Ausglass Magazine

A Quarterly Publication of the

Australian Association of Glass Artists

ausglass

POST CONFERENCE EDITION

Registered by Australia Post Publication No. NBG1569

1991

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The next issue will be prepared and published by the new Editorial Committee from Melbourne.

ausglass
magazine

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INTRODUCTION

Amidst the heat of a true Sydney summer, and the disquiet of the Middle East, Ausglass held its much awaited conference. Staged in the scholarly grounds of St. Andrew's College at Sydney University, the occasion brought together over 160 attendants spanning the whole spectrum of glass practitioners, students, lecturers, curators, writers and delegates from supportive organisations for the largest event in the Australian glass community's calendar. Some even spanned the Tasman to participate. It was launched by a festive poolside evening at Victoria Park, complete with an acappella group, a mock blessing ceremony, and apple bobbing races for the executive: a dose of fun to precede an intensive 3 day programme.

This conference braved new and difficult ground from previous years. Many issues needed exposure, clarification and discussion. With the theme *"Contemporary Making-Current Thinking"* the programme was constructed to extend the practice of glass making to include personal and medium-based philosophy, and the professional and public scrutiny that ensues the finished work. A day was allocated for each of these 3 processes: firstly, the theoretical and historical frameworks which help to explain the present position of glass within the arts field; secondly, the contemporary practice of glass making, considering the environment in which glass develops in Australia and overseas; and lastly, the critical analysis of work by the guardians of the arts - art historians, theorists, curators and critics.

Each day presented key speakers, followed by a series of brief afternoon addresses. Panel discussions, and a session of simultaneous discussion groups, facilitated audience exchange.

Two distinguished overseas guests were invited to deliver papers and extend the perspective even further to an international one: Dana Zámečniková from Czechoslovakia, a noted artist who works with glass; and Susanne Frantz from America, who is curator of Twentieth Century Glass at the Corning Museum of Glass. Here again, a balance of practitioner and theorist, echoing the conference theme.

The papers were timely, honest and insightful. Some were more compelling and will be activating debate and consideration for some time yet. Some were described by a delegate as lucid and substantial treatises on craft. Particularly important were papers by *Sylvia Kleinert*, whose opening paper reminded us of the strength that medium based decorative and applied arts came from, despite their minority status in the present day, alongside the dominant paradigms of fine art and industrial design; *Grace Cochrane* presented a fascinating defence for the role of "function" in the artwork, expanding our unpopular perception of function to an acceptable one stating that "everything that is made has a function". *Susanne Frantz* delivered a charged, courageous and challenging paper essentially dealing with the ethics and integrity on all levels of glass practice from artist, gallery through to art museum: drawing on her considerable and specific experience of glass, her comments demanded attention and carried warnings of short sightedness. *Dana Zámečniková* gave a special expose of 10 Czechoslovakian contemporary artists working in glass across several generations, confirming the innovative edge survives despite strong tradition and political oppression. *Anne Dybka* and *Klaus Moje* gave sensitive accounts of their personal philosophies, emphasising the importance of keeping the skills of head and hands united in one process. *Anne Brennan* gave an articulate paper on her transition from practitioner to theorist and the difficulties it presented, though ultimately she recognised the value that each had to offer the other; and then, to conclude and consolidate, *Robert Bell* gave an excellent summary paper confirming what many had sensed throughout: that the conference was riveting, and that it had identified the failure of the art world to ascribe a value to craft, creating much prejudice against those working with glass. Bell felt that this was not exclusive to glass: it was evident across the medium-based arts.

Outside the formal conference programme, seven workshops were conducted in the preceding week: four were held at the Sydney College of the Arts and three in private studios. Tutors were Dana Zámečniková, Paddy Robinson, Lance Feeney, Scott Chaseling with Ben Edols, Anne Dybka, Alice Whish and Pavel Tomecko. All provided a valuable practical exchange hard to find in Australia outside a college context.

A diverse exhibitions programme ran concurrently with the conference. Three were prize giving events organised by Ausglass of selected work by members. Two of these were judged by the overseas guests: *"Challenging the Medium"*, held at the Blaxland Gallery, called for original work, and produced 3 joint winners, namely Kathy Elliott, Warren Langley and Richard Morrell; *"Appreciating the Medium"*

concerning high quality production work, was staged at the Glass Artists' Gallery, with the prize shared by Brian Hirst and Meza Rijsdijk. Both judges expressed much interest and surprise at the quality and style of work on show (is this the international reassurance that Australian glass artists have sought?). "*Making for the Space*" was another exhibition, displayed at Sydney College of the Arts. It was a competition for an architectural stained glass commission for the Royal Alexandra Childrens Hospital, and was awarded to Cedar Prest. An unselected Members' Show was organised at the College grounds, giving an informal expose. A satellite exhibition of glass entitled "*Three Sydney Women*" was held at Hamilton Design Glass Gallery, providing an off-site event. Collectively, these exhibitions formed the best platform yet for the exposure of glass to a wider audience.

With such an intensive programme, breaks and entertainment were a crucial counterbalance. "*Thunderbirds*" theme music announced the entries and exits of the talented and quick-witted Masters of Ceremony, Michael Keighery and Neil Roberts; a crystal glass organist enchanted the whole contingent with classical music in the courtyard; and a genuinely hilarious auction managed to raise considerable funds, where even Susanne Frantz managed to walk away with a cast glass koala head. There was fun to be had despite the serious issues being propelled in the formal sessions.

One already senses that the conference was a turning point in the course of Ausglass. This was a conference which declared Ausglass mature enough to invite comment and criticism from outside itself, and be strengthened by the process. It put Ausglass in front of a mirror and reflected it into the eyes of all those who have taken an interest in glass over the years. There was much to be gleaned for a strong future; a rich legacy of information to fortify a craft identity within the arts, or at least to be aware of the parameters. The executive and convenor responsible for orchestrating such a successful event deserve all the accolades that flow their way.

Ivana Jirásek,
Co-ordinator Glass Artists' Gallery and
Workshops Co-ordinator for this Conference.

Photographed outside the Glass Artists' Gallery, Glebe (left to right): Ivana Jirásek, Workshops Co-ordinator; Dana Zámečniková from Czechoslovakia; Susanne Frantz, Curator, Twentieth Century Glass, Corning, USA; and Melissa Horton, Director of the Blaxland Gallery, Sydney.

AN HISTORICAL CONTEXT - by *Sylvia Kleinert*

Beginning a conference on contemporary glass with a lecture on the historical context may seem a pointless exercise to many. But we are in the process of creating history now through the discussion and heated debates of this conference. Moreover, the past has, to a large degree determined the present. The past explains how current events have occurred and provides strategies to confront the dilemmas of the present. The new comes out of the old.

I believe contemporary glass to be at a watershed. Take for instance the way in which Dan Klein prefaces his recent publication *Glass a Contemporary Art* by describing the dynamic changes of the last three decades. Klein is very eloquent about these developments:

> "What was intended as a little more than a simple experiment has ended up causing a major revolution in the glass world. Developments since 1962 have resulted in a change of status for glass, elevating it from its long-established role as an industrial material to the new place it now occupies in the world of contemporary art. It is perhaps the most significant change in its history since the chance discovery of glass two thousand years ago. It has affected glass- makers all over the world and every area of glass-making from modest vessel forms to monumental sculptures and glass elements in architecture[1]."

In this contemporary overview, Klein emphasises how glass has moved through a dynamic trajectory which leaves behind its lowly industrial origins as craft to poach the territory and status of the fine arts. The "amazing developments" to which Klein refers focus around the work of Littleton and Labino in 1962 after which small portable furnaces provided individual artists with the greater physical freedom and flexibility for personal expression which allowed them to become designer/makers. As a consequence, the status of glass seems assured, proven through the ongoing input and confidence from educational institutions, in the collections and exhibitions mounted by commercial and state galleries and the infrastructure of conferences, magazines and competitions which have formed around these developments.

Nevertheless, Klein tempers his celebratory overview with an awareness that the euphoria which has characterised the past decades is now on the wane. He warns of a "glass fatigue" and *ennui* amongst the second generation of glass artists who are no longer prepared to simply explore the expressive qualities of the medium. For Klein "The real test of whether glass is a lasting contemporary art form lies in the years ahead."[2] This same sense of imminent change underpins this conference and it is not surprising that its aims and discussion topics focus on a number of highly problematic and contentious issues. But perhaps it is only now, at this historic moment in time, when contemporary glass can recognise both its long standing history and the achievements of a new contemporary expression that such questions can be raised. Of course it would be far easier to not become involved in this process, but the degree to which we are prepared to continually reappraise the ideas and values which underpin our practice operates as a precise index to our maturity and strength as artists. The conference will have been successful if it engenders contentious debate for questions which cannot necessarily be given an answer.

The critical decisions now facing contemporary glass emerge through the two main aims of this conference and consequently I have made these aims the focus for my paper. First, the conference aims to question both "what we are making as practitioners and how we are being evaluated by theoreticians" - a statement which suggests an extraordinary gulf between practice and theory which can only be explained as part of the hierarchy of the arts and in the wider context of Western intellectual traditions. Second, the conference asks whether it is possible to meld together "a medium based aesthetic which explores the intrinsic qualities of glass, its light transparency, opacity and reflection with the fine art principles of painting, sculpture and architecture which have a questionable relationship to these unique qualities." Again, a sharp dichotomy is created between these two areas of practice, where the status of the fine arts implies a corresponding loss of "difference". I examine these debates in the context of the broader issues raised by modernism, post modernism and regionalism.

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1 D. Klein, *"Glass A Contemporary Art"*. Rizzoli, New York, 1989, preface.

2 ibid.

My proposal for a contemporary glass praxis is grounded in an understanding of history. When we contrast the tension and issues which surround our existence as an artist in the late modern world, with the earlier medieval world of guilds, all the invidious distinctions between theory and practice and between the fine arts and the decorative arts disappear. The guilds control the training for these mechanical arts which form the centre of city life. They train the itinerant stonemasons who build the gothic cathedrals of this period just as they include the silver and goldsmiths whose forbears transmitted the knowledge of classical proportions in human anatomy and architecture from Byzantium to the West.

During this period knowledge is passed on as the practical skills of everyday life, as craftspeople move through the various stages of learning from apprentice to journeyman and master craftsmen. But this guild system is swept away by the radical changes of the Renaissance. Western intellectual thought has ensured that the Renaissance is remembered as a period of humanism which centres around the revival of Classical thought. But this kind of emphasis means that we tend to forget that it was also a moment in time when the radical social, economic, cultural and political changes which we associate with the modern world begin to be effected. In his book *All That is Solid Melts into Air*, Marshall Berman writes with great evocative power of the contradictions and tensions which characterise this modern world of progress, a world which continues to offer us as individuals the opportunity for enormous personal growth through the vibrant life of the city. Yet at the same time, we know that this desire for progress will contribute to the destruction of long standing cultural traditions.

Inevitably the arts, and artists themselves are caught up and swept along in these radical changes. From now on education is increasingly now conducted in institutions. It is therefore acquired theoretically rather than practically. Michel de Certeau[3] argues that the sources for this new body of theoretical knowledge are actually located in the practices of everyday life. In this way, the skills and knowledge which made up much of the learning of the guilds is "lifted out" and "turned over" in the educational institutions to become the theory which ultimately sustains discourse. From de Certeau's arguments we see how the new professions of first the artist and the architect and, at a later stage, the industrial designer emerge from these new education structures, gradually depleting the practices of everyday life of their skills and knowledge.

At the same time, the hierarchies between the fine arts, architecture and the decorative arts is created. Although early Renaissance artists like Alberti and Ghiberti are originally trained as goldsmiths and silversmiths, they now inspire to a new status as artists and architects. In his treatise, *On Painting*[4] Alberti argues for painting as the most important of all the art forms because it uses perspective and the elements of art: line, tone, form and colour. He commends the painting of *istoria* because it will raise the morals of the community. The dramatic impact of these new values can be seen quite clearly in the decorative arts of the Renaissance. In tapestry, traditional subjects such as the *Lion and the Unicorn* give way to *istoria* designs commissioned from painters of the High Renaissance such as Raphael. And in ceramics, the earlier marriage plates commemorating betrothals are replaced with designs which copy by dot transfer and paper patterns, the compositions of highly admired painters like the Netherlands artist Martin Shongauer. As a result of these changes the craftsman is relegated to the role of mere artisan.

But the decorative artist is further deskilled and marginalised by other radical changes which emerge during the Renaissance. Capitalism now replaces the guild system with new relationships between the worker and industrialist. In *The Story of Craft*, Lucie-Smith reminds us that the industrial revolution begins already in the 12th century with the first textile factories established in France. Perhaps it is not surprising then that the 19th century reformist, William Morris looked back so enviously to the medieval era as the model for this revival of traditional craft skills and a socialist joy in creative work. In one sense, all contemporary craft movements trace their origins back to Morris' indefatigable support for the revival of those traditions of handcraftsmanship gradually lost in competition with industry. Morris' error of course, was not only to idealise the past but to blame the machine itself for the loss of hand skills and the poor quality of design in 19th century England. Only now with the benefits of intense scholarship have we come to understand that the division of labour and the design of objects for mass productions are influenced by the motives of the

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3 M. de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life, The University of California Press, Berkeley, 1984.

4 Excerpts from the writings of Leon Battista Alberti and Lorenzo Ghiberti are provided in E. Holt, A Documentary History of Art, Doubleday Anchor, New York, 1957, Vol. 1.

industrialists.[5] The machine cannot be blamed for the problems created by the industrial revolution. Through the art and craft movement the decorative arts regain status by retrieving and valorising the skills associated with handcraftsmanship. But this new status masks a rift between the hand and the machine which is rarely recognised. Such distinctions will no doubt resurface within this conference where studio glass has achieved its status by making it possible for glass artists to operate as designers/makers in the production of unique works of art whilst production ware and architectural commissions must inevitably concern themselves with the repetition of forms, the division of labour and the collaboration which we associate with industrial production.

What emerges from this all too brief historical overview is that the glib cliche of the "hierarchy of the arts" should not be dismissed too readily as mere myth. The evidence which emerges confirms how the decorative arts are marginalised by these historical events in several significant ways. On the one hand, their vast corpus of practical knowledge which originally represented the practices of everyday life, have been appropriated progressively by the new modern professions of artist, architect and industrial designer. Second; with the hierarchy of the arts firmly entrenched through the teaching program of the academies, theoretical discourse is written through the fine arts in general and through painting in particular. In the structure of most university fine arts courses and in publications devoted to a general history of Western art we see how the combined effect of these developments erases the history of the decorative arts or at best relegates them to the role of subsidiary minor arts.

The valorisation of hand skills becomes the strategy by which the decorative arts regain status. But unfortunately, this emphasis on skills is invidious in itself for Western intellectual traditions are firmly grounded in the Platonic philosophies of a Classical tradition which consistently venerates and privileges the theoretical and spiritual over the practical and material. Already in the Classical era, social status attends the study of the liberal arts, the Classical curriculum consisting of the trivium of rhetoric, logic and grammar, followed by the quadrivium of geometry, mathematics, astronomy and music. Thus the Roman architect Vitruvius argues that architecture is one of the Liberal Arts and subsequently, the Renaissance painter Leonardo argues the same status for painting because it is more abstract than any of the other art forms and therefore aspires to the condition of poetry, the most noble of all the art forms. Not surprisingly these systems of classification underpin the aesthetic theories proposed by Hegel and Kant in the 18th century and the decorative arts are relegated to a lesser status as material objects fulfilling a functional role. By contrast, the true work of art is perceived to exist for itself alone as an aesthetic object intended through a detached contemplation.

