

glass and the everyday

geometry

rhythm

light

geometry rhythm light: glass and the everyday is a collaborative project by Object: Australian Centre for Craft and Design and Craft ACT. Our two organisations are both committed to supporting, presenting and promoting contemporary craft and design in Australia. This opportunity to join forces has been mutually rewarding and has opened the doors to future possibilities.

The field of contemporary studio glass in Australia has been an evolving success story since its establishment in the 1970s. Glass workshops in several Australian universities are attracting students from around the world and many Australian glass artists are now considered among the finest anywhere.

With this particular project we wanted a passionate outsider to take a fresh look at the work of Australian glass artists. The aim was to develop a bold exhibition that investigated new ways of interpreting contemporary glass practice. Canberra-based visual artist, David Sequeira, seemed like an obvious choice. He is passionate about glass as both a collector and as an artist who often uses found glass pieces in his own work.

For this exhibition David has selected the work of five outstanding practitioners who each engage with the formal possibilities and specific material properties of the glass medium; Mel Douglas, Jonathan Baskett, Elizabeth Kelly, Deb Jones and Maureen Williams. Much of the work has been created specifically for the show, resulting from discussions between the artists and the curator.

The outcome is a superb and visually striking exhibition. We extend our sincere thanks to David and the five selected artists for their enthusiasm and professionalism. We would also like to thank all of the staff at Object and Craft ACT who work so hard to achieve all of the projects we take on.

steven pozel

Director
Object

barbara mcconchie

Director
Craft ACT

“The artist who wishes to express the idea of the unity of existence has actually three means at his disposal, geometry, rhythm and light.”

titus burkhardt

The quote from which this exhibition takes its title comes from art historian Titus Burkhardt who specialises in Islamic art. Although this essay does not seek to position **geometry rhythm light: glass and the everyday** in a tradition of Islamic art practice, Burkhardt’s quote provides a rich context for discussing the work of the glass artists featured in the exhibition; Mel Douglas, Jonathon Baskett, Elizabeth Kelly, Deb Jones and Maureen Williams. Implicit in Burkhardt’s notion of the ‘unity of existence’, is the idea of a kind of relatedness, which connects humans with each other and our world. According to Burkhardt, artists working within the principles of geometry, rhythm and light are well placed to articulate this relatedness. **○** Generally speaking artists who work in glass make a clear distinction between studio practice and production ware. This distinction suggests a hierarchy of glass artistry that is related to commercial viability and accessibility. Studio work is often considered to be concept based, an expressive outlet for the artist. This work is much sought after by ‘serious’ collectors. Whilst still highly collectible, production ware is often rooted in traditional craft practice and has a much more domestic appeal. Often referred to as ‘an artists’ bread and butter’, these works sell at lower prices than studio pieces, have a much higher turnover and are more likely to have a utilitarian function. The works presented in **geometry rhythm light: glass and the everyday** question these distinctions. **○** Dissolving and crossing these boundaries, the artists in this exhibition operate in a realm where artistic factors such as self-expression, innovation and technique are identified in their unique execution of utilitarian object based forms. Deb Jones series of glasses titled Exercise in internal volume illuminates this idea with poetic intelligence. Progressing through the series, the base of each glass thickens, until the final element is a solid piece of glass. Jones’ work seeks to articulate the point at which the glass stops or starts being a glass, or more specifically, the point at which an object loses or attains its utilitarianism. **○** All of the works in this exhibition are made and presented in sequences and series. Mel Douglas’ series of cast black bowls contrasts a smooth finish with a richly detailed surface texture. The texture of Douglas’ work is built up of a multitude of individual engraved marks. No two bowls can ever be identical. Every mark made by the artist represents a unique moment in time, the mark cannot be erased or changed. In this series, Douglas alternates the surface treatment of the bowls. In some, the exterior is textured, while the smooth interior is like a dark void. In others, the texture is captured inside the bowl, while the exterior has a smooth velvety sheen. **○** The presentation of objects as sequences and series draws attention to the process of art making.

