeed for *Tour de Force* Roan had intended to include work that wouldn't be out of place in a chemistry lab but, in keeping with all such empirical trials, the risk inherent ran true to form and that particular piece is still 'in development'. The work that did survive her exacting R&D is an exploration of the macrocosmic interconnection of humanity. She's long been intrigued by the precognitive nature of arcane sciences such as astrology and the fact that, regardless of their physical isolation, all societies throughout the ages have devised almost identical ways of interpreting the heavens, of navigating by the stars. In *Wayfinding*, which alludes to a voyage of personal discovery, the points of reference drop from a configuration of constellations visible in the October night sky. The seemingly indecipherable is unlocked by a predetermined alignment of celestial bodies. All three pieces in *Tour de Force* ponder the infinite threads that both guide and liberate us, and like all good art the apparent simplicity of the work belies the intricacy of the making. Roan's delicate and meticulous practice is, above all, an extraordinarily disciplined study of patience and observation.



Ian Mowbray, on the other hand, is anything but celestially esoteric, though his work is no less painstakingly executed. Not one to shy away from the most basic of instincts, Mowbray has long positioned himself squarely in the garden of earthly delights. His long established practice has been an erotic exploration of the lustier thematic of death, sex and the universe, and in a medium that generally caters obsequiously to the genteel and conservative classes, the sheer carnality of Mowbray's work has always been refreshingly provocative. He's the Nick Cave of glass; the satyric bad boy of the pack, drawing the viewer into a strangely closeted moment of faintly perverse, voyeuristic intimacy. *Souvenirs of My Family* represent a convergence of Mowbray's two distinct bodies of work to date the signature, 'gender ambiguous' blocks and his more recent snow-dome series – and herald a new phase in his classically *Decameron-esque*ⁱⁱ oeuvre. Mowbray serves it up, warts and all, in an 'adults only' slice of private contemporary life that inverts the conventional spectacle of glass into something almost indecently personal, and undeniably familiar. And this is key – the vulgarity and entendre is our common bond and, whether we're prepared to admit it or not, we instinctively know the circumstances of these preserved narratives. It's the chronicle of Everyman: the vulnerabilities, the imperfections, the broken dreams. For those who may not be aware, Mowbray spends unimaginable hours hand-carving all of his work (with tiny diamond files) – so in the parlance of his idiosyncratic practice, these works are one serious hand job.

Jacqueline Gropp is, essentially, a lyricist in glass. More specifically, she works in a style that invokes the melancholic assemblages of sixteenth century

Vanitas (a collection of objects chosen and arranged as a reminder of the transience and uncertainties of life.) If she had a trademark 'look' it would be a certain languid elegance (with just a hint of Victorian mourning.) Her work often speaks of yearning and regret, of resignation and loss. Her medium of choice is borosilicate, or scientific, glass; the material qualities of which convey all manner of appropriate metaphoric similes. Above all it also provides the alchemic edge, and the corresponding allusions that go with that particularly intellectually loaded territory. *Involution* is classic Gropp, in mere definition alone: 'involvement, intricacy, entanglement'ⁱⁱⁱ. But of course there's so much more. The beads (again, shades of Victorian jet) visibly mark/string together moments of lost time, of missed opportunity. The archaic symbolism of the knot signifies both connection and continuum, regardless of personal (physiological and psychological) failing. The ampoules represent containment (of both body and emotion) and carry a swag of related medical inferences; not the least being material inertia. This delicately realized flame worked piece is like an exquisitely composed sigh, barely more corporeal than the graphite shading that underscores it. It's a beautifully understated piece, a dignified surrender to the vicissitudes of life.