Nevertheless the crafts retrieve status by focusing on hand skills. Such a tactic exploits the space left vacant after the practices of everyday life are depleted by the fine arts, architecture and industry. But the subsequent development of the decorative arts is disadvantaged by this tactic. In a recent series of papers devoted to re-evaluating the history of contemporary studio glass in Australia, Nola Anderson reveals how the history of contemporary glass has been constructed as a seamless narrative which begins with the technological progress achieved by Littleton and Labino in 1962 at the Toledo workshops and moves

> "logically towards an ever increasing mode of sophistication loosely characterised as more 'artistically expressive'. It proposes that glass is an exciting and pioneering material with which the artist must grapple to find 'true expression'. It relates this development to the current artistic climate. It proposes that the beauty of glass must in some way be subordinated to a more expressive process. It proposes that conceptual rigour is one step more advanced than technical expertise and so on. These ideas have formed the majority of glass commentary to date."[6]

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5 A. Forty, Objects of Desire Design and Society 1750-1980, Thames & Hudson, London, 1986, reinterprets design history. See especially Chs.

6 N. Anderson, "Glass Roots Three essays on the narrative of Australian studio glass", in N. Ioannou, (ed). Anthology of New Craft Writing, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, forthcoming.

Anderson goes on to point out how these constructions imply a hierarchical progress from technique to concept. Are the two apparently distinct aims of this conference actually linked very closely? Is there a direct correlation between the practice of the decorative arts as a medium based aesthetic and the theoretically informed practice of the fine arts?

One way of tackling these problems would be to contextualise them into the unfolding histories of modernism and post-modernism. In one sense, the scenario I have just projected points to an aversion toward theory and this position is really very widespread amongst artists of all persuasions. Having just completed a contractual term as a lecturer in Art History at the Canberra School of Art I can assure you that in every class of students there are a small group who will assure you quite vehemently that their art is a personal expression stemming spontaneously from their intuition, a creative expression which stands to be gravely compromised as a result of reading the books required for art theory. Now the origins of such an approach lie with the myth of the artist as genius. This highly problematic construction for the modern artist came to the fore during the Romanticist period when, as a result of radical social, economic and political upheavals of the time, artists emerged in a contradictory role, elevated to an elite position in society as seers and prophets yet at the same time alienated from society and their former patrons and forced to sell their work in the market-place as mere commodities.

In many ways modernism only exacerbated these myths and the idea of "truth to the medium" where the artist responds to the inherent character of the medium re-occurs throughout modernism. One could begin with the French impressionist sculptor Auguste Rodin who overthrew prevailing neo-Classical traditions by allowing the material in which he was working, marble or bronze, to reveal its own character and the evidence of his working process. Similarly abstract expressionists like Helen Frankenthaler believed they were exploiting the inherent qualities of paint as an expressive medium when they allowed the paint to dribble down the canvas and bleed into its unprimed surfaces. And, very close to home, the American ceramicist Peter Voulkos wanted to overturn the existing codes of aesthetics established by Bernard Leach. For many years this ceramic aesthetic based on a Buddhist code of values had provided an enormous impetus to studio ceramics. Now Voulkos came to see these codes as increasingly dogmatic and prescriptive. Working in the immediate post-war period, Voulkos used new kiln techniques to create huge monolithic constructions where shapes are luted together, where the different natures of terracotta and porcelain are brought into disjunction, where coloured slips and bold epoxies subvert the restraint of the Leach tradition. Indeed the contemporary glass movement owes its origins to this major precursor. For after the 1959 Lake George Conference, the American Craft Council acknowledged what Voulkos had achieved for ceramics and put the question, why not glass?

Apparently then, the idea of being "true to one's medium" and using a medium based aesthetic has proved a very significant model for modernism and it is associated with many of the major innovations which occur during this period. Then what are its flaws and inconsistencies? If we step aside for a moment from the rhetoric which so often accompanies art history after the event, we can see that this truly very heroic model suggests that the artist is able to arrive at universal and immutable truths through the process of communing with the medium. The artist and their medium are located in an almost hermetic zone, lost in splendid isolation from the real world. But this construction for the artist and for the process of making art is really not very realistic. It suggests that artists can, and indeed should, separate themselves from the context in which they live with all its multitude of political, social, economic and cultural issues and influences. Not only is this hermetic world impossible to achieve but we actually deny the impact of the richness of our lived experience on our art work when we limit our philosophy to that of a medium based aesthetic. In hindsight we now see that the functionalist dictum of "truth to materials" can itself become a prescriptive dogma which actually hinders artists from development through its moral overtones. For example, how do we decide what the inherent values of a medium are and are these values universal and eternal or are they rather culturally conditioned?

Two examples drawn from literature will serve to prove the point I wish to make. Writing in the 1920s the American F. Scott Fitzgerald used the qualities of glass as a symbol of the transparency, hardness, flashiness and superficiality of a nouveau-riche America. In a short story titled, *The Cut Glass Bowl*, the beauty of an ostentatious but fashionable wedding gift is gradually transformed into something grotesque, ponderous and malignant. In many ways, the ideas and values which Scott-Fitzgerald conveys characterise the Art Deco period and the glassware of artists like Marinot and Argy-Rousseau. By contrast, the plot of Peter Carey's recent novel *Oscar and Lucinda*, focuses on the contradictory nature of

glass as a symbol of great weakness and strength whether it is seen as one of the fabulous Prince Rupert's drops, or in the mundane glass factory at Darling Harbour or in the folly of the glass cathedral commissioned for Boat Harbour by Lucinda Le Plastrier. Here glass is seen elusively as an "opaque skin of dreams ... a thing in disguise, an actor, ... not solid at all, but a liquid ... a gross material most nearly like the soul or spirit ... (the material of sacrifice because) ... it was free of imperfection, of dust, rust, ... (and so) ... an avenue for glory"[7] and the medium which symbolises the friendship between Oscar and Lucinda in the practical, mundane world of colonial Sydney. Comparing and contrasting these two pieces of literature we see how the intrinsic qualities of glass are really malleable: fused and twisted by the ideas and values of the artist themselves.

My final misgivings about this medium based aesthetic, suggest that it only confirms the apparent separation between practice and theory. I see this gulf between theory and practice as inherently dangerous because it is these theoretical discourses which provide the context and the conventions through which the art world operates: its artists, gallery directors, critics and art historians. To deliberately separate ourselves from these discourses may court disaster on several grounds, either by demanding that contemporary glass practice be critically evaluated within the particular parameters of a medium based aesthetic or risking one's work looks naive and uninformed against the work of other artists, when judged from the context of the fine arts. Or has the institutionalised nature of our educational systems, blinded us to the actual nature of the creative process producing a gulf between theory and practice which is more apparent than real? Is there really so much difference between constructing what I hope is an exciting and exhilarating lecture and a dynamic piece of glassware? In the process of producing both we are all drawing upon our skills in technical expertise and our conceptual knowledge. In this scenario for a contemporary praxis, a theory informed practice, let's step back from the Platonic division between the active and contemplative life, to acknowledge that this combination of practical skills and knowledge are operating actively all the way through the process of being creative; conceiving goals and modifying them by adding, culling and rearranging. This reinterpretation and recovery of value for the idea of *skill* presumes that skill consists of both practical and theoretical knowledge which operate symbiotically in the production of art works.

The past decades have seen new structuralist approaches begin to question the dogmas and prescriptive categories which have been bequeathed to us by history. In place of modernism's division between the fine arts and the decorative arts, and between high art and popular culture, there comes the growing recognition that all aspects of our culture operate as signs which communicate the ideas and values of society. In this reading of history, the decorative arts are reinstated as the very special objects with which we share our everyday life. Nonetheless the past still remains influential continuing to create dilemmas for craftspeople and continuing to influence the critical response and economic status of the work. So philosophies need to be implemented which will subvert these existing value systems. One strategy I would like to propose would opt for a new, broader definition of glass, one which does not try to define parameters for practice which may in the end prove restrictive to both the practice and reception of contemporary glass. Such an ideology of glass could quite contentedly embrace a practice and a range of semantic meanings which flow along a continuum from the fine arts of painting and sculpture through architecture to industry. Current examples illustrate what I mean. What happens to our understanding of glass if we consider that it constitutes the central element in the work of art which stands as one of the most important pieces of work produced in the second half of this century? Then the whole tenor of our response to contemporary glass and to Marcel Duchamp's *The Large Glass*, undergoes a radical shift. The work remains a consummate dadaist snub to bourgeois values as an ironic play upon human relationships between the sexes. But now we see how *The Large Glass* revives perspectival traditions to operate as a window to the domestic world. The transparency of glass and its fragility are both critical elements, providing the visual dynamic for the sculpture and allowing the element of chance to be exploited.

And if the fine arts appropriated their knowledge from the practices of everyday life then let's poach their theoretical territory in return. Placed into a position of marginalisation we need to operate like *bricoleurs* copying, borrowing and thieving this territory of power. Whether glass artists are producing goblets, vessels, sculptural forms or architectural panels, their work must inevitably impinge on the conventions which operate in the fine arts. Let me use the work of Klaus Moje as my paradigm here. In

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7 P. Carey, Oscar and Lucinda, University of Queensland press, 1988, pp134, 361 and 376.

one sense he is operating politically, subverting existing hierarchies by retrieving the Classical history of mosaic glass but in recent article in *Neues Glass*[8] Geoffrey Edwards points out how Moje is also drawing from his own regional traditions of 17th and 18th century German glass by treating the glass as a stone-like substance with crisply cut and defined edges. However in tracing the contemporary developments in Moje's work Edwards also links his glass with contemporary minimalist movements in paintings, paralleling the mathematical precision and utopian order created by Moje with painters like Kenneth Noland or Sol le Witt. Over the last decades the work has developed from grid-like mosaics through angled monolithic constructions to a recent expressionist style which Edwards links both to Moje's Germanic background and his growing response to the Australian landscape.

I intend to return to these regionalist readings in a moment but for the present I want to focus on Edwards' reading of Moje's designs where he writes in quite painterly terms of these weaving rhythms in fields of colour. For here we begin to breach the heart of the dilemma confronting the decorative arts. The functionalist aesthetic articulated by early designers like Christopher Dresser argued that good design was achieved through the structural form of the object and this stemmed from its functional role. The beauty of the object derived from its functional form in association with the inherent beauty of the material being used. Within such an aesthetic decoration and ornament are deemed unnecessary and if the artist elects to decorate it, it must be used with the utmost restraint and serve the purpose of enhancing the overall form of the object itself. Thus ornament became a crime for the decorative artists at the moment in time when painters were developing these same elements of art into the personal visual language which became abstraction. Like many other contemporary glass artists Moje is overturning these highly problematic constructions of "decoration" and "ornament" to utilize the surface of the glass in the same way as a painter confronts the field of their canvas and in turn the object becomes a volumetric shape in space. These are the new interactions which can be exploited by any glass artist.

This said I would not want contemporary glass to lose sight of its industrial roots. For these reasons I find myself interested in the work of artists like Joan Brassil and Neil Roberts, both of whom contextualise their ideas into an industrial site. Brassil has consistently used glass as a means of signifying the transparency and reflection of ideas. In *Random Rays in a Glass Reflected*, Brassil draws upon the industrial skills and expertise of Peter Minson. Together they used the facilities of the physics department at the Australian National University where Peter blew tubes of glass inside large chemical flasks to paddle and shape them into large hour glasses. Thus like the American sculptor Eva Hesse, Brassil's final installation comments on the banal and repetitious domestic routines of women. Her work also alludes to the passing of time and random way in which we have constructed our explanations for the universe. Similarly much of Neil Roberts' work is grounded in the objects we associate with everyday life, the neon signs of the entertainment industry or the knives found in our homes both comment upon the society's values. When forms are taken out of their traditional context, new readings are possible for the medium. Thus the "Knife Case 1" from the exhibition *The Distance*, of 1982 reads as the very beautiful weapon, an exhibit from the scene of a crime, a reminder of the covert violence which underpins human relationships and emblematic of the contradictory nature of glass itself.

Placed at another point along this continuum are those artists who have inserted their glass into architectural spaces: Paddy Robinson, Cedar Prest and Maureen Cahill. Unfortunately, work such as this which requires extensive collaboration with architects and interior designers is given far less critical attention in the narratives of contemporary glass than the small, unique pieces produced by the designer/maker in their studio which can aspire to the status of the fine arts, exhibited and purchased by the collector. These hidden hierarchies operating within glass reflect the insidious influence of two of modernism's most cherished myths: the idea of artistic freedom and the closely related idea of function. The view that art exists as the vehicle for an artist's personal expression is closely related to the status of the artist as genius. But in fact no artist is free to do whatever they want. The cultural production of all communities is constituted from the lived social, political, economic and cultural reality of their time and all artists are working within the given conventions of their time. Thus the artists who work in production ware or who collaborate with architects are no less free than the designer/maker in their studio. Indeed, if we listen to an artist like Maureen Cahill talking about her installation "Willy Willy" in Parliament House, she is adamant that the brief for this commission offered her challenges which are not

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8 G. Edwards, "Like an Oriental Calzedonio; Neues Glass von Klaus Moje", in *Neues Glass*, 3.90

to be found in studio practice. Moreover the new technical processes she used could not have been achieved without the economic and psychological support of the commission. At the same time, the sculpture exists in the real world, seen and appreciated every day by hundreds of workers in Parliament House.

The continuum I have constructed ends with production ware. However, the ongoing contribution of Eastern Europe and Scandinavia and their different but equally well-established industrial traditions have been deleted or at least marginalised in the narratives which explain contemporary studio glass. Nowhere is this absence more apparent than in Australia where our regional position continually defers to the imperial centres. Now from a post-colonial context we can see that our historical position has meant a delay in industrialisation, and an imbalance in opportunities. It will be difficult for any Australian industry to insert itself into the present context of a highly developed design industry, nevertheless this must happen for reasons of economic self sufficiency and cultural coherence. But before we gain the ear of interested patrons, we need to recognise how the contemporary narratives of studio glass have built upon an American model which was constructed around a post-World War II, cold war rhetoric where individual artistic freedom was equated with American democracy. As Cedar Prest pointed out in an earlier Ausglass conference, this kind of construction has largely erased the prehistory of existing Australian traditions in industrial glass, the input of artists as designers for stained glass and the influence of European models. We could ask, has this construction for a studio practice in contemporary glass, coupled with the existing hierarchies of the arts, actually created an aversion to production glass? Can we explain this bias against production ware in the context of modernism where the artist exemplified their freedom to innovate by overthrowing existing traditions. By contrast, the idea of function implies the artist is restricted to the requirements of the brief and the product. Do we need to tease out the idea of function and separate design for utilitarian objects from the way in which all art objects function to communicate ideas about our culture? Such an industrial model may even require different criteria for critical evaluation. After all, it was the functionalist aesthetic of modern design which argued that engraved glass was no longer acceptable, thereby marginalising the contribution made by earlier artists like Frank Webb. In this respect, the commissioned coat of arms by Anne Dybka for Parliament House represents an important revival of older techniques in glass. The intricate symbolism which can be conveyed of such techniques fulfills fundamental human needs.

In this new regionalist position, Australian artists have to relocate and redefine their own traditions and trajectories for the future. I am not advocating here any narrow provincialism, rather an awareness that we do have our own local imperatives and that these have developed in interaction with a diverse range of international influences. Such an assertion of regionalism demands that we come to terms with national identity as the very necessary process by which we articulate these ideas. In a forthcoming article in *Art Monthly* I discuss the work of a range of artists who have used the icon of the Southern Cross to examine these issues. Whereas a painter like Elizabeth Kruger employs the Southern Cross to suggest how a personal sense of identity is constructed through a network of chance influences, Warren Langley's "Futures" series of 1979/80 are more subversive, relocating the flag itself in different contexts in order to question the way in which national identity remains linked to the primary produce from the land rather than any commitment to the manufacturing industry.

I have written this lecture from the premise that glass artists, working in many different spheres, will maintain their position at the forefront of Australia's visual arts ensuring that the medium of glass will be appreciated as a powerful medium of creative expression, equal but different.