Jonathan Baskett’s work the Kugler Kaleidoscope presents art as more of a journey than a destination. His series of 216 beakers takes its source from the 72 colours of the Kugler glass colour chart. Initially made as test samples for production ware, these beakers have been formatted as contemporary art by arranging them in a modernist grid. Generating the Kugler Kaleidoscope as a studio piece made from elements of production ware, Baskett’s work reveals an openness to the process of art making. The fruits of an investigative process have become the seeds for self-expression. **○** Maureen Williams’ round platters appear as variations within a set formula. In each platter, a circle of transparent yellow glass is locked in between an inner circle of solid colour and an outer band of solid colour. Hung along the wall, the resulting row of target-like forms draw attention to the interaction of colour confined within a format of concentric circles. Williams flexes the potential of her palette and although there are 15 platters in this exhibition, the display anticipates the infinite possibilities of colour combinations for a continuation of the series. **○** All glass art is about the manipulation of materials, that is, the way that glass is melted, cast, blown and decorated. It is also possible to consider Elizabeth Kelly’s work as a manipulation of light. Her shallow dishes are the result of a subtle blending of chemicals with clear glass to produce a unique range of colours. Kelly’s forms are designed with various thicknesses, allowing them to absorb light in different ways and create variations in colour intensity. Grounded in the form of utilitarian objects, these works are structures for capturing and filtering light created through a meticulous blending of heat, chemistry and time. **○** In most cases the works in this exhibition appear deceptively simple. The complex processes employed by some of the artists are secondary to their commitment to purity of form, colour and surface. The ways in which each artist comes to terms with properties of glass are at the heart of the exhibition. All of the works in this exhibition are drawn from a utilitarian base. The unique transparencies, opacities, fragilities and strengths of glass are used to create platters, bowls, beakers, bottles, plates and glasses. Glass is part of our range of everyday sensory experiences. We drink from it, eat from it, pour from it, serve from it and cook in it. We hold it, wipe it, wash it and look through it. Each of the artists expresses a particular commitment to iconic forms that connect us to such daily domestic routines and rituals.

david sequeira 2004

David Sequeira is a visual artist, art/business consultant and freelance museum education/ curatorial consultant based in Canberra, Australia. Working in a range of media, David explores the notions of language and information through colour and geometry. A self confessed hoarder, David collects books, vases, flower petals, leaves, orange domestic ware and plastic plates which all find their way into his practice. David’s interests include museums, libraries, flea markets and junk shops.

Now based in Canberra, Jonathan Baskett's company began in Bremen, Germany. Specialising in the design and production of utilitarian objects, Baskett has secured retail outlets around the world for his bowls, egg cups, beakers and vases. Baskett seeks to strike a balance between the decorative nature of an object and its function in day-to-day life. For Baskett, understanding the 'success' of a design object lies in examining the ways in which people live with that object, or more specifically, the way they use it. Focusing on production ware requires Baskett to refine a range of processes and techniques and his lines are the result of continuous experimentation. His work included in this exhibition, the *Kugler Kaleidoscope*, emerged from an investigation into the properties of glass made by the German manufacturer Kugler. Fascinated by the distinction between the myth of their advertising brochure and the reality of their product, Baskett set himself the task of blowing a beaker for each colour as a sample. Baskett's 'three-dimensional colour chart' highlights the limitations of print in conveying any real sense of colour.

born 1969 Canberra, ACT **profession** Self employed designer and maker of utilitarian studio glass products, runs Jonathan Baskett Studio Glass, Canberra **location** Lives in Murrumbateman, New South Wales and works from his studio in Canberra **training** Bachelor of Arts, Glass (Honours) Canberra School of Art, Australian National University, 1996; Master of Arts, Glass Design, Canberra School of Art, Australian National University, 2003 **exhibitions** Has participated in numerous exhibitions in Australia and overseas since 1995 including two solo exhibitions in Germany in 1999 and 2001 and exhibitions at Craft ACT in 2002 and 2003. Work represented in public collections in Denmark, Japan, Germany and Australia. Won design contract with National Gallery of Australia in 2000. Has designed and produced glassware for the Nouvel Studio, Mexico and collaborated with Salvati, Venice, Italy. Recipient of Thomas Foundation Travel Grant and an Australia Council Visual Arts and Crafts Development Grant.



