

Beguiling creatures and imaginary worlds in glass

CRAFT

Kerry-Anne Cousins

TOM Moore: Glassorama - BioDrama! Diorama all the ding-dong-day! Beaver Galleries, 81 Denison Street, Deakin, until November 21. beavergalleries.com.au.

Tom Moore has created a singular vision of a world fashioned in glass, with imaginary hybrid creatures that move fluidly between plant, human and animal forms.

Not for him are the space age fantasies of science fiction. Nor are his creatures robots from an alien world.

And, although they may inhabit a world of the future - a world changed perhaps by our own environmental action - they are yet familiar.

Moore has been making these small creatures and creating imaginary worlds for them to inhabit for many years. Because of their beguiling nature it is easy to overlook the sheer bravado of the works.

This is evident especially in the artist's mastery of the traditional technical skills of Venetian glass making. The use of Venetian "canes" provide the flowing bands of colour in the glass that are Moore's decorative signature.

There is also the skill with which he han-

dles the glass, highlighting its fluidity and plasticity, while his use of a rainbow palette of colours animates the works so that they sparkle and zing with energy and vitality.

The narrative is played out like a theatrical event on the flat top of a round wooden turntable with three separate "stage sets".

Against an urban backdrop of buildings with roads blanketing the earth or green grass and blue sky, small glass creatures (the tallest is 52cm) take their place.

Some are "motorised" by being provided with wheels although they actually move on small circular revolving platforms like precious objects in a merchandising display. Others become winged galleons and chariots.

Moore has the ability to make us believe in these small creatures so that we readily accept their surreal accoutrements of wings, hands, fins, tails, and the many all-seeing small eyes - protuberances that seemingly sprout at random from their forms.

Some creatures can also be turned upside down as in the two opposite heads in a work called "Night Gardener Bottle" - a nod perhaps to the notion of us Antipodeans being upside down - or grow upwards developing strong green tendrils and delicate pink flowers.



Tom Moore, Dicey Hooligan

And you have to admire the effrontery of Moore's birds like the "Bluebird Bottle" that stand astride confidently - cocky, sharp beaked and in charge.

Then again there are the small delicate birds that grow like flowers on twisting stems or land delicately on the top of works like the "Radagast Radish".

Moore is conscious of environmental concerns. The recurring motif of small flames

and matches is especially prominent in the work "Dicey Hooligan" where they lick at the cut wood in the back of the truck.

They remind us of the environmental destruction of trees and the ensuing climate change.

There are also the teeth! Like small evenly spaced white pearlies they appear everywhere forming a tiara on the 'head' in the work "Three Legged Fish", a necklace in "Meticulous Folly" or just casually arranged across the bumper bar of the car in "Dicey Hooligan".

These small sharp teeth seem ready to nip - a reminder that not all is as pleasant and benign in this fantasy world as it initially appears.

Tom Moore was born in Canberra in 1971 and graduated from the Australian National University School of Art in 1994. He obtained a PhD in 2019.

He is associated with JamFactory in Adelaide and was its production manager for 15 years.

The JamFactory recognised his achievements in 2020 by designating him a JamFactory Icon. The Icon series celebrates the achievements of South Australia's most influential Visual Artists in craft-based media. The artist now lives and works in Adelaide.