But wait, there's more; Tom Moore, who has long broken with convention to evolve a wonderfully eccentric practice that runs more along the lines of 'the theatre of the absurd'. It's a practice that is nothing short of a phenomenon – a mixed media construct amply laced with wit and 'alternative' wisdom. His imaginative narratives and his growing cast of unlikely protagonists (enviro-hybrids, all) pose

moral conundrums of surprisingly epic proportion. The latest episode in the *Cirque d' aMoore* is dedicated to birds of every conceivable feather. There is, of course, an established historic precedent for glass birds but Moore, in his inimitable fashion, has side-stepped the obvious and given the birds his signature humanoid make-over. *I Notice Birds* runs the gamut of glass and art references – from the shamanistic motifs of Eskimo art to Lalique to the kitsch lamp-blown 'shopping-mall' swan barometers, even – and like all the forerunners it's eminently collectible. But although Moore can turn a fine goblet or crank out yards of reticello with the best of them (he's been the production manager at the JamFactory Craft and Design Centre in Adelaide for the last decade) his personal interest doesn't lie in conventional ideals of beauty or perfection. He's drawn to characterization. Birds, he observes, may be cute but they're never quite friendly or warm. On the contrary they're beady eyed and prone to pecking (and, ergo, potentially fairly dangerous.) Traditional representations of birds in art are imbued with a certain stylistic grace – Moore's cast of players tends instead to be unruly and bogan, god love 'em. His installations invariably constitute a crowd, a deftly comedic party piece that celebrates the joy of craft and demonstrates that playfulness is serious business too.

All eight maintain practices that are excitingly innovative conceptually and uncompromisingly singular. What they do have in common is the artistic integrity and the courage and commitment to forge their own creative paths, and while paying all due deference to the master craftsmanship that necessarily underpins their practices, none allow themselves to be defined by

it. Perhaps even more importantly, all have maintained the generosity of spirit that echoes the early vocational (almost evangelistic) nature of the original studio glass movement; the dedication, the nurturing, the genuine love for the craft (without being obsessively enslaved by it). Somehow they have the ability to fine tune all of the salient elements and move beyond static representation to an extension of life itself. They plug us all into the common mystery. The work may be variously gestural, lyrical, or emotive, it may embrace social issues and rattle the cage, it may merely provide the whisper of a nudge – but whatever the manifestation, it resonates. It makes us stop and think, it coaxes us to re-examine our value systems, it asks us "will you be, can you be, receptive?" It fulfils, in other words, the proper function of contemporary art.

Megan Bottari, Curator *Tour De Force*

i Joan Falconer Byrd's interview with Harvey K Littleton
<http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/oralhistories/transcripts/little01.htm>

