



Holly Grace, left, and Lisa Cahill at their new Denmark-inspired show, *Light Translations*, at the Canberra Glassworks. Photo: ELESIA KURTZ

Love of light bonds artists together

By Sally Pryor
Arts Editor

Cool Scandinavian tones, long freezing winters and a quality of light that couldn't be more different from Australia – it's easy to see how a pair of glass artists could both become fixated on a country like Denmark.

When Lisa Cahill and Holly Grace came up with the idea of doing a joint exhibition at the Museum of Glass at Ebeltoft on Denmark's east coast, it seemed like a conceptual match made in heaven.

Although their styles are very different – Grace creates large engraved vessels imbued with gold light, while Cahill's works are ethereal wall-mounted sculptures – the resulting exhibition in January was a dreamlike success.

And now, the show is making its way back to Canberra, where Cahill has a studio and Melbourne-based Grace regularly uses the Canberra Glassworks kilns.

Grace said the pair, who met studying at Monash University in Melbourne, had long bonded over their love of Denmark.

Cahill's family is Danish, and she's been travelling there since she was a child, while Grace studied at Bornholm, the country's Baltic island.

"[The show] is basically looking at the landscape and the quality of light, in Australia and Denmark, which is quite different," she said.

"The light in Australia tends to be really quite strong, and in Denmark, it's kind of softer light, you get to see more of the colours in the sky and especially with glass, light's actually quite important in how it changes the surface and the colours within the glass. It's quite interactive with its surroundings."

Cahill said Denmark had always crept into her work in various ways, and stemmed from her time living there as an 18-year-old.

"A lot of people say my work is very Scandinavian, very simplistic and the colours are subtle, and I thought, why have I done work like that?" she said.

"The first winter I had there, the sea froze over. So between Sweden and Denmark there was about 100 metres worth of ice, you could

walk out on the waves and you could even see that the waves had frozen inside. It was unbelievable."

Despite planning the exhibition together, Grace and Cahill didn't actually see their works side-by-side until they arrived in Ebeltoft to install it, and were initially shocked at how profoundly different their pieces were.

"In a way it was almost two solo shows – it's very different work," said Grace.

"But the work actually balances each other out. Lisa's is probably more simple, and I've got a lot of detail in mine, so it's actually quite a nice contrast between the two."

Cahill said she was pleasantly surprised at how well the pieces worked together.

"They're very different works and they're obviously different colours, but I think it's because it's coming from the same concept, we have the same sensibility, but somehow the show works," she says.

■ *Light Translations*, by Lisa Cahill and Holly Grace, is showing at Canberra Glassworks from June 4 to July 17.