Credit: Sylvia Kleinert is a Canberra based art historian and writer who is currently working on a Ph.D. at the Australian National University.

THE CONTEMPORARY CRAFTS INDUSTRY: ITS DIVERSITY - by *John Odgers*

> *"... after the pluralistic seventies ... crafts practice has become more diverse, frequently abandoning functionality and traditional techniques. ... Divorced from its traditional concerns and lacking a sound theoretical basis, it is hardly surprising that much contemporary craft seems bemused and unresolved."*
> (Caroline Miley: "Identity Crisis in the Crafts", Craft Victoria June/July 1990)

Diverse and Diversity are words which are bandied around quite freely when referring to contemporary craft and they are generally given a positive reception. Reviews and critiques of craft work often hold up the diversity of the work as being its strength, and put this diversity forward as the special contribution which the work makes. I often think, though, that "diversity" is one of those words behind which critics and writers hide when they don't know what to say.

The quote at the beginning of my paper from Caroline Miley is matched by these comments from Robert Ellison when he reviewed the 28th Ceramic National in the United States:

> *"Experimentation is the strength of the 28th Ceramic National. Many of the artists treat familiar concepts or elements in an unusual manner or employ them in a new context ... (this) all contributes to an appealing diversity."*
> (American Craft, Oct/Nov 1990)

He goes on to say:

> *"The diversity of works in this exhibition represents to some extent the broader freedom brought about in recent years by the geographical and ideological decentralisation of artistic authority. As barriers, rules and boundaries have crumbled a hierarchical elitism has given way to democratization that encourages the merging of popular art and craft with high art, and a blurring of distinctions. The concepts of originality, pure form and truth to materials or media have been de-emphasized, thus opening the door to hybrid mixing, poaching and appropriating. Pluralism has decreed that there are many realities."*

Here we can hear the positive response to "diversity" coming through - the "democratization of art, the boundaries crumbling etc. - but he airs a warning:

> *"The question can be raised"* Ellison suggests *"as to whether our era has gained broader parameters for art or merely traded standards for the freedom to do anything."*

Further to these two references to diversity I would add other interpretations, these being:

* diversity as schizophrenia;
* diversity as widening your market;
* diversity as just bad craft;
* diversity as pluralism; and
* diversity as discrete identity or distinguishing characteristic.

I will address these in turn.

Diversity as Schizophrenia

With contemporary craft becoming more and more separated from its traditional base it is easy to see the development of craft schizophrenia.

As contemporary craft distances itself from the historical analysis of form, function, technique, materials, decoration and so on and aspires to be "fine art" one can see a yawning chasm developing. On one side of this chasm is fine arts in all its resplendent glory, layered with meaning, begging to be interpreted, rejecting materials, skill and object and longing for its hidden truth to be deconstructed to neatly fit the newest academic theory.

On the other side of the chasm is that work which happily subscribes to a clearly articulated role whether that be functional or decorative. This craft is secure in the understanding of its market place, and is proved to be commercially successful. Over the middle of the chasm gingerly tiptoeing along a very rickety ladder, unsure of which way to go, perhaps trying to keep a foot in both camps, is an increasing body of work, the result of the blurring of those old distinctions and boundaries which once made everyone's lives much easier.

This work comes from both sides of this chasm I might add, with fine artists appropriating traditional craft techniques and materials, as well as craftspeople wanting to add layers of "fine art" meaning to their work. That work which is good will inevitably find a successful niche. That which is bad plunges to the unknown depths of the chasm. It seems at this time in the development of the crafts in Australia that there is a great deal of work vainly trying to cross this chasm, divorced (as Carolyn Miley said and which I have heard echoed by many voices) - from its traditional concerns and with little understanding of its own historical and sociological background. Much of this work, while wanting to be classified in a way which gives it authority and respect, spurns any theoretical base for its development.

This is craft schizophrenia in full flight and perilously close to being incurable. When I see so called diversity, I often see craft schizophrenia.

Diversity as Pluralism

Diversity as pluralism is perhaps the starting point of craft schizophrenia. Miley and Ellison both recognised, as have many others, that the 70s was a decade of experimentation. Out of this increased democratisation and pluralism has come good work and bad work, with the bad work often having other labels attached - conceptual, ideas based, avant garde, etc. This is not to say that conceptual or avant garde work is bad, but rather that bad work is often disguised by claiming it as something else which therefore can't be judged by the same criteria as craft. The disguise fails to conceal, in the end, the bankruptcy of this work.

So the visual arts pluralism of the 70s has created diverse forms, used here as meaning, quite academically, being different from something else. This diversity comes from new or unusual ways of treating materials, different combinations of materials, different or confusing end products not in keeping with the materials and so on. This diversity can sometimes create new ways of seeing and doing, can sometimes create new- or re-interpretations. On the other hand this diversity which has come from pluralism can often just create bad craft - ill conceived, poorly made, hard to use, unattractive to look at, and technically insignificant.

This latter becomes then my interpretation of *Diversity as mismatch of idea, design and skill inputs*. I think in Australian contemporary craft we see much of this mismatching of inputs publicly displayed. I actually think that this mismatching is very often the obvious and necessary result of experimentation. The trouble we have is that the quality control and self selection criteria (or should I say self destruction criteria) are not rigorous enough. **This** sense of diversity will always be present in a vigorous and growing contemporary craft process but the public should never see it - it is a personal process, a metamorphous behind closed doors. And until this self discipline is clearly evidenced in the crafts there will always be an element of denigration of the crafts by other professionals.

Diversity as Diversification

I have always been intrigued as to why there is an embarrassment about success in the market place. Throughout the 70s and early 80s the word "marketing" was frowned upon. Someone using this term was treated as if they had unbearable body odour or bad breath.

Fortunately we have matured and have come to accept the quite legitimate place which marketing has in the scheme of the crafts industry. Hence my understanding of diversity as diversification. Diversification of product lines is an age old technique in all industries. It is an acceptable - more than that - an absolutely necessary part of successful product based businesses. It involves spreading one's capital risk and shoring up those products which lose their market share with other fresher ones. It can mean small variations in a base product, it can mean a series of related products. It doesn't necessarily reflect the diversity of pluralism, but rather the diversity of common sense.

And finally, to the *Diversity of discreet identity*. Many analysts and writers have made the claim that there is an identity crisis in the crafts today, due primarily to the preoccupation with becoming an artist instead of being satisfied and proud to be a craftsperson, and also due to the use of fine arts language and theory to assess the crafts. My comments might have you thinking that I subscribe to this idea, and you would be right.

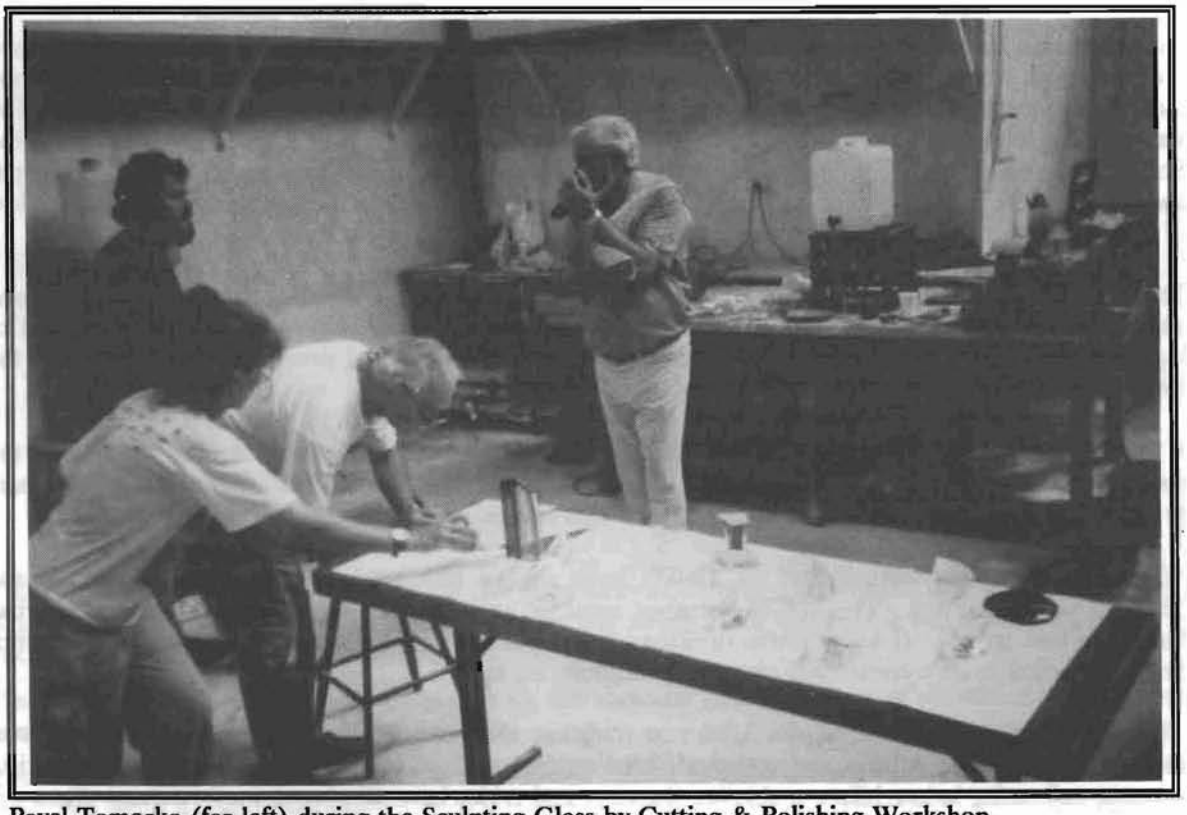
If one wants to be an artist then that is a fair and honourable aim. One should move into that sphere of operations, work with the aim of an artist and be judged in terms of the fine arts. There is absolutely nothing wrong with that but do it wholeheartedly and honestly.

On the other hand, being a craftsperson is also entirely honourable and an admirable pursuit. The characteristics which distinguish craft work from any other activity make it valuable and entirely unique. It does involve the highest order of thinking and development of ideas, the utmost control of technique and materials, a commitment to quality, an astute sense of the market place for objects and a belief that what is made does add to the value of the society or the economy. It already involves meaning, and does not need gratuitous layers of meaning applied to it, as with the current rash of "textual" works.

This is the diversity of the crafts industry which I will leave you with - the diversity that comes from the distinct characteristics of the crafts which go towards making this industry unique. It is **this** diversity which will allow a rejoining of craft and architecture as architects find once again the value of decoration and personality for their buildings.

It is this diversity which will allow crafts people to find a role in designing for industrial production, whether small or large scale. It is this diversity which the crafts industry must promote proudly if contemporary crafts are going to be something more than consumerist glitz and so go down in history as simply playthings for the amusement of the rich. It is this diversity which will allow the development of an export market, thus showing once and for all that the crafts industry is a legitimate and economically viable sector of the Australian economy, an activity which truly adds value to the economy, and is not merely a nostalgic reference to the pre industrial times from which our western society has come.

We should embrace the unique and successful combination of ideas, materials and techniques which produce good craft, lest we all find ourselves at the bottom of that yawning chasm.



Pavel Tomecko (far left) during the Sculpting Glass by Cutting & Polishing Workshop

CONTEMPORARY GLASS - ARE WE GOING THE RIGHT WAY?

by *Robert Bell, Curator of Craft, Art Gallery of Western Australia.*

At rather late notice I inherited this topic and this title from another curator in another art museum. He wasn't able to make it, so I don't know what he was going to tell you. I don't know if he was going to tell what the right way was and what to do to get on the road to it. Perhaps he was going to give a lecture on "wrong" approaches - a sort of lexicon of bad decisions and artistic dead-ends. "Famous failures in glass" and how to avoid getting caught in the same embarrassing trap. Do's and don'ts, and don't-even-think-about-its for aspiring artists working with glass! Perhaps not.

Working in art museums, one's view of current developments in any field is always part of a wider view that includes the past and drams of how the future might shape up. Constantly re-evaluating the past in the light of the present I find I am re-evaluating the potential of the present in the light of the future. Asking *when, how and what-if* ... ***When*** a miraculous new product, material or technique is discovered, ***how*** will artists deal with it? ***What if*** they miss it, what if they screw it up? ***How*** will they expand its vocabulary? ***Where*** will it lead them and us?

Every moment bristles with possibilities. I picked up a paper yesterday with the headline "GULF TORCHED!" - two innocent words electrify us into an instant vision of the future. Can we cope - is there an art possibility in there somewhere? You start to instinctively shift gears about the future.

Historically, glass has been linked with technology as much as with art and its development and direction have been led by market forces and technical discoveries and innovations. Determining what is a "right" direction for glass from these forces now engages us as we try to understand, and to position contemporary glass in the context of other art.

Right where the world is now falling apart, three thousand years ago the Egyptians were using an exciting new man-made material - glass - as an integral part of their remarkable art. Tutankhamun was buried with a headrest of cast blue glass. A thousand years later, people in Alexandria were able to use high-style glass objects in the new "millefiori" technique.

The Romans were even more inventive and adventurous with glass - contemporary narratives exploited cameo glass, cage cups and enamelled glass showcased the technological explosion that placed glass into the cultural mainstream.

Subsumed into the spirituality of the Christian faith, glass combined with light and architecture to give vision to faith from Rome to Ravenna, Constantinople to Chartres. Glass rose to importance second only to architecture in the hierarchy of the arts in the service of the church in the Middle Ages. The stained glass windows of the Gothic cathedrals have often been called a poor man's bible, illustrating the Scriptures in comic-book fashion for an illiterate populace. Their theological significance went deeper and an elaborate metaphor was developed where light was construed as the truth of God. The window of glass allowed its passage while forming a barrier to all else.

Three hundred years ago the Renaissance liberated many arts, Venetian glassblowers, German enamellers and engravers translated Baroque ornament into prestige products. The very embodiment of ingenuity, glass was the ideal material to demonstrate craftsmanship and new technologies well into the 19th century.

It is only by the end of the 19th century that we can start to conjure names of glass artists and the emergence of the studio artist working with the crafts. Emile Gallé turned the light on the modern age, breaking glass' tyranny of spectacle, letting it flow with nature, symbolism and the mind.

While Edison's glass lights flicked on, Gallé's were shaded with bats' wings and carved insects, and Tiffany's posed as lilies. The age of the glass artist as an individual participant in the secular urban landscape had arrived. (I know you're thinking: "why is he giving a lecture on the history of glass when this is supposed to be a conference about contemporary making?").

The point is - that as inheritors of a 3,000 year tradition, glass artists can understand some of the forces that have shaped the artistic and technical development of their craft. Craftsmen, designers, artists, patrons, collectors, industrialists, architects, theorists and critics have all played a role through history in determining what is done with glass. Museum collections contain much of the world's glass heritage, but,

although linked through material and process, glass objects from the past **don't** reach the present in a seamless historical continuum. Instead are fragmented segments of technical and artistic brilliance, some sequential, some re-invented, others abandoned and rediscovered.

A firm belief in "going the right way" may suddenly be subverted or enhanced by forces outside the practice itself.

Will the influence of computer technology or new glass materials, new contemporary art theories or new marketing strategies and methods steer glass in as "right" a direction as the invention of Gothic architecture, lead glass, or wheel engraving did in the past? Artists with good ideas and things to say will assimilate these new forces with gusto and re-write the language of glass - the way that artists such as Gallé, Tiffany, Lalique, Marinot, Wirkkala, Libensky, Littleton, Eisch, Schreiter, Chihuly or Vallien grasped the moment and redirected the course of glass, if not in their own image, then coloured by their own vision and skill. However, abandoning what some might see as the "ghetto" of craft will not necessarily reveal unfettered artistic vision - the wider the technical base of glass - the broader the range of expression. Training in thought, communication and design are tools the artist must have to be able to select glass' multiple languages and secrets for what they have to say. Artistic vision and technical virtuosity are not always found in the one person - many a good idea has been let down by incompetent technique or aspired to by technical flash. There are rich possibilities for artist-designed and conceived works in glass to be produced from any number of areas between industry and the studio.