ii Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, published c1353

iii Concise Oxford Dictionary

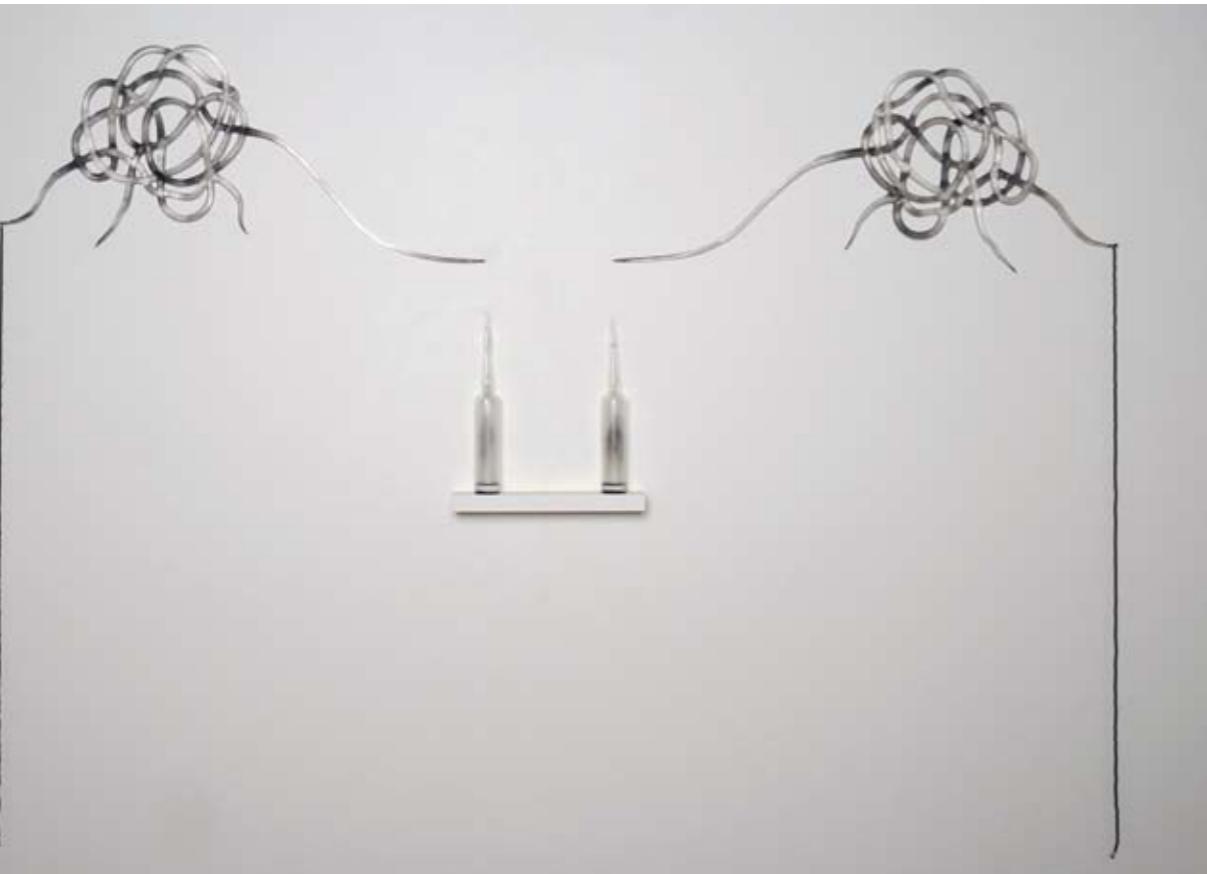
NICHOLAS FOLLAND
JACQUELINE GROPP
TIMOTHY HORN
DEB JONES
TOM MOORE
IAN MOWBRAY
TRISH ROAN
NEIL ROBERTS

NICHOLAS FOLLAND

RIGHT : *Casual Acquaintance – The Septic*, 2010, Timber side table, refrigeration unit, crystal bowl, linen doily, 12v LED light, timber plinth, 110 x 75 x 50 cm



JACQUELINE GROPP



BELOW : *Involution*, 2009-10,
Hot formed borosilicate glass,
pharmaceutical ampoules, graphite,
pencil, Indian ink, glass beads and
water, 188 x 130 x 55 cm. Made with
the assistance of Peter Minson of NSW



TIMOTHY HORN

ABOVE : *White Death*, 2009, Crystallized Rock Sugar, foam-core,
hot glue, varnish, 40 x 63 x 40 cm

RIGHT : *My Mother's Arm*, 2010,
Cast Glass, 40 x 15 x 12 cm

FAR RIGHT : *To Everyone Who Smiled
at Me That I Didn't Know*, 2010,
Cast Glass, 12 x 14 x 9 cm

DEB JONES



RIGHT : *Contemporary Epergne*,
2009, Blown & solid glass, wood,
steel, glue and bottle caps,
46 x 19 x 76.5 cm

FAR RIGHT : *Pond Life*, 2009,
Inflatable pond, sheet glass,
blown and solid glass, tin cans,
60 x 70 cm diameter

TOM MOORE



IAN MOWBRAY

BELOW : *My Family's Souvenirs Series: (l-r) Uncle Barry/Auntie Barbara, My Brother, We're All Here, A Lover*, 2010,
Carved Glass and Glass Jar, each 18.5 x 8.5 cm diameter

OPPOSITE : *My Family's Souvenirs: My Brother*, 2010,
Carved Glass and Glass Jar, 18.5 x 8.5 cm diameter



TRISH ROAN

BELOW LEFT & FAR RIGHT : *Wayfinding*, 2009-10, Scientific Glass, glass beads, rayon thread, water, 33 x 17 x 17 cm