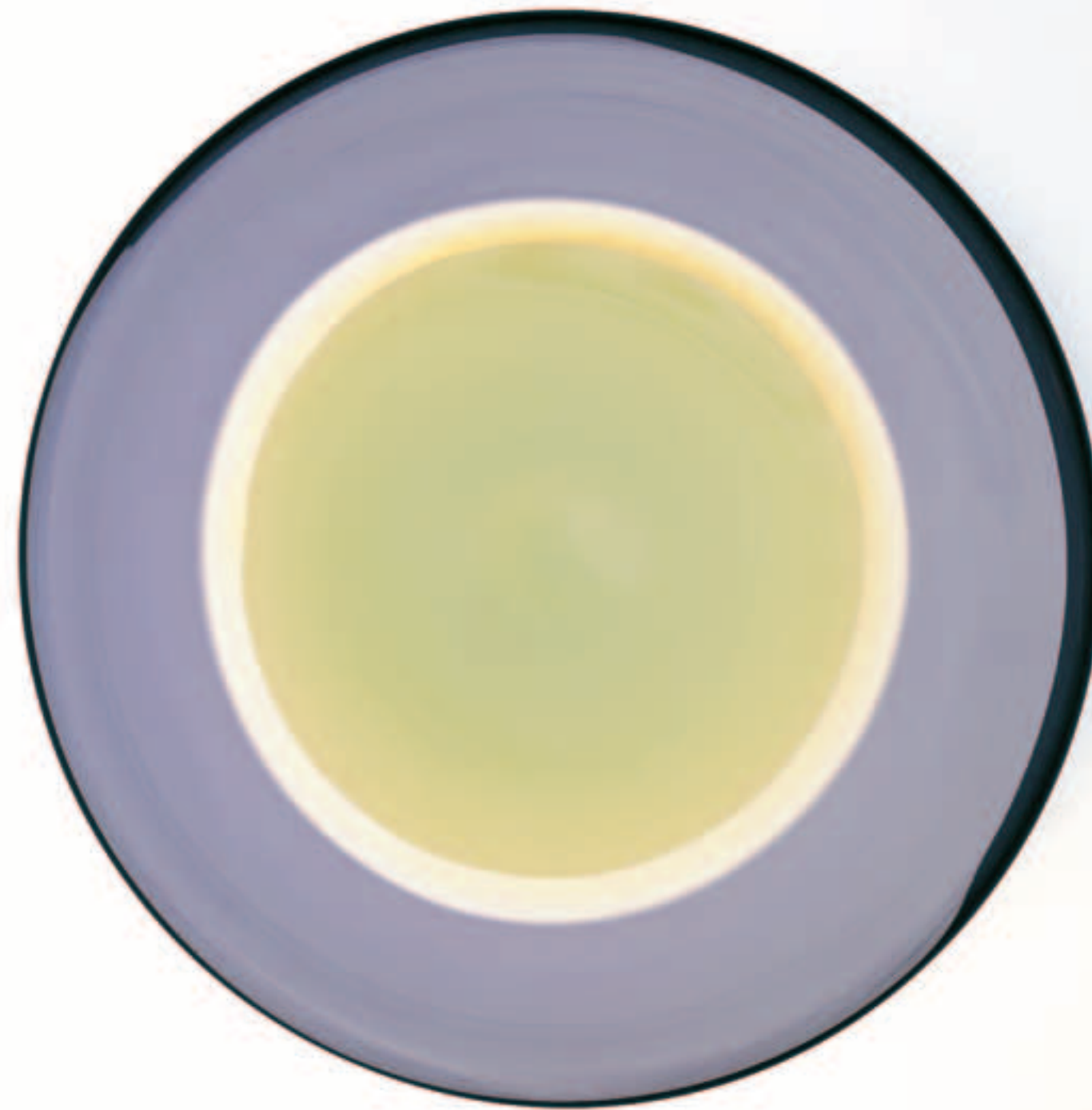
jonathon baskett

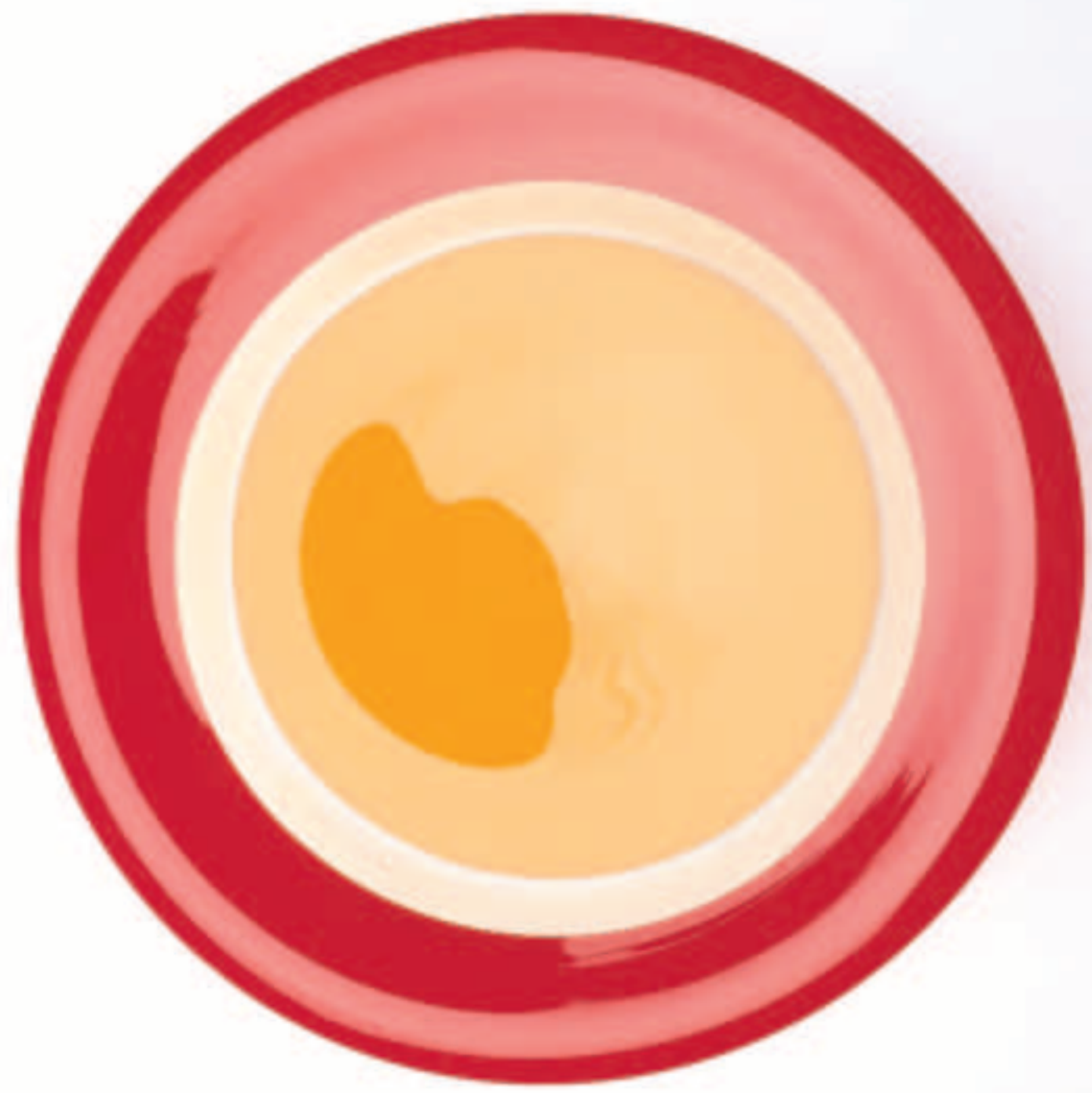


born Port Pirie, South Australia, 1952 **profession** Self employed glass artist **location** Lives and works in St Kilda, Melbourne, Victoria where she established a studio in 1993 **training** Bachelor of Arts (Ceramic Design, Hot Glass Major), Chisholm Institute of Technology (now Monash University), Melbourne, 1986; Pilchuck Glass School Scholarship, USA, 1998 **exhibitions** Has held numerous solo exhibitions in Australia and overseas since 1992, most recently at Craft Victoria in 2004 and exhibited extensively in national and international exhibitions since 1985 including the touring exhibitions *8. Triennale: Australia and Germany — Craft from Scratch and At The Edge — Australian Glass Art* in 2000. Represented in major public collections in Australia and overseas including the National Gallery of Australia and all major state collections in Australia. Winner of numerous awards and a recipient of Australia Council Grants for New Work and Professional Development.

Maureen Williams makes a strong distinction between her studio work and her production ware. Williams' studio works often include large organically shaped vases and vessels. The dream-like landscapes, imaginary terrains and altered aerial views painted on these pieces reflect Williams' personal journeys, histories and interests. Unlike her