If new visions come from good communication, then access to work and ideas is essential. Collections provide that but collections are energised by exhibitions - they are the direct link with what is happening elsewhere. We've seen this week the face of the global network - yet all the live broadcasts and satellite links can't yet bring us the real object - there is a future for the exhibition trade I'm pleased to say.

As we're talking about directions, I thought I would finish with some images of work spanning 10 years. The first few are from an exhibition that the Art Gallery of Western Australia mounted in 1982 - International Directions in Glass Art - it brought to Australia for the first time work from around the world - an eclectic mix of visions, directions and energies seen through one slice of time. These slides show hot it looked in Perth.

The artists came from a variety of positions:

1.	Therman Stantom	)	Alluding to Duchamp
2	Tom Fleming	)	Dealing with shards &
3.	Harry Umen	)	renewal.
4.	Dewain Valentine	)	Concerning themselves with
5.	Ben Kaiser	)	structure and light.
6.	Richard Posner	)	With narratives.
7.	Christine Robbins	)	" "
8.	Dana Zámečniková	)	" "
9.	Ted Barnes	)	" "
10.	Linda MacNeil	)	With the poetry of
11.	Michael Cohen	)	technology.
12.	Tom Patti	)	
13.	Robert Levin	)	With the drama of the
14.	Joel Philip Myers	)	material.
15.	Stanislav Libensky	)	
16.	Bert Frijns	)	With illusion and sleight-
17.	Kazuko Eguchi	)	of-hand.
18.	Johannes Schreiter	)	

I'm now in the process of assembling another International Directions in Glass - part of the 1992 Crafts Triennial. Ten years on, some of these forces are still strong - the language is more international in its vocabulary but its dialects are strong and convincing.

Please excuse this pigeon-holing - it goes with the museum trade - a form of shorthand I use to feel some of the currents.

The "right" way is never obvious at first, but the live current of glass is always there to give power to the right idea when its time has come.

DYNAMIC LEARNING - A QUALITY APPROACH TO QUALITY TRAINING

by *Richard Hames, Executive Consulting Services*

"Of Maps, Models and Metaphors" - The Traditional Approach

Many criticisms have been levelled at Australia's education system over the past few years - most of this fully justified. Australian educational institutions seem never to have shown the slightest sign of veering from the primary task assigned to them by our society, namely the (admittedly useful) function of incarcerating children between the ages of about 5 and 18 to free their parents from the tiresome task of raising them.

A casual glance around a typical Australian school will reveal the facility as being optimised for conformity, uniformity, discipline and obedience training, in terms both of its structure and curriculum. While I have no doubt that certain of these values are beneficial, this doesn't detract from the fact that the system as we have designed it, focussing as it does on the teacher and the "teaching" process, has always operated according to unspoken but clearly communicated values about how growing children should be handled. It certainly has very little to do with education.

By the time our children finish high school they become accustomed to the pursuit of irrelevance and automatically carry this obedience training with them well into their future lives. My own experiences in higher education and industry training have convinced me that the typical adult "learner" brings the same habits and expectations to the classroom in grown-up life that he or she learned so well in obedience school; often sitting passively and granting the instructor absolute authority to decide what they should learn, how, when and why.

Certainly if we are looking for ways to foster creativity, innovation, logical reasoning, imaginative and critical thinking, problem-solving and decision-making skills among the workforce then our current educational system is the last place in which to find them.

Going to school, in fact, effectively interrupts our education and provides little if any opportunity to put learning into action. Yet effective learning as "the transformation of our direct experiences into personal knowledge as a precursor to action" is the key to us managing change successfully. Not for nothing do the Japanese assert that "quality begins and ends with education" (i.e. learning).

Creating New Values for the Future

Learning within the context of our information-rich world is not simply the passive acquisition of knowledge or skills. On the contrary it is a dynamic and creative process by which each of us adapts to changes in our environments. Learning, we hope, enables us to make meaning of our reality and therefore has as much to do with finding out about our world (and our own relationships with it) as it is about taking action to change (our relationship to) it.

According to John Dewey, "the object of education lies not in communicating the values of the past, but in creating new values for the future". If learning is to be effective in its application to change, if, in other words, it is to become a strategic tool, it must combine experiencing with conceptual modelling as two inseparable parts of an holistic process. Furthermore, as everything continues to change at an increasingly rapid rate, we need to keep learning.

Yet this view of "experiential" learning as an imaginative and developmental process in the continual renewal of new knowledge and, more importantly, of new ways of knowing, is not the view of learning held by the conventional educators, let alone their counterparts in industry training. These people would rather continue to use old maps to explore new territories in the stubborn perpetuation of a system that actually inculcates "superstitious learning" before we reach puberty.

Indeed the outcome of such mindless classroom activities is more than adequately reflected in the widespread use of television as "chewing-gum for the mind". Is it any wonder then, that many of our leaders suffer chronic cases of acute mindlessness from time to time when the entire system and its concentration on myth and superstitious learning, is designed to maintain the status quo as a means of effecting social control? I hardly think so. But if our current system is inadequate for dealing with the kinds of societal changes occurring today, what can we devise to take its place? How can education and training contribute more effectively to the creation of better products or services, the achievement of economically viable yet ecologically sustainable futures for our industries?

As the rate of technological change in our information-packed society gathers speed, so the rate at which skills become obsolescent quickens. In these circumstances "catch-up" training becomes irrelevant and the need for a "just-in-time" view of skills acquisition within the context of a "lifelong" learning culture becomes imperative.

The challenge for Australia in the immediate future is the forging of a "quality-appreciative" ethic in which the entire society participates to continually renew and improve knowledge, skills and praxis.

Dynamic Learning - A Philosophy for Action

I propose that the entire notion of formal education and training as we have conceived it needs to be radically reconstrued and made relevant for a post-industrial, information-rich world. We need to discover a new action paradigm of learning that shifts us from knowledge about the world as an end in itself, to a "quality appreciative" process of knowing about the world "in order that its condition might be improved".

This is the essence of dynamic learning: an unending process of personal and organisational investigation and discovery; a process where people are empowered to learn in such a manner as to effectively synthesise their experiences into knowledge in order to exist in dynamic co-evolution with their environments. A "learning ecology", if you will, that is itself always learning.

The Carnegie Report of 1986 clearly stated that for learning to be of any significance in the future each of us must be busily engaged in the process of bringing new knowledge and new ways of knowing to bear on a widening range of increasingly difficult and complex problems.

The focus must shift from teaching to the systematic and strategic management of learning, from the passive acquisition of facts and routines to the active application of ideas to problems and the development of "appreciative" and innovative systems.

It is only through this new co-operative learning model that we can hope to explore the complex, volatile and ambiguous issues that increasingly confront us at work - issues for which there are no clear answers nor currently existing solutions.

Through this model we can focus on the process of learning itself - by reflecting upon the process of how we found out about a problem we are able to take action to improve future action taking. This "second level" (or systems integrated) learning is the key to successful practice-through-reflection and is that part of education which is denied us in more conventional models where the teacher/instructor remains the focus.

Furthermore this model integrates praxis, propositional and practical knowledge into a dynamic, holistic "learning culture" emphasising interactions and relationships between individuals and their environments. Briefly, dynamic learning:

* centres on personal meaning and involvement both through knowing and experiencing and is thus largely evaluated by the learner;
* is self-initiated, for even when the impetus and stimulation is externally directed, the sense of discovery, of reaching out, grasping and comprehending, come from within; and
* is sufficiently pervasive that it tends to make a real and perceptible difference in the behaviour, the attitudes and even the personality of the learner.

Improving Learning Systems in Australian Culture

Dynamic Learning is an agent for ethical change - a paradigm shift in learning culture towards the notion of "appreciative" systems. Without this shift in thinking our educational organisations will remain rooted in the past and the synergy and innovations of which we speak will inevitably pass us by.

But, "what must an organisation do in order that it might learn?" How are our organisations to become dynamic evolving systems, openly interacting with their environments and creating more enduring, responsible and sustainable futures for us all?

What can be said with some authority is that all organisations can benefit from the concrete experiences of those individuals who comprise it. As members of an evolving, learning organisation, we need to be able to participate as individuals dealing with our own changing environment as much as interacting components of a system with its own changing environment. The dynamic learning approach seems most appropriate in the experiential exploration of these complex processes, particularly as they relate to the role of arts training and organisation in the future and the process of strategic development within the arts.

This "chaotic" view of the world in a state of dynamic flux; this belief of organisations as complex systems of human activities, transactions and relationships; this concept of our own organisation as an autonomous learning system, equips us, as Richard Bawden asserts, if we care to use them, with the most wonderfully appropriate tools for managing the transformation to quality learning.

A fundamental shift in "mind-set", however, is required if we are to break free from the shackles of current educational mindlessness. If we are serious about improving the quality and relevance of learning in our society and of providing a quality learning culture within our society, indeed if we really do comprehend the profound knowledge available to us through the adoption of the dynamic learning ethic, then we have no option but to invest in people and their learning on a scale not yet fully appreciated.

On the other hand if we continue to isolate training within the classroom; if we limit its potential to a chosen few people or skills and cut the budget for training at the first sign of recession; if we continue to focus on education and training as a one-way didactic process, (i.e. "learning from being told") as preparation for a life-long "career"; and if we continue to value things over relationships; we shall limit any comparative advantage we might have had and consign our country to a new dark age. We shall never catch up with the likes of Japan, (or Thailand, Korea, Taiwan and Mexico, for that matter!) and we will have only ourselves to blame!

The Future Challenge for the "Lucky Country"

In spite of this bleak prediction, the typical reaction from the education community to the kinds of ideas I'm proposing here would seem to indicate that we are too apathetic, self-interested or non-reflective to respond with any sense of vigour or comprehension to urgent systemic reforms. Even the much-publicised round of current workplace restructuring scarcely scratches the surface of what has to be done. And done now if Australia is to avoid the drift into another, far less exotic, more menacing Dreamtime.

Perhaps it is inevitable that any attempt to warn and challenge the prevailing ways of getting things done in a democratic society will be stifled by the inertia of social convention. For so it would seem. Perhaps we really have lost our way. Maybe Bruce Grant was indeed correct when, in his book, "The Australian Dilemma", he claimed:

> *"Taking Australia where it now stands, and the likely challenges it will face during the rest of this century, it is obvious that such a test - of a desire and capacity to be a distinctive society with a will to survive - is imminent ... In addition it must be said that the Australian people show no particular qualities at this time that might equip them for what seems like a sophisticated self-assessment."*

But he said that in 1983. There is still no evidence that he was wrong. And there is still no sign that we want to do much about it!

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THE GETTING OF WISDOM: THE GAINING OF SKILLS AND A PHILOSOPHY TO PRACTICE

Session 1: by Cedar Prest

1. Introduction - A Philosophy to Practise

As a stained glass artist, I deal in light atmospheres. It's as exciting as being a stage lighting director, but much more permanent. I'm in love with glass, its transparency, brilliance, opacity and reflectivity, there's so much potential. Glass needs light and the art is about the manipulation of the two. I judge the quality of a window by its ability to produce a suitable light atmosphere for the building and its integration with the architecture. One of the problems for the designer in this field has been caused by people's gothic preconceptions of stained glass. While Ste. Chapelle may be an example of the best integration of glass and architecture to produce a lofty atmosphere and sacred light suitable for the function of worship for the 14th century, it is not for the 20th! My working life has been dedicated to the search for an Australian style, an expression relevant to us, where we are NOW.

Australian light is different, our windows need to reflect that difference. A year ago I made the impressionist painters journey from Paris to Provence to Malaga and Morocco, in the steps of Matisse, Cezanne and Klee, to see if those passages of changing light could be compared with the dislocation of transportation from England to Australia. Not quite. Our light IS different. The clue to understanding the right colour palette for us lies in the vegetation - subtle soft green greys, sun bleached grass yellows with a hint of carmine, blue grey purple shadows. Not for us the reds and blues of British Empire, its more like our lifestyle - relaxed and outdoors. Our architecture is slowly evolving to reflect this and become more integrated with the landscape. What we have to give the world is our unique vision and vitality. Don't be deflected by the influence of Rupert Murdoch international media levelling. Leave the "cringe" with the glossies beside the toilet!

The second part of my philosophy is about people, education and self expression. I believe that our education has tragic "Flaws in the Glass". We stress the three R's, but literacy is only one of man's five senses of expression and communication. We have left our children feeling inadequate because they could not write while we denied them development in art and music which were presented as peripheral soft options for the less able. No dance education, and was domestic science ever about taste! With such handicaps in self expression, who wouldn't reach for a Winfield and a stubby! My work in communities over the past ten years has become about helping people to gain confidence in their own self expression in glass. I really believe that much of the best Australian art is made by those connected to the land and able to interpret its qualities like vastness, age, the intimacy of the rockhole or the wildlife. We have some of the last wilderness unaltered by man here, and expression of that identity is symbolic of creation's will to survive and our identification with that process. Perhaps a true Australian religion!

2. The Gaining of Skills

In the gaining of skills, I would call my model the "Do It Yourself" one. When I wanted to learn stained glass in 1956, there was no place to go. The war and the depression had interrupted apprenticeships, and afterwards the increasing costs of labour made production of stained glass unprofitable. Anyhow, as George Bell told me, it was too heavy for girls! I found an opportunity to learn after I married and came down from Oxford to London in 1965, and I have gone on seizing the opportunities ever since, as I followed the academic career of my husband about and brought up my sons. Learning any techniques for any field, and adapting them to my personal vision of Ausglass.

I would need an hour to tell you this journey properly, but I'm going to have to flash visuals to give you a quick idea of the extent of my explorations.

I grew up wandering in the "bush" on the suburban fringes of Melbourne. I wanted to be a Botanical Illustrator and wrote a book before I went to university. This window by Napier Waller on the staircase of the Botany School was one of my first glass encounters. My favourite was this unfettered exploration by Douglas Annand on an interior foyer wall of Wilson Hall where we sat our university exams. In those years when I drew at night at the National Gallery of Victoria, two other influences were Roualts "Face of Christ on the Veil of St. Veronica" in the gallery collection, and Leonard French's series of Campion paintings. French had invented an abstract symbolic language, I wanted my own and my early paintings showed the frustration of that immature struggle.

While reading about English Socialism, I encountered William Morris and discovered we shared more than the same birthday. My identification with his philosophy of life and work has remarkably never shifted.

Then, like most graduates, I worked = taught, saved and went "home" to England to see civilisation. I married in Oxford and then found glass tuition in London.

This was the Coventry era of Do It Yourself glass. The schools were very Fine Art orientated and there was no technical instruction. You learned by using the materials, from other students and through accidents. The painting style in this slide was becoming looser and more expressionistic. I tried everything. I was concerned that so few past students were practising and also by the evident gap between Coventry and current architecture. I experimented with plastics, fibreglass and resins to try and free the glass to float freely without the confines of lead. But, eventually I had to ask myself about truth to materials and because plastics scratch, attract dust, discolour and don't sparkle, I decided to concentrate on the light in the glass. Before I left England, I read through all the catalogued works on glass in the British Museum and Victoria & Albert libraries, and there, one sleepy afternoon, discovered Robert Sowers "*The Lost Art*". Instant identification. This slide shows my first view of the German school, and looking at Schaffrath's Aachen cloister I knew I had found someone thinking in the same direction.