BELOW RIGHT : *Falling*, 2009-10, Blown Glass, glass beads, rayon thread, water, 40 x 18 x 18 cm. Made with the Assistance of Brian Corr



LIST OF WORKS

NEIL ROBERTS



BELOW TOP: *Untitled (BA na na BA na na MAN go Series)*, 2001, Plastic and metal object, fluorescent tubes, wood, 57 x 183 x 7.5 cm. Courtesy of the Estate of Neil Roberts and Helen Maxwell Gallery

BELOW BOTTOM: *Untitled (BA na na BA na na MAN go Series)*, 1998, Plastic and metal object, fluorescent tubes, wood, 57 x 183 x 7.5 cm. Courtesy of the Estate of Neil Roberts and Helen Maxwell Gallery

NICHOLAS FOLLAND

Casual Acquaintance – The Septic, 2010, Timber side table, refrigeration unit, crystal bowl, linen doily, 12v LED light, timber plinth, 110 x 75 x 50 cm

JACQUELINE GROPP

Involution, 2009-10, Hot formed borosilicate glass, pharmaceutical ampoules, graphite, pencil, Indian ink, glass beads and water, 188 x 130 x 55 cm. Made with the assistance of Peter Minson of NSW

TIMOTHY HORN

White Death, 2009, Crystalized Rock Sugar, foam-core, hot glue, varnish 40 x 63 x 40 cm

DEB JONES

My Mother's Arm, 2010, Cast Glass, 40 x 15 x 12 cm
To Everyone Who Smiled at Me That I Didn't Know, 2010, Cast Glass, 12 x 14 x 9 cm
Stop Light, 2009, Oil and spray enamel on glass, 9.5 x 9.5 cm
Chair, 2009, Oil and spray enamel on glass, 12 x 19 cm
Life is Ordinary – Good Ordinary, 2009, Oil and spray enamel on glass, 14 x 15.5 cm
Datsun 1200, 2009, Oil and spray enamel on glass, 18.5 x 21 cm
Smokes, 2009, Oil and spray enamel on glass, 14.5 x 20 cm
Bins, 2009, Oil and spray enamel on glass, 18.5 x 30.5 cm
Puppy, 2009, Oil and spray enamel on glass, 26.5 x 34 cm
Power Switch, 2009, Oil and spray enamel on glass, 8.5 x 24.5 cm
Dentist, 2009, Oil and spray enamel on glass, 12.3 x 12.5 cm
Match Box, 2009, Oil and spray enamel on glass, 9 x 10 cm

TOM MOORE

Prank Through The Looking Glass, 2009, Blown & solid glass, wood, steel, glue, 40 x 19 x 67 cm
Intrepid Explorer Camp, 2009, Blown & solid glass, electric lamp, 42 x 19 x 27.5 cm
Diving Bird, 2009, Blown & solid glass, wood, steel, glue, 52.5 x 19 x 53.5 cm
Contemporary Epergne, 2009, Blown & solid glass, wood, steel, glue and bottle caps, 46 x 19 x 76.5 cm

Armour, 2009, Blown & solid glass, wood, steel, glue, 58 x 19 x 50 cm

Good Compost, 2009, Blown & solid glass, wood, steel, glue and fake moss, 34 x 14 x 18 cm

Pond Life, 2009, Inflatable pond, sheet glass, blown and solid glass, tin cans, 60 x 70 cm diameter

Wearable Glass Bird Helmet, 2009, Blown glass, 35 x 24.5 cm diameter

I Notice Birds, 2009, DVD video, Dimensions variable

IAN MOWBRAY

My Family's Souvenirs: A Lover, 2010, Carved Glass and Glass Jar, 18.5 x 8.5 cm diameter

My Family's Souvenirs: We're All Here, 2010, Carved Glass and Glass Jar, 18.5 x 8.5 cm diameter

My Family's Souvenirs: My Brother, 2010, Carved Glass and Glass Jar, 18.5 x 8.5 cm diameter

My Family's Souvenirs: Uncle Barry/Auntie Barbara, 2010, Carved Glass and Glass Jar, 18.5 x 8.5 cm diameter

TRISH ROAN

Wayfinding, 2009-10, Scientific Glass, glass beads, rayon thread, water, 33 x 17 x 17 cm

Falling, 2009-10, Blown Glass, glass beads, rayon thread, water, 40 x 18 x 18 cm. Made with the Assistance of Brian Corr.