studio works, Williams' production ware, which she sees as abstract paintings in glass, is highly coloured and easily accessed by a broad market. Her range includes plates, platters, bowls, vases and perfume bottles. For this exhibition, Williams has combined these two aspects of her work to create a series of circular plates. Displayed on the wall, these target-like objects have connections with Pop Art and Minimalism, while their shape and scale remains consistent with Williams' domestic range. For each plate Williams restrains herself to two solid colours separated by a small band of transparent yellow. The circular form of each plate is like an arena for exploring the interaction of colour, whilst the series of plates as a whole encourages a consideration or comparison of the impact of these combinations.

maureen williams





deb jones

At the heart of Deb Jones' work is a deep concern with human nature. Recent exhibitions have included glass sculptures of pillows reflecting her interest in everyday objects and the ritual of daily experience. A love of minimalism governs both her studio pieces and her production ware and Jones' work is characterised by a simplicity of form achieved through laborious techniques. ○ For this exhibition she set herself a series of investigations which flirt with both of these aspects of her glass making practice. Jones' exercises in internal volume and diameter present moments of uselessness, functionality and transformation. In a strange and subtle process of evolution, standard sized drinking glasses change into objects that have little or no utilitarian value. Central to Jones' working process is an interest in the idea of beauty. For Jones, the notion of beauty involves a careful balance of both aesthetic and conceptual aspects of an object.


born Parkes, New South Wales, 1963 **profession** Self employed glass artist, founding member Blue Pony Glass Studios, partner Beeny Bros Architectural Glass; Commissions Manager, Jamfactory Glass Studio. Formerly lecturer at Canberra School of Art **location** Lives and works in Stepney, SA **training** Graduate Diploma of Art (Visual), Glass, Australian National University, Canberra, ACT, 1992; Bachelor of Arts (Visual), Graphic Investigation, Canberra School of Art, ACT, 1989 **exhibitions** Has participated in numerous exhibitions in Australia and overseas since 1995 most recently 2004: *Australian Culture Now* at the National Gallery of Victoria and *Similar Existence* solo exhibition in 2003 at Craft ACT, Canberra. Work held in public and private collections including Parliament House, Canberra, recipient of grants and winner of prizes including the 2003 *City of Hobart Art Prize*. Has undertaken artist residencies at schools and universities and undertaken numerous commissions for installed glass works in South Australia.