In 1971 we emigrated to America and I encountered another national style of glass - an opaline interpretation of Art Nouveau. In particular Tiffany and La Farge. I liked Tiffany because he drew with the glass rather than painting, he liked non-flat glass and had the money to make the glass he imagined. I taught the first glass course at Maryland Institute and explored more with my students. I fell in love with German translucent opals which I found in a New York warehouse. I made my first real work. I visited Sowers and wrote to the Germans.

Next I had the opportunity to gain studio experience with Patrick Reyntiens and Lawrence Lee, masters, scholars and gentlemen of Coventry fame. Now I learned real studio practise, better technique and consolidated. What a privilege. But when you look at Coventry, it is John Hutton's engraved West Window which seems to point best toward the 20th century. He refused to teach me until 1975.

Briefly more America, the Californian experience teaching the first glass summer course at Mendocino, and meeting Peter Mollica, a young professor with similar ideas, we wrote each other books! Back in Australia, I got an early Crafts Board grant to study the work of the then unpublished Germans. These slides show two of my favourite German environments. Domenicus Boehm Narien Kirke baptistry at Bonn-Marienberg for its lightness, sparkle and the inter-relatedness of the inside and outside work. Schreiter's Chapel at Leutesdorf, a masterpiece of design for a meditational environment. At the end of the German trip, I had learned about good design and contemporary architecture, but I felt unsatisfied at the emotional and spiritual level. Only Meisterman seemed to work from the heart.

After more Australian and American exploring, I found the beauty and passion I sought in the works of Evie Hone and Harry Clarke in Ireland. Living at Princeton gave me time to study architecture from F.L. Wright with weekly visits to New York, to contemplate the real buildings. My vision of glass and architecture was now very broad and sculptural, but back in the province of Adelaide, life went on as usual. Architects were self absorbed. The opportunity for self expression was made through parks Community Project.

Three years with the Crafts Board pushed me into politics and gave me an overview of Australia and a voice for the injustices of the distribution network to those in the country. Afterwards, through the Arts Council, I pursued redress and was invited to do community projects in the landscape from Alice Springs to Whyalla, the Riverland and Kalamunda (8 in all), living my theories in the bush. I needed to be back in touch with my roots, away from politics, with people where my heart is. In the end, my work will speak for itself. You can draw your own conclusions for glass education from this journey.

3. Concluding advice to those starting now

1. Never stop doing - a little every day amongst any obstacles.
2. Always draw, again every day if possible. Your drawing is your connection to your personal visual world.

3. Get your feet dirty, meaning keep your roots in the soil. Become a custodian of this and be prepared to act to ensure its survival.

4. On the educational front, let's insist that our schools develop expression in all of the five senses so that our children can leave confident in their own self-expression. Let's keep Art Schools and Universities as places where students can mature by wide ranging study and exploration in a flexible structure. This is the time in life to be able to play and learn without specific goals - recognition of senses, confirmed in other projects and studio practice.

   However, once the students have found their area of professional specialisation, they need to achieve sound craft training, presentation skills and business practice before they leave. Perhaps studio experience is a sensible option in this period. (Teamwork - in my own studio practice I can do observe, and I stress the importance of collaborative teamwork where different people collaborate to produce the best work for different commissions in respect of their own individual skills.)

   I suspect that "fine art" comes from the heart. So, it's a different journey for everyone.

This country has been good to me, and allowed me the freedom to develop. People have commissioned me to make for them, and invited me to live and work with them in their landscapes. I don't ask for anything more. The historians can judge whether it was art or craft! I think the love and the people and the LAND were the most important.

Session 2: by Bridget Hancock

I have been invited to speak on this panel as a person working in glass with no formal training behind me, to discuss my gaining of skills and philosophy to my work.

I have learned everything I know through 10 years of experimentation, trial and error, different Ausglass workshops and a "never say no" attitude.

What I make is warm glass for interiors.

This started by gradually developing a range of production-type work - lights, platters, furniture, clocks, wall pieces, etc., which allowed me to experiment with techniques, design and the market place, learn how galleries operate, and develop confidence with the medium. My concern has always been with improving the aesthetic of interiors, and my aim was to be in a position of overall design control so I could design and make the lights and the furniture, the floor tiles, etc. This instigated my move into larger scale architectural and interior commissions, which involves working with architects, designers and builders, working to a brief, contracts, insurance, much larger scale, higher risks, greater technical challenges and more sleepless nights.

My philosophy is still "give it a try", and I think lack of formal training may be an advantage in this regard. Partly personality, but partly because I haven't been taught what I can't do.

So far I've been lucky and never came totally unstuck on a project, albeit pretty close. Once I've taken on a challenge, it's a matter of pooling all resources, information gathering, experimenting and producing, and it's all very good education.

Information gathering has always been the most time-consuming thing. A formal training may have supplied me with a greater technical information bank, and I may have saved some time, but I don't know anyone working in the field who doesn't spend a lot of time "finding out" things - whether it be how to do it, where to get it, or who can make it (steel work, etc.).

I also think production work is more successful without too much art theorising. A design based aesthetic results in work that is more accessible to the general public, and means you can sell without guilt about selling out!

What is frustrating me most at the moment is how to work with other designers on a project and still maintain my passion and personality in the resulting work. I think acquiring the confidence to insist on personal content has taken me a lot longer because I was NOT formally art trained, and to this end I feel

ready to experiment with content, exhibition work, perhaps even go to art school NOW. My personal emotional aesthetic needs development, but it is all part of the evolution of a life.

A certain amount of compromise HAS to occur when one wants to live off art.

So either everything you make contains your whole soul, or you split it up into **work** and **art**; or production and exhibition or a day job and your work.

I don't think any amount of training changes that, and in fact probably makes compromising a more difficult problem.

Session 3: by Richard Morrell

I feel it is not possible to describe a philosophy without describing how it was acquired. As a matter of necessity then, I shall have to relate some personal history.

After several frustrating years in the workforce, performing tasks ranging from electronic engineering to laying railway lines, I decided to seek a more satisfying career, and entered Art School. I decided that glass was to be my forte, and therefore I went to Stourbridge School of Art, with the express intention of acquiring the skills to be a glassmaker.

As you can imagine, I was quite dismayed to find that skills acquisition was very low on the curriculum, far more importance was placed on experimentation and concept development, ideas which were not in line with my idea of learning a new profession. Despite feeling like a fish out of water, I persevered, and learnt the craft of glassmaking from some of the local glassmakers who were occasionally brought into the college to demonstrate. These master craftsmen, who had generations of experience behind them, taught me a respect for the material which I never learnt from my tutors.

I learnt how to make decanters, glasses, bowls, furnaces, and even unravelled some of the complexities of glass formulation. My tutors were, however, not impressed, and I left the college with a rotten mark, which worried me then.

A word on skill; skill is something which can only be acquired through practice, but practice alone is not enough. Practice makes permanent, not perfect. Without continual reappraisal of one's efforts, it is easy to simply practice one's mistakes.

It has become fashionable recently to demean the acquisition of skill. Some artists believe that practice can actually limit their creativity! I can only laugh at that, for it is a poor artist indeed whose imagination is cramped by skill.

Personally, I have long believed that to write poetry one has to know the language.

Having completed my studies, I took a position as tutor at C.I.T. in Melbourne. I found myself in an odd situation there, as my fellow instructor, Julio Santos, was more than capable of teaching the skills of glassmaking. Therefore, in the interests of presenting a well-rounded course, it was up to me to encourage the project development, creativity and experimentation side of things, the very things that I had so little time for when a student myself.

It is said that a good teacher will learn as much as he teaches - well, I learnt that wisdom is something one acquires through changing one's point of view.

Having finished my contract to C.I.T., I left teaching to pursue my real ambition of becoming a professional glassmaker.

It was the early 1980s, craftwork was exploding onto an unsuspecting marketplace, the craftspeople carried away on a wave of exhibitions, craft centres and public funding. The in thing was to be experimental and creative, the era being typified by coffee table sculpture which "challenged the nature of the material", but only really succeeded in challenging the credibility of the public.

I confess, I too was involved in the general enthusiasm, I too made peculiar objet d'art in an effort to draw attention to my work. Thankfully, my efforts at the time were largely ignored.

I say thankfully, for deep inside there was a nagging doubt about what I was doing. I felt my hard won skills were contributing little to what I show as my best pieces. A disquieting worry began to grow as to the quality these pieces represented.

I decided to change my point of view. In an effort to give direction to my work, I set some parameters to work within.

Firstly, I would make vessels. There is an historical precedent for making vessels from glass, and this gives a framework of reference by which the success of a piece may be judged.

Secondly, instead of "challenging the medium", I resolved to learn respect for it.

Thirdly, I resolved to pursue QUALITY. By this I mean that I would try to reveal the qualities I perceived within the material.

This, then, has become my "philosophy to practice". I do not propose it as a model for others, rather as an example of how a personal philosophy may emerge.

In conclusion, I might just say this: much human endeavour has been expended in the pursuit of knowledge. It is my opinion that knowledge is something we acquire in the quest for quality, no matter what we may perceive that quality to be.

Session 4: by Anne Dybka

Education, and some Philosophy as Applied to Art

Obligations of Education

I believe the area we are dealing with today comes under the heading of Education. I am not an educator, so I can only put forward my untrained personal views. Some sort of philosophy should be behind pretty well all of the things we do, so I'll try to include that too.

So, why do people decide to go to a school? Doesn't the word "education" mean on the one side to impart knowledge, and on the other to learn? There is also another rather nice explanation of the word in the dictionary - which is "an enlightening experience!". I don't think this latter view should be forgotten in one's daily efforts. Both teacher and pupil must try to keep interest and enthusiasm alive, because there are bound to be long periods of hard work and discipline, and this is especially hard during the time when you are actually bad at the work. But the more you are "enlightened", the more hope arises as to what you will be able to achieve once you have mastery.

Just as the old should remember what it was like to be young - so the teacher should remember what it was like to be bad at the work! Both teacher and pupil should have sympathy with each other, and **belief** in each other ... I must make this point - that in education there are obligations - on both sides there is an obligation - the teacher to teach, the pupil to learn. A straight fact, sometimes forgotten.

Sir Joshua Reynolds began a long tradition in the English Academy of Training in Drawing and Painting. The Guilds also had a strict and long tradition in methods of training people in the various Crafts and Trades. No one was allowed to set up their own workshop to sell their work until they had demonstrated with their "Masterpiece" that they were indeed master of their Craft. This maintained quality, and you had no "backyarders" who brought their Craft into degradation. I believe this view was held by unsophisticated cultures also.

The Academic Art training was truly broken away from finally and forever by the Bauhaus ideas in Germany. Beginning with painting and spreading to sculpture and other disciplines. Where they actually decided not to teach, and not even to answer questions. Everything had to be discovered for themselves by the Pupils. This was the beginning of the big "Messes". I can't see why anyone went to school at all under such circumstances, better to save your money, stay home, and make your discoveries there. For those who were naturally full of talent this was probably o.k. and they were free of any stultifying effects

of the old too "unchanged" disciplines - although they might have saved a lot of time if they'd been shown how to do many things which they had to spend years figuring out. For the rest, it just led to laziness and mess, all excused and covered by the magic word "Art".

Where the Crafts are concerned it is even more important to learn how to do your work. You can have all the ideas in the world, but until you have mastered the techniques and skills, you can only live in "unenlightened" frustration. It is not until your tools obey you that you can attain freedom. Freedom to really do what you want to do in your work.

Then also, you can invent and improve further techniques and so add to the sum of both Art and Knowledge.

What people are impatient with nowadays is the fact that all this takes time. I don't think teachers should take the attitude that the methods they are showing are the absolute and only hard and fast ways of doing something, they can merely explain that through the years, sometimes centuries - artists of all times and cultures have discovered by **their** trials and errors that these are effective techniques.

I believe the teachers should be able to listen to the ideas of the pupils, and allow them to experiment within the bounds of possibility and good sense. The teacher can sometimes learn from an enterprising pupil. All the same, if through too much lenience one can see that the pupil is going off the track in such a way as to perpetuate bad work results, they must be corrected. He or she may be annoyed at the time, but later they will be glad.

In the modern psychological jargon of the teaching world, these may seem naively simple statements. That this section of talk is a form of stating the obvious. I think it is a forgotten common sense.

When I was learning drawing with George Bell, he said to me "today's the day to buy a brush and be a Genius!". In other words - cut out all that boring time learning. Needless to say, he was being ironic.

Some Philosophy

Now how should one apply some kind of philosophy to one's work? We all want to do work which is of fine quality - otherwise why bother? If it is just hackwork to make a living, and only that, don't call yourself an ARTIST ... A lot goes in to being an artist, and people should not be afraid to aim to be one in their sphere, they should want to be the best possible. They will never know if they succeeded, that's for Posterity, and for that reason people should be a bit careful of what they claim for themselves. During one's lifetime often you can't see the wood for the trees - again, it takes time to sort out who was really an artist. But they must always **strive**, never sit back and say "that'll have to do". Small or large, currently important or unimportant, each piece of work must receive your ultimate effort to be right.

So, you've made every effort, you want quality. But ... however clever or able you are, the intrinsic quality of the work cannot be anything better than what you yourself are. Here I am not talking about accidental ART - what you **are** will come out in your work, you cannot conceal it, any more than you can in your handwriting unless you are copying someone else or faking. So it is in yourself that there must be special qualities.

Well - Who are You? Personal identity is a query for everyone. It is said that people search for their identity, and that through ART (which is part unconscious) they may find it. But that is only one aspect. In order to develop a person should try to have a wide **Horizon of Thought**. For this to be possible one should be eagerly interested in many aspects of life, around us now, both far and near and in past histories both of man and nature, and of your own particular art seek its origins and diversifications. There are so many curious things to seek out and know, to think about and to be inspired. "Enlightened" should I say? If you are only interested in your own small sphere of existence - your work will be very narrow - even shallow. Thinking is a marvellous form of "time travel". According to your circumstances and available sources, your mind can range over so much of life both physical, mental and spiritual, that has up to now been experienced on this planet. So much is there if your mind is interested to travel, and there are many people and places ready to open their books to you.

For this to be useful, your own personality should choose a path of subjects in experiences to which you are naturally drawn - fate will supply others - and from these you form a kind of chain of thought, often changing shape but always connected and growing, (never just drifting formlessly by) in this way you are

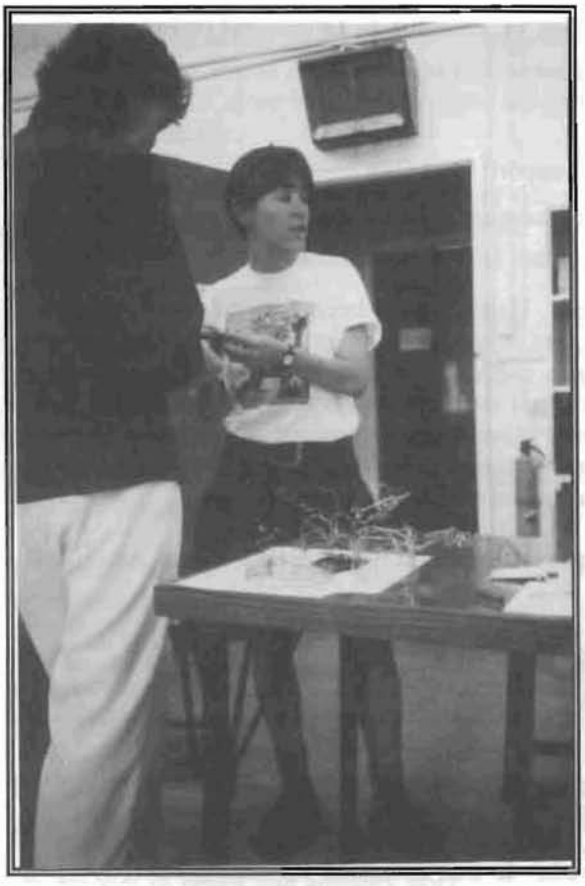
almost without noticing, forming your own philosophy and making decisions as to what is of value and what can be discarded. This is reinforced by the discovery as time goes by that more **constants** appear in your opinions - that in fact you have got a guiding philosophy of your own.

