

# Mixing imagination and intellect

Kerry-Anne Cousins

**Brenden Scott French: Parallel Carriage - studio glass. Beaver Galleries. Until March 19. [beavergalleries.com.au](http://beavergalleries.com.au).**

The work of Brenden Scott French is always surprising because of his inventive approach to glass. The intellectual component of his work - the structural framework of his art practice - is matched in its realisation by his creative skill.

In his artistic statements about his work he acknowledges the functional history of glass but has chosen instead to create works that explore conceptual ideas and personal visions of nature through wall panels and sculptural objects. His technical skill and creative imagination is showcased through his mastery of the magic alchemy of glass that he transforms into surfaces of glowing colour.

The exhibition includes works from the *Geologic* series of vases, the *Balloon and basket* series and the Geological storage facility series of wall pieces.

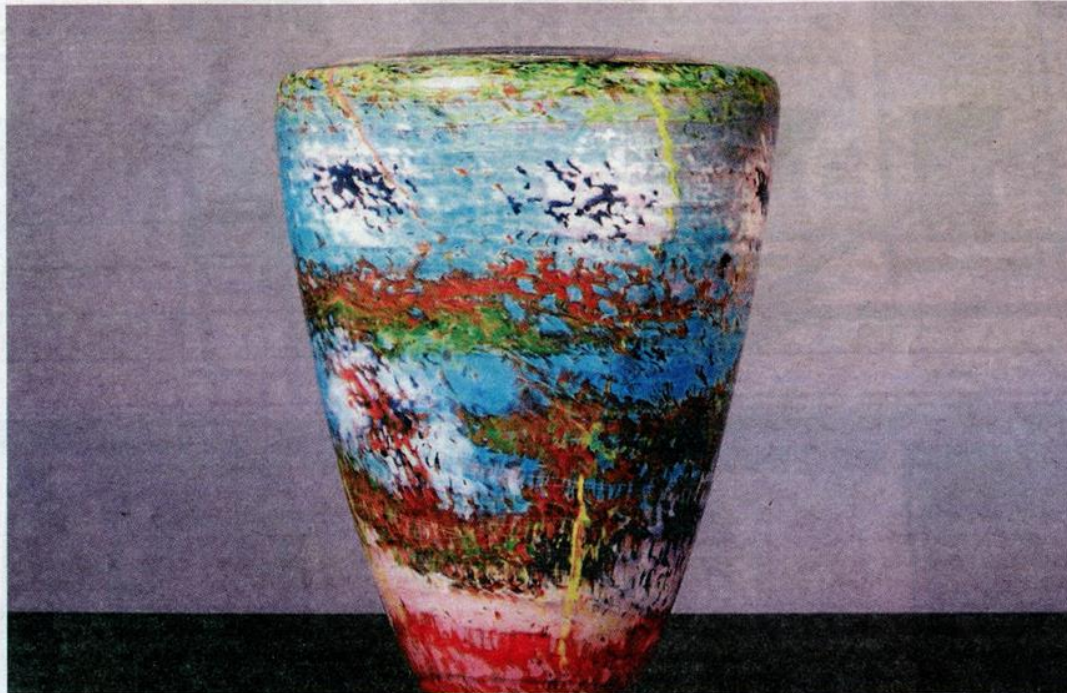
There is one work from the *Temporal Looping edition X* series and some standalone pieces that are related to the works in the exhibition by technique and style. It is, therefore, a good introduction to the artist's recent art practice.

Scott French fuses numerous multi-coloured glass rods and granules of glass using the *pate-de-verre* and *murrine* roll-up techniques to create flat sheets of densely coloured glass that can then be blown or shaped into his desired form.

Through his mastery of these techniques and others he has developed, he can create in an almost impressionist manner, painterly complex surfaces made up of tiny strokes and dabs of colour.

From a distance these tiny areas of colour coalesce to form images of dreamlike landscapes, overblown floral blooms or abstract patterns of colour.

Pieces from the *Geologic* series are open vessels where the glass surfaces display motifs of romantic landscapes that appear



Brenden Scott French, *Geologic vase III*. Picture: Supplied

and dissolve in the light.

Three small wall panels (32cm x 23cm x 2.5cm) from the *Geological storage facility* series I-III also display these dreamlike landscapes.

In these works the soft foliage of the trees transformed by light almost seems to move with the wind against a pastel sky. One thinks of the paintings on glass by Sidney Nolan but this is a different approach as Scott French creates the image within the glass itself so that surface and form are fully integrated.

The more abstracted images of splashes of colour are demonstrated in a work called *Direction stones*. The large glass monoliths

(54cm in height) are organic in form. Their soft splashes of colour resemble pale overblown flowers.

Another work is entitled simply *Bottle*. Its tall elegant form (54cm in height) capped with a slender neck rises from a gold foot. It is decorated with sprigs of flower-like blossom that have an Asian sensibility.

In other works such as the *Funerary* series of vessels, the density and opaqueness of the glass has the solidity of a glazed ceramic work.

In this *Funerary* series as in the *Balloon and basket* series, fragility and solidity co-exist - a tenuous relationship between the two states is suggested by the apparent solidity of

the "basket" or glass vessel and the contrast with the fragility of the striped glass balloon that accompanies it.

The "balloon" made from translucent glass either sits within the vessel on a metal armature or appears to rest on its rim where it is attached by a thin copper string. The artist has created the effect of uncomfortable and unresolved tension as if the balloon is about to fall or fly off without warning - the copper string inadequate for its task.

Brenden Scott French has just completed a residency at the Canberra Glassworks and no doubt this residency will continue to influence his art practice for some time to come.