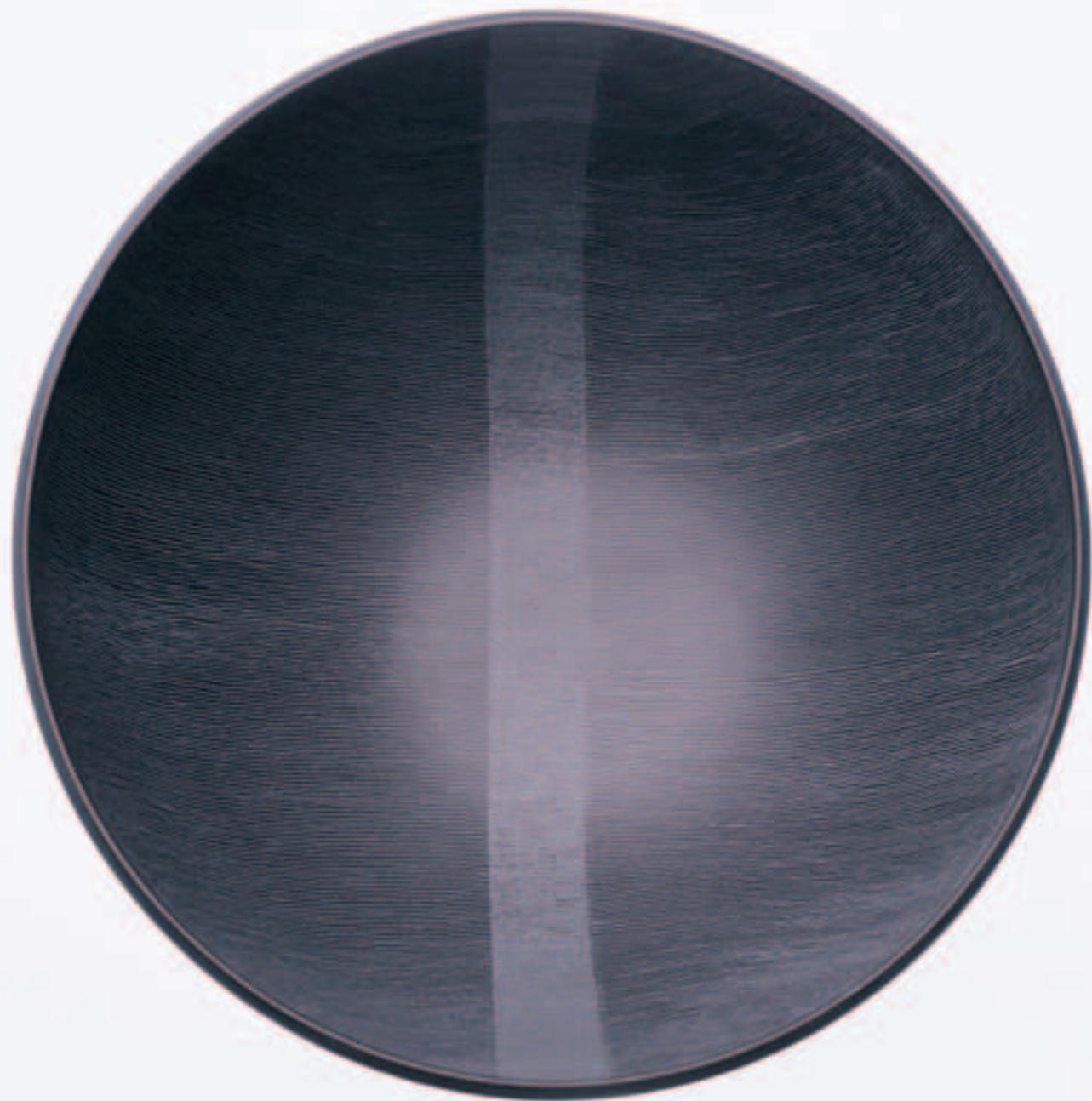



mel douglas

born Burnie, Tasmania, 1978 **profession** Glass Artist **location** Lives and works in Canberra, ACT **training** Bachelor of Arts (Visual) First Class Honours, Canberra School of Art, Australian National University, ACT, 2001 **exhibitions** Has participated in numerous exhibitions in Australia and overseas since 1998, including the international touring exhibition *Canberra Meets Venice* in 2001 and most recently *Collect* at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London and *SOFA*, Chicago in 2004. Has been the recipient of numerous significant awards and scholarships including the *Ranamok Glass Prize* in 2002 and *Pilchuck Glass School (USA) Scholarships* in 2000 and 2004 and was a finalist in the *Bombay Sapphire Prize — Glass in Contemporary Life*, 100% Design, Earls Court, London UK in 2004. Work is held in public collections in Australia including the National Art Glass Collection, Wagga Wagga.

For Mel Douglas the bowl is an iconic form that has a deep connection with domestic life and ideas of offering and containing. Through her surface treatment of these objects Douglas explores minimalism, contemplation and balance. Douglas restricts her palette to tonal variations of black and white and creates texture by engraving lines into the exterior surface of her objects.  Totally absorbing herself in this repetitious and time-consuming method of mark making, Douglas finds a meditative aspect to her process. The austerity of these works suggests stillness and silence. The interior of some of her black bowls are like a dark void, while their uniform exterior surface is built up of individual lines. Other bowls in this sequence reverse this combination, the interiors are textured and the exteriors are dark voids. Douglas' constructed comparison extends beyond the distinction between rough and smooth. Her work contrasts the notions of time and timelessness. Each of her lines is a unique mark created at a certain time in a certain place. Her textural accumulation of lines is set against an empty black space which cannot be fixed to a specific moment or location.