Visual arts and even crafts are like music and mathematics, a form of language. An inter-national and inter-time language. It is not much good trying to explain visual art in words, the language you are using is a different one, and impacts on different parts of the mind, which is why it can jump "time". If your communication never reaches your audience you have failed. Therefore deliberate obscurity is an offence like mumbling, coughing or spitting in their face. If you have any clear thoughts or beliefs, these should come through and be understood. Puzzles may be intriguing, but they are really playing - and mean that **you** have **no** philosophy and nothing real to say, and that is why you are hiding.

... There was an original cell, or blueprint from which your own complicated and wonderful person developed. So - in reverse, all the by-ways, offshoots, explorations, complications of fears and needs, pains and joys, which you go through, can in old age return to basic principles which - through it all - have finally kept their truth, and from which all things can develop and all things die back to.

I believe that in all great Art as opposed to that which is ruled by style or fashion, or just displays of cleverness, these spiritual constant values are present. All generations can somehow recognise this, and these objects whether simple or elaborate, have a perpetual strength of meaning, and are forever venerated.

If during question time you ask me to list these values for you, I will tell you that that is the hard thing to know, and that you will have to live our your life to find out.



Alice Whish at the workshop:
"Some Call it Jewellery"

Mo Orkiszewski (left) with Dana during her workshop: "Illusory Space"

FOSTERING THE ENVIRONMENT FOR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

by *Noel Frankham - Director Visual Arts/Craft*

I thought I'd start by telling you a few things about yourselves that you may not know.

> *There are almost 12,000 artists and craftspeople working in Australia.*
>
> *They earn an average of $12,900 from sale of their work, but it costs them $12,400 to produce it. It is worth noting that glass artists earn relatively more as, while their production costs are about the same as other artists, the income earned is closer to $20,000.*
>
> *This group of 12,000 citizens generates over $500 million worth of economic activity. This includes $234 million in sales of work, $180 million being first sales, plus salaries for over 20,000 people.*
>
> *Of that income from sales, Mr. Keating should be pleased to know that $64 million was found overseas, making a most valuable contribution to Australia's balance of payments.*
>
> *As a result of our artists' efforts, there are over 150 public art galleries and museums, and over 900 commercial galleries and retail outlets in Australia.*

Much of this has been achieved over the past 15-20 years. We can, I think, take considerable satisfaction in the knowledge that contemporary art and craft constitutes a very real contribution to this country's quality of life.

Twenty years ago a great deal of what we now take for granted did not exist. In that time we have seen the development of highly professional arts support and development organisations that have encouraged markets, information exchange, community access and understanding and a high level of professional practice and discourse that is acknowledged within Australia and internationally.

However, it is vital that we do not become complacent, that we continue to be mindful of our histories, and the society in which we exist.

I have divided my presentation into two parts:

* the theory and programmes of Australia Council support; and then
* I'll show some slides of the international studios administered by the Board and the work of artists recently awarded grants.

I want to make three points in the first part of my address. Firstly, as has been pointed out already, the "industry" that we have come to be has a history, a past that is crucial to understanding the present and informing the future. I use the word industry with some caution; used in-house as a description of collective endeavour it's o.k., used more broadly it can suggest our importance and professionalism; but it also can have the negative effect of comparing us with other highly organised management/worker based, primary, secondary and tertiary industries that enjoy greater public acceptance and attract much better conditions, and that have a different notion of success and profit orientation.

Secondly, I will discuss the policies and grant programmes of the Australia Council's Visual Arts/Craft Board.

The last point will draw together the plan for the next decade or so.

I won't spend much time on history, as other speakers have effectively described both the elements and significance of the past.

A look at Council's past and how it affects the present is an example of Sylvia's opening paper.

Council in the mid 70s was full of the euphoria of youth. It was notorious for taking risks, seeming paternalistic, accused of cronyism and scatter gun in approach. Many of us will recall spectacular failures and extravagances, but pausing to consider our successes reminds us that the points I made at the outset are quite extraordinary achievements in under 20 years.

Council's work is divided into two related components, grant giving and policy research and development.

Grants are given to individuals and organisations. Supporting individuals, especially practitioners, is fundamental to Council's commitment to arts development, and I'll talk more of that later.

Council's other major achievement has been the establishment and development of national, specialist and network organisations. Visual arts examples include the Crafts Councils, contemporary arts spaces, numerous artist initiated (and often temporary products/venues/ workshops), information resources and representation bodies such as Crafts Council of Australia NAVA, AMAA.

Having been key to much of this organisational development, the Council has continued to provide assistance through special projects, exhibitions, conferences etc. that they have undertaken.

We are now in an interesting phase of our respective organisational lives. Sophisticated, independent, expert, visual arts and craft organisations now exist alongside the Australia Council (albeit that many of them are funded by Council). We all need to be respected as professional and mature.

As you will appreciate, there has been some redefining of relationships and roles over the past three or four years that, coinciding with the onset of economic austerity, has not been easy to live with. However, as evidence of the level of professionalism and maturity I believe we are beginning to see successful collective effort with identification of common goals, respectful of history and expertise.

I cannot think of one visual arts or craft organisation that has not recently passed through period of reassessment and restructure. While some of these may seem minor, and some may not work, it is crucial that we not become complacent and rely on notions of relevance, need and success rooted in the mid 70s.

I speak with some authority on this, as I've been close to two major and quite traumatic restructures. In 1976 I was a student at the Tasmanian School of Art (Tasmanian College of Advanced Education) which suffered the first of the tertiary restructure/amalgamations following the Karmel report. And six months after joining the Visual Arts Board it was amalgamated with the Crafts Board to form the body I now administer. With some reservation, both amalgamations were successful, and neither would have been achieved voluntarily.

I realise that I'm moving from the point of this paper, but it is worth noting that as we are at a point in our industry's development when we should clarify direction. As the public and corporate dollar is becoming more difficult to obtain, it is vital that we remain flexible and open to creative options.

Independent of structural considerations it is imperative that we only do the important things. There is no need for us to be attempting things better suited to other organisations. Rather than duplicate or repeat, we propose to work with those organisations sharing resources and a common vision for the future.

At its December meeting, the VACB reviewed its three year life and the economic and cultural context in which it operates.

It looked at the past and all the grant programmes questioning administrative and philosophical effectiveness and efficiency.

The Board has had a succession of cuts to its administrative capacity. Since amalgamation in 1987, we have lost five permanent positions and I now have to come up with a means of accommodating one less by the end of June.

In that three year period, the Board has shed some of the design business, but added five new programmes. The outcome has been that while the Board still administers the same grant programmes, it disperses $6.7 million in grant funds in much the same way as it always did, to do this it has reduced the amount of policy and advisory work.

This erosion of its policy role was of very real concern to the Board. The assumption that dispersing grant funds is its primary function only holds up when the Board has a strong philosophical or policy foundation on which to base the activities undertaken.

By the end of last year, the Board was seriously questioning the relevance of many of its basic policies to the grants it gave. The December meeting refocussed the Board with the following results. The Board determined that within the general Council objectives:

* fostering strong artistic life throughout the nation;
* promoting excellence in and developing all forms of art;
* actively encouraging involvement in the arts by all Australians;
* nurturing a national identity and confidence;

it would adopt a primary aim of fostering a dynamic visual culture in Australia. It agreed on three key objectives:

* developing the understanding of the visual arts and crafts;
* providing opportunities for creating visual arts and crafts;
* making artists a force and resource in the community.

In accordance with the objectives the Board looked at the various strategy options. The principal ones being the capacity to fund, develop, advise and represent. Funding of course is a good means of achieving progress against most of the objectives and the Board decided to maintain all but three of its grant programmes:

* Collections Development - will remain suspended until the Board fully considers Katrina Rumley's review;
* Professional Development of art and craft advocates curators, museum and administrative specialists - this three year old programme will be developed during this year to the AMAA which is more suited to managing this aspect of cultural development;
* International projects will continue to operate through the Board but will almost always be undertaken in collaboration with other visual arts, craft and government bodies such as Crafts Council of Australia, Australian Exhibition Touring Agency, Art Museums Association of Australia, Austrade, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The Board reviewed the effectiveness of small grants. The cost of processing an application with the complex peer group system is about $1,500. The Board decided to cease giving grants under $5,000. It acknowledged that such requests may be better served by providing a block amount to other bodies like the National Association for the Visual Arts, Crafts Council of Australia and the Art Museums Association of Australia. This will be very carefully monitored.

The Board also made a number of decisions in respect of other grant programmes. Many of these are administrative and procedural, aimed at streamlining and reducing the up to 80% commitment of staff resources that presently goes to applications and grant processing. All of the changes are clearly articulated in the 1991 programmes of assistance booklet due out in 2 weeks. If you haven't ordered a copy, please call the Board and do so.

The Board has 18 staff, 37 Board and Committee members and a total grant budget of $6.7 million. Apart from salaries, the admin budget is $200,000. Over $100,000 of that is spent on the direct travel, accommodation and sitting fees of the peer assessors. It is my view that we have erred on the side of fairness and become a little too democratic over the last three years. I propose to reduce expenditure on assessment meetings by as much as 30% if I possibly can. The government imposed an efficiency dividend of 1.25% for remainder of the next four years which will mean that I have to slice as much as $60,000 from the present $200,000 admin budget.

In saying all of this, I hope to provide context in which the Board has made some of its decisions. I don't want you to think that it is all bad news at Council, but similarly basic economics are a major factor influencing what we can do. Many of the changes will mean that regular clients will have to approach the Board in a different way, first time applicants won't know any difference, and it will also mean that feed-back is vital if we are to assess our success at the end of the year.

Changes relevant to individual artists are also detailed in the new booklet. However, the more major changes include:

Closing dates: there will only be one closing date for Professional Development of Artists' grant applications in 1991 - 15th May

Therefore there are no separate Artist Development and Overseas Development ground rounds.

There are five categories -

Fellowship Grants	$30,000	
Development Grants	$15,000	domestic and
Project Grants	$ 7,500	international
Overseas Fellowship Residency		
Overseas Studio Residency		

Each grant category is for a specific amount, however a budget will still be necessary so that we get a sense of where the money would go.

Pre-requisite professional experience will no longer include any time spent studying, and is adjusted for this year to:

Fellowship and Fellowship Residencies	10 years	
Development Grants		7 years
Project Grants and Overseas Studios	2 years	

Overseas residencies are now only offered every two years - we will book ahead.

From the May round anyone who gets a grant cannot reapply until the 1993.

Andrew Bryan and Katherine Stenning are running the programme of assistance for individual artists.

The Board will give priority to applications from practitioners seeking to produce, exhibit, research, publish and promote their work as well as to buy equipment and upgrade skills.

The Board seeks to fund organisations to exhibit work, tour exhibitions, develop public access programmes, undertake critical writing and documentation, generate new activities and projects, serve, support and represent the interest of artists and crafts people, develop professional skills of visual arts/craft specialists, and promote and market the visual arts.

I would like to move away from grants to look at the final part of this section, the future. Policy research and development and the Board's role as an adviser and advocate on behalf of the visual arts and crafts can and should be a major part of its function.

One of the keys to success is effectiveness. In the 90s it will not be sufficient for the Board, or anyone else, to go it alone on major policy projects. Many of these will have to be undertaken in association with other bodies. However I feel that the Board has a special responsibility to take a lead role, to be receptive to ideas generated outside, to facilitate projects initiated by others, and quite specifically to be a principle link between the arts community and the Federal Government.

Partnerships and collaboration offer not only a wise use of resources (financial and human), but also the benefits of collective united action and representation. As an example the Board's international committee recently decided to enter into an arrangement with Austrade (the Federal Government's International Trade Agency) to develop markets for, and sales of contemporary Australian painting and prints. Their research suggests that painting and prints are most likely to sell and return more export income. Austrade has decided to target the next three Chicago International Art Fairs, and has allocated up to $850,000 towards costs. The Visual Arts/Craft Board has set aside $150,000. Believing as it does that craft and media other than painting will also sell, the Board has set aside another $150,000 to assist craft sales overseas. This deal with Austrade accesses all of their international trade marketing expertise as well as their funds, at a ratio very much to our advantage. This deal however could not have been achieved without the lobby and representation work undertaken by CCA, NAVA and the Commercial Galleries Association of Australia.

Following the theme of collaboration the Board wishes to devote staff time to developing alternative sources of income targeting the corporate sector and other agencies and departments of government.

The Board has quite a list of outstanding policy issues that will now be more efficiently addressed by three senior staff who have been freed from grant processing to devote their considerable expertise to developing opinion and strategies relating to the following - I'm only going to list them, ask for details:

Accommodation for artists and visual arts organisations
Droit de Suite
Moral rights
Women in the arts
Child care
Art and working life - Art meets Trade Unions
Unionisation of artists
Industry awards
Copyright
Sales tax and taxation generally
Superannuation
Arts in a multicultural Australia
Extending Parameters: community access to and participation in art museum operations
Craft equity
Professional Development
Advocacy and representation
Evaluation existing grant programs
Western Sydney (arts equity and participation for disadvantaged urban areas)
Occupational health and safety
Selling art and craft

I know that this is all quite complex, so I'll move on to the second half, (the pictures) during which you can ponder the state of the Visual Arts/Craft Board and prepare questions.

I thought you would be interested to see the following slides of the Board's overseas studios and the work of some of the artists who recently got grants.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate that the achievements to date should be a cause for satisfaction to us all. However, the challenge of survival in the next decade is going to be considerable.

The Board will foster an environment for professional practise by ensuring clear objectives and relevant strategies, and maintain a sense of focused direction throughout. For our part, the Board will contribute to developing community understanding of and access to your product by funding galleries and museums, special community/audience development projects. Market development opportunities such as the Australian Contemporary Art Fair are good examples of these.

We will continue to provide support to makers by giving direct grants, supporting venues that collect, present and publish, and projects that promote and market. The key to success will be ability to manage change, take calculated risks, develop creative flexibility, identify and maintain focussed direction and communicate effectively with professional partners.

And finally, as an outcome of our collective effort artists will be a stronger and better valued force and resource in our community.

Some held the floor ...

Neil Roberts

... others put it to better use!

Meza & Ivana

TECHNIQUE AND SKILL: its use, development and importance in contemporary glass - by *Klaus Moje*

One of the basic fundaments of the studio movement has been that the intellectual conception and the technical realisation of the object should be the work of one person. Head and hand should work together in the creation of a work of glass art and were not to be separated from one another.

Let's not forget that when these fundaments were built through the 60s, craftsmen disappeared into the woods - long bearded, known as hippies and slogans like "*Blow Glass for Peace*" appeared on T-shirts and stick-on-buttons.

This also was the time in which skill became suspicious. The one who had it could not possibly be the one who wanted to be called an artist. He or she automatically would be "degraded" to a craftsman. The well made object became related to the crafts and also as often misunderstood - to industry. "The mishappen bubble" as formulated in Dan Klein's book on the history of contemporary glass, became the standard for the glass art object.

I do remember these years, where you had to move very carefully when you spoke in these terms. Coming from a European background, or better a German background, my education was based on the fact that you have to learn the alphabet before you write a word, and only then you build sentences. This pre-school-learning-technique has changed throughout the world and so has changed the education of the craftsmen. (Please do not assume that I am already concentrating on one side of the different skills necessary to the studio-glass-artist.) No-one will dispute that skill in this profession is a necessary element, but I am sure 12 comments will produce 12 different answers.

In 1968 David Pye wrote in his book on workmanship, the word "skill" does not assist useful thought because it means something different in each different kind of work. To a smith, dexterity is important but rarely in the extreme; but his judgment of certain matters, particularly heat, has to be brought to a pitch and decisiveness rarely needed or matched in woodworking trades in which, however, more dexterity is often needed. Moreover, much of what is ordinarily called skill is simply knowledge, part of "what can be conveyed by words or drawings" - you can make it mean what you please. It is a thought-preventer.