Jumper, 2009-10, Stop-motion animation, Dimensions variable

NEIL ROBERTS

Untitled (BA na na BA na na MAN go Series), 2000, Plastic and metal object, fluorescent tubes, wood, 57 x 183 x 7.5 cm. Courtesy of the Estate of Neil Roberts and Helen Maxwell Gallery

Untitled (BA na na BA na na MAN go Series), 2001, Plastic and metal object, fluorescent tubes, wood, 57 x 183 x 7.5 cm. Courtesy of the Estate of Neil Roberts and Helen Maxwell Gallery

Untitled (BA na na BA na na MAN go Series), 1998, Plastic and metal object, fluorescent tubes, wood, 57 x 183 x 7.5 cm. Courtesy of the Estate of Neil Roberts and Helen Maxwell Gallery

NICHOLAS FOLLAND

Nicholas Folland is a restless artist who is currently holidaying in his birthplace, Adelaide. He is a Samstag Scholar who studied within the research program at the Piet Zwart Institute Rotterdam and the University of Barcelona, completing a Masters Degree at The University of Sydney in 2009. He has lived and worked in Australia and Europe, and examples of his practice are held in the collections of the National Gallery of Victoria, Art Gallery of South Australia and the Museum of Contemporary Art Sydney, as well as University and Regional Galleries, and private collections internationally.

MEGAN BOTTARI

Megan Bottari is a Far South Coast of NSW based artist who has consciously developed a three-tiered practice that combines making, writing and curating in the field. Since graduating from the ANU School of Art Glass Workshop in 2004, she has worked variously in arts administration and freelance curatorial practice, and in 2006 wrote the monograph for *Klaus Moje: Glass*, the second in Object's (Australian Centre for Craft and Design) *Living Treasures: Masters of Australian Craft* series. Though currently contentedly employed as the curator of the Bega Valley Regional Gallery, she nevertheless maintains a keen interest in glass and eagerly awaits the impending establishment of her own studio. She has taken the solemn pledge never to make a glass fish...or anything in cobalt blue.

Jacqueline Gropp grew up in a house sheltered by a weeping willow in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne where she explored aspects of the world through the material of transparent glass including: night stars through the lens of a telescope; the many eyes of a spider temporarily trapped in a converted Vegemite jar; too many bad 70's comedies through the television screen; and pink bubbling concoctions contained within test tubes of her brother's chemistry set.

Intrigued by Muranese glass, she came into contact with the material's molten form through glass blowing lessons before undertaking a Bachelor of Fine Arts at the Australian National University (ANU) School of Art, Canberra, where she graduated with First Class honours in 1997. Awards including the ANU Peter and Lena Karmel Anniversary Award for Art, Thomas Foundation Pilchuck Professional Scholarship and Australia Council Visual Arts/Craft Fund Development Grant allowed her to travel to New Zealand, Japan, Italy, the Netherlands and USA where she was able to exhibit, study and undertake research into the history of scientific glass apparatus and become enamoured with the depiction of glass in western painting and the films of Andrei Tarkovsky. She currently lives and works in Canberra where she sporadically creates works for public scrutiny.