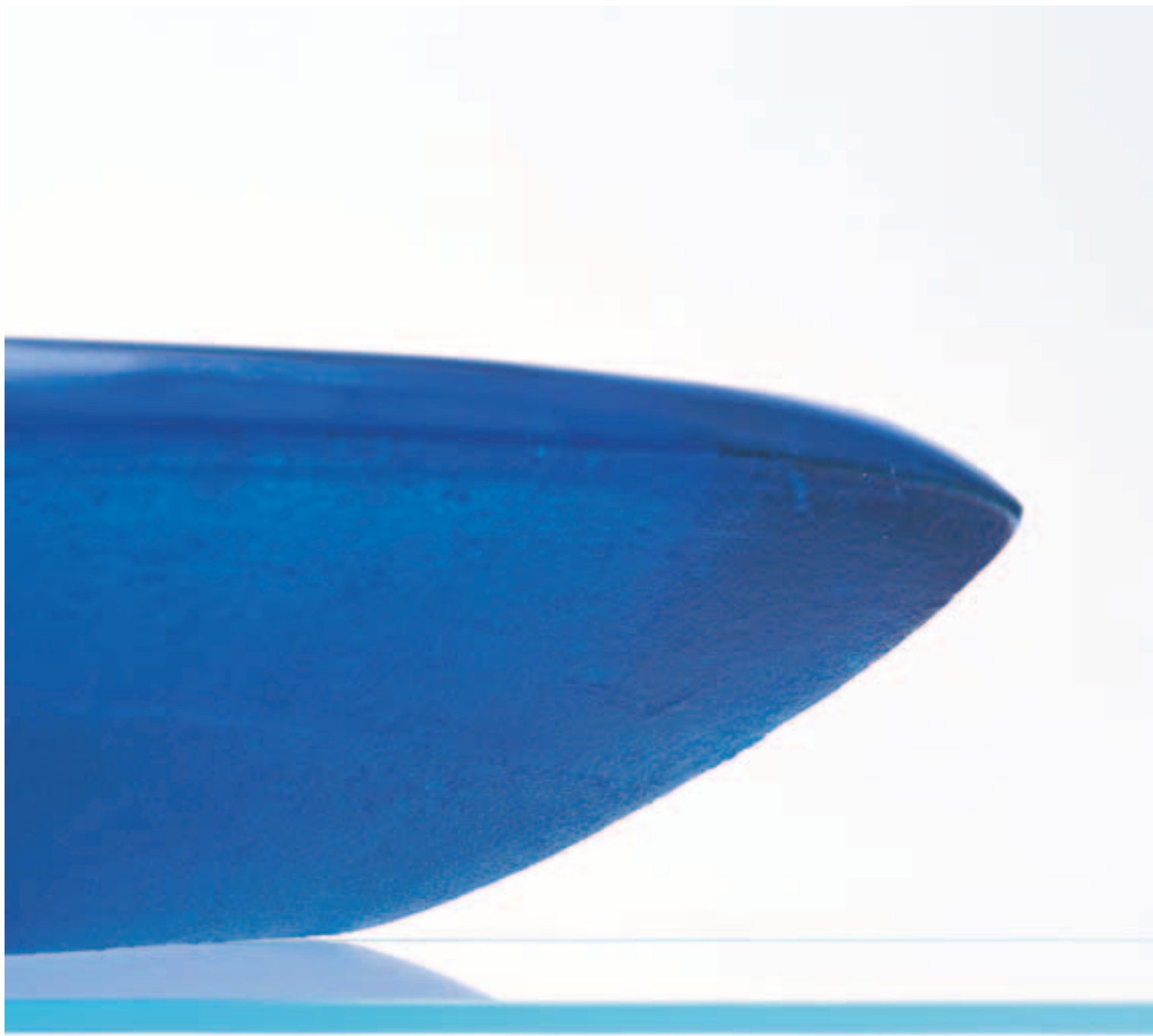


Elizabeth Kelly is known for her mastery of light through alchemical colouration and glass density. Kelly's dexterity with colour and glass has been achieved through total immersion, much like learning a language. Her palette is the result of a series of experiments with the chemistry of colour using metallic oxides and rare earths. This complex process guarantees Kelly a truly unique selection of colours, which can be manipulated further through variations in material depth. The foot of her objects is often a different thickness to the walls, and the lip of a dish is often a different thickness to its base. These variations allow light to penetrate her objects in a variety of intensities creating a range of chromatic saturations.  Kelly's glass casting techniques are informed by her interest in the industrial processes that were originally devised in 19th century America to produce pressed glass wares. These processes led to the development of a global industry that now produces utilitarian objects such as jars, bottles and other containers. Kelly constantly researches and adapts the methods of throw-away glass manufacture to create studio based design objects.

born Adelaide, South Australia, 1960 **profession** Runs Studio Tangerine — Coloured Glass and Sculpture, Lecturer, School of Design, University of Canberra, ACT; formerly Head of Glass Studio, Jamfactory Contemporary Craft and Design, Adelaide **location** Lives and works in Canberra, ACT **training** Master of Visual Arts, Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney, NSW, 1997; Bachelor of Visual Art (Glass), Institute of the Arts, Australian National University, ACT, 1991; Glass Workshop Trainee, Jamfactory, Adelaide, 1987. **exhibitions** Has exhibited extensively participating in numerous group and solo exhibitions in Australia and overseas since 1988. Recent solo exhibitions include *Glass Memories* at Chappell Gallery, New York, 2002 and group exhibitions *20/20 Vision* Museum of American Glass, Wheaton Village, New Jersey, USA and *Less is More, Less is a Bore*, Brisbane City Gallery, QLD. Has received grants and awards including an Australia Council *Craft-In-Site* Grant through Craft ACT in 2004 and undertook a Creative Glass Centre of America Fellowship at Wheaton Village in 2002. Work is held in public collections in Australia and overseas including the American Museum of Glass, New Jersey, USA.

elizabeth kelly





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