By the time he reissued his book on design in 1978, David Pye had a firm decision about whether the concept of skill could most usefully be applied to "know-how", "simply knowledge", "manual dexterity", or a shifting combination of the three: the word, he wrote, excludes any reference to "know-how" and indicates simply a particular application of dexterity. The old usage of the term did refer to "know-how'; and certainly the modern usage does. I think, however, that it is necessary to differentiate between "skill" as know-how, for know-how in making is design. In this way, Pye felt impelled to divorce manual skill from mental skill (know-how), going directly against the grain of established Arts and Crafts Movement opinion. Most theorists who analyse skill today (from whatever perspective) take a different point of view. A psychologist is likely to define skill in terms of the co-ordination of perceptual and motor activity - thinking and making. A philosopher might think of skill in terms of the distinction between knowledge and know-how - the kind of information which can be found in books and the kind which can't - and to stress the importance of craft skill as an example of know-how, or tacit knowledge. An educationalist is likely to think of skill in terms of the expressive training of both mind and body - the intelligence of feeling - and to warn curriculum planners that they ignore skill at their peril. So far from an article by Christopher Frayling and Helen Snowdon in "Crafts" No. 56 in 1982.

But back to our isolated little world of glass. Looking back into the 60s and 70s (I had my first studio in 1961), I saw myself as a side figure in the development of something that was called later "the glass movement", because this movement aimed mainly towards the use of hot glass. The furnaces were lit around the world and more or less virtuously the molten glass was blown and swung around, rather a performance of the material than of craftsmanship. Certainly also titles would be found for the creations. Mainly after they survived the finishing process. On the quiet side of the hot glass scene, I saw Swedish and CSSR glass makers who made neither titles for their work before or after the process, were less spectacular to watch, but impressed through easiness and their control of the material. The beauty - not the distortion of the form - was the result.

So there was the conflict. The skill of the mind against the skill of the hand. And some had the skill of the hand and preached the skill of the mind, and vice versa.

It took a long time until the respect of each others' background development became strong enough to accept the fact that there was something to be learned from each other. This process started in the 70s and found its best expression in the 1976 Hot Glass Conference in London, where glass artists from both worlds performed in demonstrations and lectures. As a side effect also, the cold working techniques raised attention. And I remember the standing ovation for Stanislav Libensky and Jaroslava Brychtova, giving a lecture on their kiln-casting work, unknown by many of the participants.

No-one should under-estimate the role of the Pilchuck Glass School which started in 1973 as a hot glass facility and has progressed through the years into an institution which handles all sides of glass making. Here an international ever-changing group of instructors passed on skills of glassmaking and forming, therefore lifting the secrets out of the shadows of ancient trade restrictions.

How well do I remember the first influence of the Swedish glass makers in Pilchuck. How watchful were the eyes of the Swedish glass makers, when they watched the Americans. Teaching cold techniques which were more or less unknown in the USA, I felt like an observer of the hot glass scene. Seeing it improving from summer to summer with an incredible energy.

Americans went to Murano - forgotten as a centre of glass making in Europe and America. Dick Marquis, Dale Chihuly, Ben Moore are only a few of a stream of Americans who went to Murano to learn from the skills of the Italian masters.

Today it is the Italian glass maker who has the strongest influence on the development of the American hot glass scene. But something else has ben learned from the master executer in hot glass. And this is the fact that glass blowing is a collaborative business. If one will reach the peak - the principal fundament of being head and hand has become extremely shaky. The skill level has risen and with it a specialisation. Hardly one of the leading hot glass artists is still involved with the most important part of the hot glass process - the glass blowing. The skills are divided - some artists orchestrate up to 12 people to realise one piece, others only keep their hands in the surface treatment - we are in the years of the gaffer who is capable to centre his skills on the process.

I cannot make a prognosis on the developing effect this new direction has or will have on the glass scene. But I see progression in skill - both in Mind and Hand.

The effect on those 12 who have worked with Dale Chihuly on his Venetian pieces has without doubt a learning effect, even if their skills became a tool in the hand of the conductor. But observing the situation of Chihuly's working techniques, I only found out that by using the skills of others he made them aware of their own capability and forced them to find their own unique working style.

David Hopper is the extreme of the other side. Studio artist of the first wave, he ran a production studio for art nouveau type glass for years before he retired from it and started again, and successfully, a new career with his new work. A man who has gained and hardened his skill in first class production work and found his way out and is producing his work with minimal assistance.

As he is one of the few who continue on the old principle, it seems to be the cold glass scene which is going on to live the fundament of intellectual concept and technical realisation being in one hand. The independence from collaboration with others has drawn away a great number of artists from hot glass to cold glass work.

Again, the influence of the European glass worker has a dominant effect on the development on this part of the glass scene. Pilchuck as a culmination point is hosting artists like Libensky/Brychtova, Dana Zámečniková, Kurt Wallstab and others to pass on skills higher developed in other countries.

This certainly raises the question why can America not draw from its own resources? This is going back to the question of education. The European educational system that allows a pure technical training on glass schools in specific areas of glass work, produces skilful craftsmen. For some of them, this is just enough. Others continue to widen their education in an art school, either specialised in glass (like in the

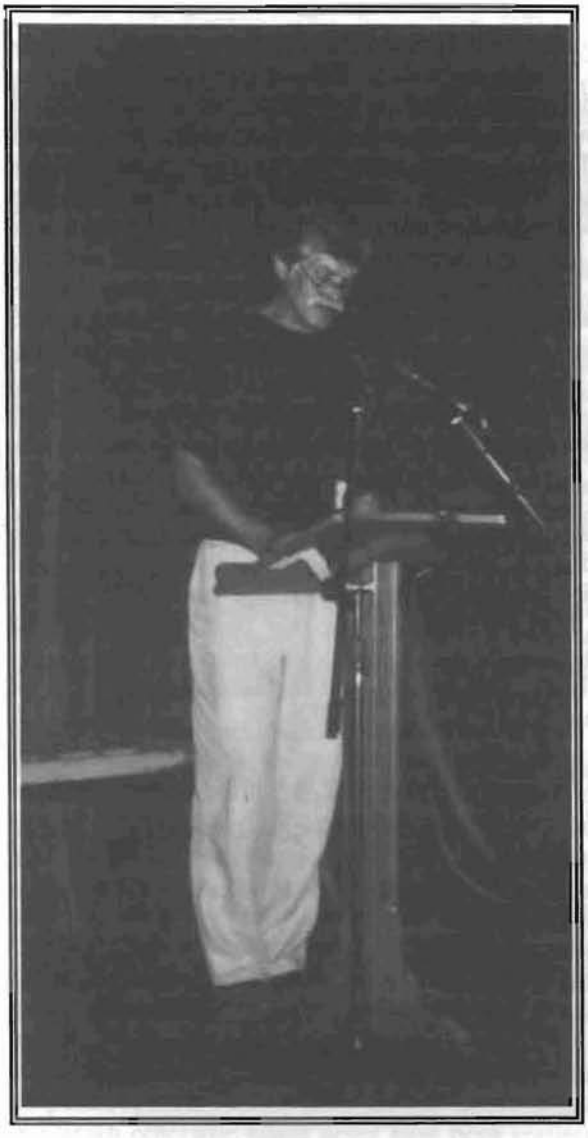
CSSR) or in other fields of the visual arts. Education will happen under the guidance of experts in their field, who not only have a skilled mind but also have skilled hands.

This seems to be the dilemma on the other side of the ocean, in the USA or here, where still a lot of facilities are guided by professionals of the first or second wave of glass makers with limited skills in both mind and hands.

One seems to be very obvious. In contrast to the 60s/70s, it has become clear that only expressive training of both mind and hand guarantees survival in the 90s.

There is no division between Mind and Body. Loving the process as much as the concept is the tool for originality. The concept is providing you with the aura - the process is all about feeling.

I want to finish my talk by saying: **Skill makes you free - Go for it!**



Klaus Moje

Anne Dybka at her Glass Engraving Workshop

CHALLENGES IN ARCHITECTURAL GLASS - by *Maureen Cahill*

For an artist maintaining an international profile, invitations for overseas exhibitions are frequent. However, I found that the opportunities were restrictive due to the pre-determined size of exhibits for packaging and travelling limitations due to the fragile nature of the medium. The result was that work produced catered to pre-conceived demands determining scale and limited or no control over ways in which work was displayed.

Artists often make repetitive, smaller scale work due to the supply and demand through the gallery structure. It is important that the artist should be able to respond to more than the marketplace which is not appropriate to his/her ideas whether in a public or gallery space.

There is limited scope in Australia, once public galleries have purchased artists' works as there are very few private collectors compared to other countries such as the USA or Europe where both private and public collections are abundant.

With so few public gallery collections who all identify that their selections are limited due to current funding and space restrictions and with only a small amount of private collectors, the opportunity to explore large scale works beyond the plinth belongs to public spaces. I term public spaces as all spaces enjoyed and viewed by the general public, not defined by public commissions versus corporate commissions.

The public galleries' policies for purchasing works in glass vary greatly, yet all offer little scope for works such as mine. In all cases, lack of funds and space was a major limiting factor in public galleries and glass not clearly defined, considered a "grey area". The way most collections are broken up basically stems from 19th century collections, when public museums were formed and loosely based upon the National Gallery in London. At a time of "Current Thinking-Contemporary Making" it is limiting to rely only upon the gallery situation.

There are many barriers to be broken down and challenging environments to be explored beyond the traditional, exhibitions frameworks which establish professional profiles.

The move away from the gallery situation (plinth) and into the public arena was obvious and borne from necessity if I was to extend my interpretations of the medium and to successfully re-evaluate scale, purpose and concepts.

There were many instances of technology withstraining the aesthetics, but it was also true that the aesthetic often stretched the technology. I point this out so that if concern is given to practical information it is not inappropriate and I hope the understanding of the practical and contractual side of public art may be of use to others entering this field. It is important to note that photographs or slides of my work reduce the work to a two dimensional image. This contradicts the main intention of my work which is volume created by spatial relationships between the forms and the subsequent changes of images produced within a three dimensional environment.

I will now describe some early works which have direct bearing on my present practice:

Kite Flight and **Midnight Flight** (1982), relied upon understanding the flexibility of gravity, softly curved kite frames were formed and hung on the same plane against a wall in an interlocking configuration. These two early works were cosmetic in the sense that they were not a conscious effort to define space but merely decoration which could be fixed to any given wall.

Flute Flight (1982) employed these same surface characteristics by introducing strong, lineal qualities achieved by slumping. A larger number if identical forms were spaced at varying intervals on different planes, suspended from above. Volume was created by the imagery produced by the repetition which units created - Volume in which the space that the units commanded became the object observed. This was the point of departure for future work in public spaces.

Breakthrough (1983) was successful because it exploited the medium to its full potential and directed the viewer to question the value of glass as a creative material for interpreting ideas whilst examining the inherent contradictory nature of the medium. The work challenged the traditional notion of glass as fragile, rigid material - glass no longer considered fragile for its own sake but that its visual strength be evident despite fragmentation and the sharpness of the material.

Ascension (1984) formed part of an exhibition called Constructions where I was one of three independent artists each using different mediums who were invited to install a large scale work based on the formal composition and construction of various elements, particularly rods and planes. Each work had a certain architectural reference, not necessarily in the nature of the materials but through a formalism and combination of building elements. There was a strong sympathy between the nature of each artist's work: hence the title of the exhibition.

It is important to note that all works were temporary installations of about 3 weeks duration and were financed by myself. It was at this stage it also became apparent that with the closure of this last large exhibition space and with the limited acceptance of large scale material-based concepts presented for gallery situations that my directions needed to seek alternative solutions. Other factors to consider were that the materials used to date were not suitable for permanent public areas, i.e. the glass wall standard 3mm window glass and the suspensions suspended from the wire grid system were nylon which has only a 2 year lifespan and is subject to stretching. These semi-permanent installations were cordoned off so that the public could not walk beneath them and these temporary safety considerations were detrimental to the aesthetics of the work.

As a result of viewing **Ascension** in May 1985, I was invited by Aldo Giurgola, who created Parliament House, to visit the site proposed by the architects for a large scale glass installation alluding to my previous work. This space was the advisers' waiting space to the House of Representatives. At last I had the opportunity to work with a large scale permanent space.

"I realised that the challenge represented the need for a major research program involving aesthetic, architectural, engineering and structural aspects relating to public safety."

I was provided with a Design Intent of the Commission prepared by the architects, Mitchell Giurgola and Thorp, who clearly identified the space with my work and as part of the integral part of the architecture.

I wanted to create a visual impact which was ethereal, which transcended the fragility and the rigidity of glass through repetition, fragmentation and illusion - a "now you see it, now you don't" experience depending on where it is viewed from. With such a space I could extend and take such possibilities to their limits by creating a work consisting solely of spatial divisions and relationship - *organised disorganisation* - which brings me to the more literal meaning and the name of the work: **Willy Willy**, an Aboriginal name for a sudden, spiralling windstorm and whirlwind which collects refuse or anything which is not stable beneath it.

As this is the space where important material is prepared to take into Parliament, the idealistic notion is that this "glass" is loose representation of a Willy Willy which takes up and collects anything which is light and superfluous so that what remains and is presented to Parliament is solid and of consequence.

The suspended glass installation in the Advisers' waiting space was significant because it was the first collaboration with an architect who considered my work as an integral part of the architecture from the early development on planning. Aldo Giurgola valued the role of the artist by allowing the freedom of interpretation within a given space, handing over the architectural environment, for consideration when it was still in its fabrication stage.

In my situation, it was clear that the architects had identified the space with my work and unlike many of the other commissions which were a direct result from competition, the brief clearly defined concepts which were familiar to my work. I was required to submit a design according to the brief after which a certain standard of procedures would be applied.

Major reference is made to **Willy Willy**, because it was the catalyst for future directions in freeform glass in public spaces. There were distinct advantages and unique possibilities which this commission offered me which otherwise might never have been realised:

1. that artists were not necessarily known by name when chosen or for having executed the particular scale of work previously;
2. the scale of the space was one of the largest available on the site and therefore was ideal to extend ideas which I had commenced to explore;

3. although my work was material-based, my work was not compartmentalised or subjected to barriers through categorisation of art or craft due to the architectural framework in which it was considered;

4. this resulted in my work being taken out of a gallery situation and could be identified without any preconceptions - no longer limited in scale or purpose or to a particular viewer;

5. no other commissions would have afforded me the extra time which was needed far beyond the initial contractual requirements due to the extensive, additional research for including safety-proofing glass to be suitable for public spaces where glass is freely suspended above people's heads and not fitted within a fixed framework;

6. in many cases, for the purposes of a direct response from specialist sources, my letters of enquiry for research came from Parliament House architects in response to my briefing - this assured me prompt attention which was not the case when I enquired as a freelance artist as I had experienced reluctance or apprehension from industry when consulting in a private capacity. Because they could not fit my requirements into a recognised industrial "standard" codes - these which I later established myself through contracts and lawyers.

Briefly, some examples of these practical problems and solutions specifically characteristic to my work are:

1. Maintenance - i.e. conservation of the work in public spaces should be covered by the artist if one wants to maintain integrity, as this work is viewed consistently by the public as yours. Therefore, in the case of the Australian situation, which has no guidelines, I subject the "commissioner" of the work to abide by the "Code of Ethics for Australian Museums Association" which states "all objects accepted by the museum should be properly conserved, maintained and the objects documented and exhibited to the widest possible audience".

2. Location of the Work - the work cannot be removed in any form without the consent of the artist and then as per configuration of design drawings. This covers the problem that Richard Serra had in the States where the local community removed his work.