JACQUELINE GROPP

TIMOTHY HORN

Timothy Horn's work focuses on the meeting point between the natural and constructed worlds. Much of his work has drawn extensively from the sphere of decorative arts, concerned with the inherent/assigned gendering of objects. More recent work attempts to locate the area of slippage between the organic and artificial. Often working at an ambitious scale, he chooses to work with materials for their inherent physical and metaphorical qualities. Inspired by 19th-century zoologist Ernst Haeckel's engravings of jellyfish, he began an ongoing series of large works made of transparent rubber, that culminated in his first solo exhibition in New York, *Villa Medusa* in 2006. More recently the fabled "Amber Room" belonging to Catherine the Great of Russia, considered "the eighth wonder of the world", inspired a crystallized rock sugar encrusted carriage for Horn's exhibition *Bitter Suite* at the de Young Museum in San Francisco in 2008. Horn's work has featured recently in exhibitions at the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh, Museum of Arts and Design, New York, GoMA, Brisbane, and the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra. A Samstag Fellowship took Horn to study in Boston in 2002. He has lived in New Mexico since 2006. It is a region and landscape, which has greatly influenced his work.

I was born in NSW. My sister was the reader and I was the maker. That's the way it still is. I spent my 20's at art school or travelling finishing at Canberra School of Art in 1992.

I then made the move to the JamFactory and Adelaide and it has become my home. I became a glassblower and in 1995 opened a glass studio with my friends called Blue Pony. I enjoy drawing, making design work, artwork or for that matter anything.

In 2007 Jess Loughlin and myself opened a new studio called gate 8. Presently I share my time between that studio and the JamFactory glass studio. We run the jam studio as a team in which I am the studio designer.

TOM MOORE

Tom Moore uses traditional and innovative glass techniques to breathe life into his eccentric hybrid specimens. Though Tom's inventive creatures are mostly friendly, he addresses darker issues such as nature vs. industry in his dreamscape dioramas. For the last 10 years Tom has been the production manager at the JamFactory Craft and Design Center in Australia, where he makes varied commissioned items, and trains graduates in glass production and exhibition work. Tom exhibits his glass in elaborate mixed media environments and was featured in a show at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney this past Fall. Tom's work has received a number of awards and is in many notable collections.

DEB JONES

IAN MOWBRAY

Ian Mowbray has been working in glass for nigh on three decades. He originally rented space in the Jamfactory with partner Vicki Torr in 1981, followed by the establishment of Moto Glass in 1989. Since moving to Melbourne in 2000 and setting up a new studio (World Glass), Mowbray has been working exclusively with kiln formed glass. Only too aware that glass is already extraordinarily beautiful in its raw state, Mowbray resists the easy path of coasting on the obvious material properties and investigates instead the darker potential offered by the medium. His main focus lies in the personal political: the torments and desires inherent in daily domesticia. He is represented by Diane Tanzer Gallery.

TRISH ROAN

Trish Roan grew up in Melbourne, and moved to Canberra to study glass at the ANU School of Art, finishing with Honours in 2006. Since then she has been working as a glassblowing assistant for several artists, as well as working in her own studio at ANCA (Australian National Capital Artists). She has exhibited her work in various locations in Canberra, as well as in Denmark as part of the 'Young Glass 2007' exhibition. Trish recently undertook a research residency at the Sydney College of the Arts in 2009. Her practice lies somewhere in the margins of crude science and everyday miracles. For now, she lives and works in Canberra.

Neil Roberts trained as a glassblower at the JamFactory in Adelaide in the late 1970's, followed by a stint at the Orrefors Glass School in Sweden in 1981 and the New York Experimental Glass Workshop (Urban Glass) a year later. On his return to Australia he was invited by Klaus Moje to join him as associate lecturer at the fledgling Canberra School of Arts Glass Workshop. Roberts had a broad arts practice that straddled disciplines and media, and a natural curiosity and empathy for materials that inevitably eventually drew him away from a dedicated glass focus. He was the recipient of numerous awards including Australia Council residencies in New York (1989) and Manila (1991), the inaugural ACT Creative Arts Fellowship for Visual Arts (1995) and the Canberra Arts Patrons Organization Fellowship (2000). Working primarily with glass, neon and collected objects, he was a sculptor of growing reputation at the time of his accidental death in 2002. The extraordinary spirit of his practice remains evident in his extant public art commissions and the large body of collected works held both in private and public hands.

NEIL
ROBERTS