3. Standards - as there were no standards for safety laminated glass used in this way (the closest being rubber-fixed in car windscreens), I researched standards and adapted them by contract.

4. Insurance - Products Liability (as well as the usual insurances) is especially suitable for glass as it protects the artist should some catastrophe occur and the glass causes damage to a member of the public.

5. Fixings and safety rules vary in each State in Australia, worldwide when it comes to free-hanging forms, but well documented specifications approved by the commissioners' engineers prevents artist's liability.

Finally, all artists, whatever their medium and however they would choose to put it, would like to feel that their work held some relevance to the society in which they live, but accepted or rejected, society produces artists who produce art. It is left to the art critics to assess the immediate impact or lack of it, to art historians to measure the rim of the crater if detectable. To appear on the landscape at all, artists have to have their work seen and this is usually on the plinth, i.e. in the gallery environment.

Most exhibition artists are aware of the advantages of having the opportunity of showing their work in a formal viewing space where they know it will be seen and treated seriously (if not always favourably). They are also aware of the limitations of such areas and of the dangers of becoming suppliers to the gallery trade. The danger is somehow more acute when what they produce is not as art in itself but as an appendage to a mainstream of art or a branch of the decorative arts or sculpture in medium or any of the other niches as defined or more often than not, left undefined, by public art policy or lack of it.

I have tried to show an alternative to gallery work as a transition to the public arena, i.e. work in large public spaces and buildings. This is not a universally applicable alternative, although as Parliament House has shown, there is the scope for public work in a large variety of media. Other examples of recent work are - Condux Building, Sydney and the World Congress Centre, Melbourne.

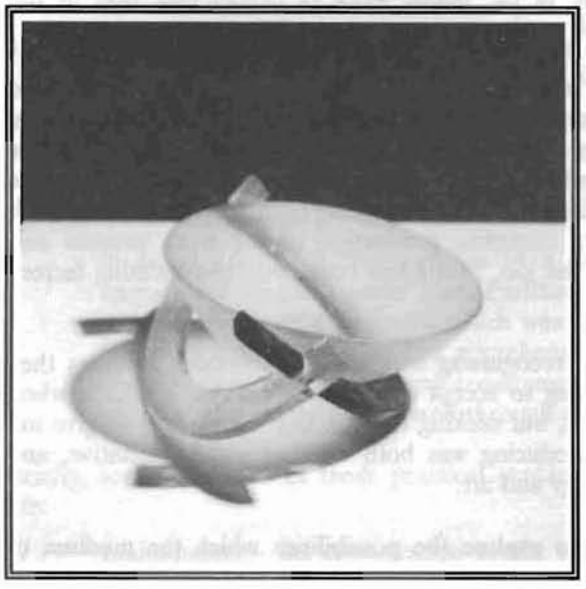
The commission to produce public work is a well documented occurrence in the lives of many artists such as Brychtova and Libensky who have been most influential in their public work, but public work brings public liability and there is little that is visible in the public work of others that tells of the challenging working practice needed to bring about such work.

Going public is rather like when a small company goes public, and what was once administrated by a sole owner/manager is now governed by a board of directors. Once I made the step into the public arena, completely new considerations about my work took up a lot of time, but also having to gather together the help and expertise needed to make the work and to hang it required project management skills. This liaison with the commissioners of the projects and working within the constraints of their brief were both new aspects in the public arena, as was letting go of complete production of the work process and accepting that I could not always cover every aspect of the job. Yet I was constantly re-educating factory workers towards artists' needs for the finished detail.

I was merely a co-ordinator for my concepts, seeking, recognising and utilising specialist skills as they were required to produce my desired aesthetic. Learning to accept compromise on that aesthetic when the limitations of technology made it necessary was hard, but seeking to push that technology to give me what I wanted and not simply what it was used to producing was both exciting and informative, and highlighted a need for a closer unison between technology and art.

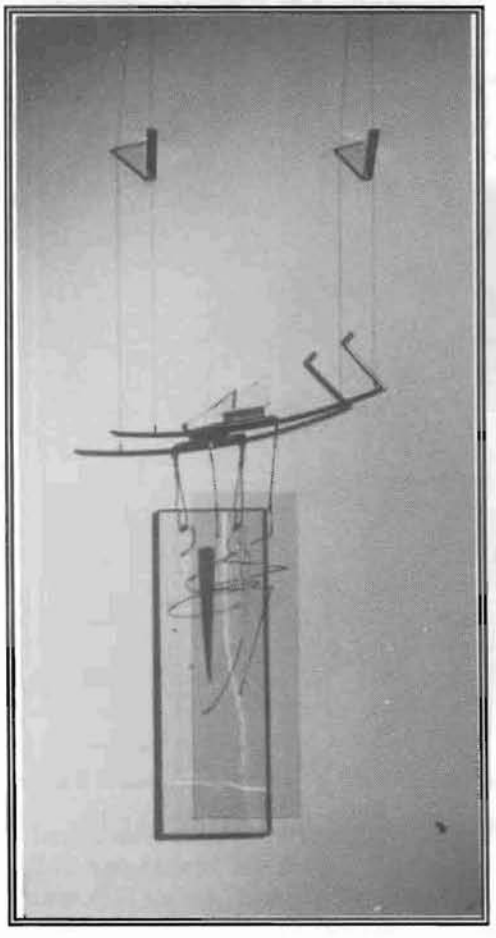
Architecture and industry has not yet felt the impact to explore the possibilities which the medium of glass extends to it.

The Opening of the Exhibition *Glass: Appreciating the Medium* at the Glass Artists' Gallery, Glebe



Rocking Bowl by Kathy Elliott,
joint winner of *Glass: Challenging the Medium*
held at the Blaxland Gallery, Sydney

The courtyard at St. Andrew's College



Queen of Combs by Meza Rijsdijk
One of the many entries which sold at the
Exhibition held in the Blaxland Gallery

Reunion of friends ... or fringe benefits??
MC, Michael Keighery and Marilynne Bell

AUSGLASS ... The Australian Association of Glass Artists

MEMBERSHIP FORM

RETURN TO:

Maggie Stuart
1 Frederick Street
St. Peters. NSW. 2044.

Phone: (02) 550 3626

OR YOUR STATE REPRESENTATIVE:

Name in full: .....
Given Name Surname

Mailing address: .....

.....

..... Postcode ..... Telephone No .....

Please indicate the major area of glass work in which you are interested:

☐	Hot	Kiln	☐
☐	Cold	Flame	☐
☐	Leadlight	Engraving/Carving	☐
☐	Stained/Painting	Collector	☐
☐	Other (please specify)		

.....

Please indicate which category of membership is requested:

☐ A. Full Membership
Open to any interested person
Fee $45

☐ B. Affiliated Membership
Open to interested organisations, institutions, companies, libraries etc.
Fee $45

☐ C. Student/Concession Membership
Available to persons approved by the Executive Committee. Supportive documentation must be submitted with application.
Fee $25

Please note: Membership fee is for twelve months, and is renewable each January.

It would also be appreciated if you would indicate below which category would best describe your involvement with glass.

☐ Full time occupational

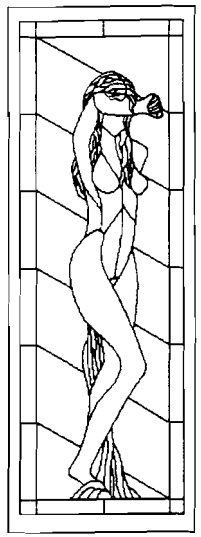
☐ Part time occupational

☐ Recreational

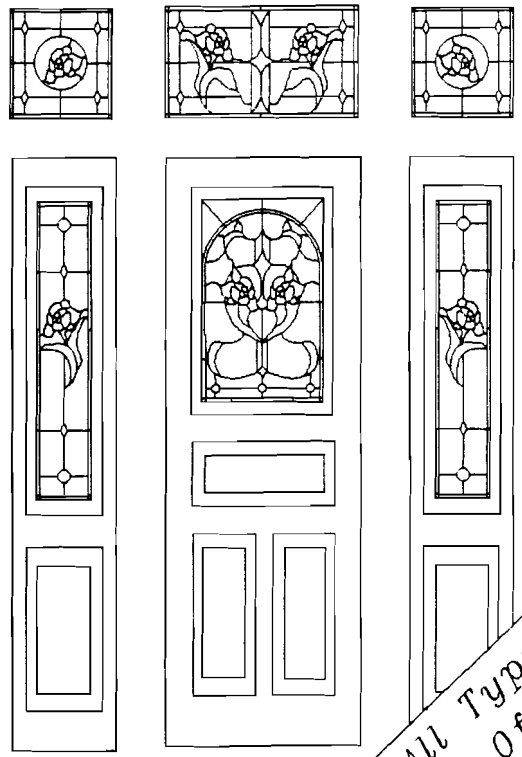
Advanced Leadlighting

Advancing the Method Maintaining the Art

Round Windows



Entryways



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ETHICS AND SURVIVAL - by *Warren Langley*

Let me speak firstly about ethics: and secondly let me, using our own studio as an example, briefly give my very clear recipe for survival - which surprise, surprise, is irrevocably linked to an extensive research and development programme.

Ethics: let me use instead INTEGRITY. Let me also say that I wish to view this issue of ethics or integrity specifically within an Australian context. That is, to an exceptionally small marketplace where most of the glassworkers either know each other or at least know what the others are doing. In such a situation, I believe that the ethical behaviour or the integrity of the individual must be paramount.

Integrity of Style - Let me give you an example: since 1989-91 I have used a process involving sand and a variety of refractory substances to kiln form float glass into a variety of forms. For the most part, the process has been used for architectural work, but also for my exhibition work and for the range of glass products produced by my brother and myself for OZONE glass design.

I don't claim this to be a particularly difficult technique. Nor do I believe I have any rights over such a technique. Technique is cheap. However, I have used this technique both in Australia and overseas to create a very recognisable style. A personal design vernacular if you like.

Recently, for the first time, I have been confronted by the existence of work by others which so closely mimics my style as to be potentially attributed to me. It has caused me to think at length about integrity. It's not the technique which is precious, its the potential loss of artistic control over work which may be attributed to me, and in a marketplace as small as the Australian situation, this causes concern.

To revert back to the very beginning of this preamble - we are faced very basically with issues of integrity, and the bottom line unfortunately is that ethics and by corollary, integrity start and finish with the individual, and we can only live in hope.

Another aspect of integrity, which is more closely related to survival, is **Integrity of Dealings** - that is integrity in dealing with your galleries, your dealers and your clients. It is expected of the bricklayer, the plumber and the doctor, why not the artist or designer. I believe it is crucial to our survival to be seen at all times to be behaving with the utmost integrity. I find this particularly relevant to the area of architectural commission work and the very direct communication and dealings which one has with client, architect or interior designer.

Having spent many years pioneering a greater acceptance of glass in architectural spaces, I have realised that the more professional the behaviour and the greater integrity of behaviour, then accordingly the greater the credibility of the individual.

Integrity of Truth - can I also draw attention to another area I find borderline unethical - the catalogue mystique syndrome. When is a laser induced computer enhanced bio co-ordinated prelude in D-Minor just an abrasive water jet?

Integrity of Self - or is it valid to be called a "glass artist" when one does not pursue an active exhibition profile? I would like to discuss this at length, but there's no time.

Integrity of the Spirit - this is about the real reason for making.

Let's briefly deal with the 2nd aspect of this topic - survival/research and development. I am inclined to be trite and simply say that from my own perspective it requires 50 hours per week for a minimum of 13 years.

But above and beyond this, I have always adhered to one very simple survival tactic. It is based quite simply upon diversity, that is, a broad product base, coupled with an intense, often outrageously expensive research and development programme. In our studio, we are continuously working in three very distinct areas. I would hope that there is a stylistic crossover.

There are the three areas of my own exhibition work, architectural, site specific projects, and the increasingly important design range for OZONE.

The survival tactic contained herein is quite simple: the research and development programme is always cross-fertilised between the three areas of operation. In other words, a technique, process or imagery utilised in one area of work provides the catalyst which mutates something in one of the other three areas.

For example, the varying areas of work shown in the following slides are all mutually dependent.

So you can see that our survival tactic has been quite specific - diversity of studio skills in conjunction with extensive ongoing experimentation. I do believe though that there is no trick for survival. It simply requires enormous hours of hard work and commitment, and of course a similar commitment to behaviour with integrity.

WHEN IS A CHIHULY A BILLY MORRIS? - by *Tony Hanning*

Preface:

I would like to preface my talk today with a comment concerning the title and topic of this paper. I think it is important for you to understand that while I am delighted to be asked to present it, and I'm very happy to be here, neither the topic nor the title are of my choosing.

Nola Anderson has said "In the worst world, Criticism and Art might be like running in a car rally with the wrong map - Criticism might win, but all the Art could be somewhere else".

With this topic, our fears are realised, for if **ever** there was a topic indicative of that worst world, it is this one.

When I was asked to present this paper I was told that the theme of the Conference would be "issues" as opposed to technique. I was told that my qualification lay in my resemblance to Chihuly by way of us both being dependent on others to blow our forms, however, regardless of this tenuous analogy, what remains is the fact that the organisers of the Conference see this as an issue, and in my mind it is the **consideration** of this as an issue which serves to reinforce the notion, however true or false, that the concerns of the artist and crafts person are miles apart.

I think what I'm trying to say is that if ever we should avoid an issue it is this one.

In researching this paper I have solicited quotes from a number of people, and searched out what I consider to be relative statements from a few noted people, but as the essence of the issue involves identity, I am going to give you the quotes and the names of their authors separately. My quotes are from Dante Marioni, Nick Mount, Jane Burns, Harry Bellman, Pablo Picasso and Saul Steinberg.

Quote 1: Glass people have to stop kidding themselves that what they're making is great art. What they're making is glass. Even in the great museums, the glass we see was never intended to be art. Its status as art was never a concern of its maker.

Quote 2: I dunno. What's the answer? When you leave a piece of venetian glass in a window long enough that it becomes a venetian blind?

Quote 3: If more Australian glass artists had someone else to blow their forms, Australian glass might be better or as a whole.

Quote 4: Culture is a contemporary house filled with antiques.

Quote 5: No-one else has a bigger ego than a hot glass artist. It's a set up. They're trying to take the piss out of ya. The answer is never ... never you mind.

Quote 6: When I go into the country and admire a scene, I keep looking in the corner for a signature.

Now, all of these quotes have a direct relativity to the question and it's a close contest as to which is the silliest answer - but I'm going for culture is a contemporary house filled with antiques as about as silly as you can get. Who said it? It was Pablo Picasso who said it, and now that you know that, you probably see that statement in a different light. After all, Picasso, in our eyes, was not a man who said silly things. We admire Picasso - his identity goes before him.

I've been asking people "Who built the Sydney Opera House?" and 90% of the answers came back as Jorn Utzan, but I know that a pedant would give you the name of the senior construction engineer, and a potter the name of the tile manufacturer.

I want to leave the quotes for a moment and talk about one of my favourite places: Pilchuck. Now I know there are people in this room who resent Pilchuck, and yet they've never been there. Anyway, I've always maintained that too few of us ever take the opportunity to attend Pilchuck.

One year that I was there, they had Billy Morris as the "gaffer". He was not employed to make Billy Morris' or for that matter Dale Chihuly's. He was there simply to blow glass for whoever required blown glass for further treatment. He blew for me a plain black cylinder onto which I glued certain appendages to make a face. Years later the glue gave out and all the appendages fell off, leaving me with a plain black cylinder. Am I then the proud owner of a Billy Morris? If I were to produce this cylinder now, and hold it up before you, and tell you it was a Billy Morris vase, what would you think of me?

Despite cynical belief to the contrary, Pilchuck is a great leveller. A session at Pilchuck is a humbling experience for teachers and students alike. I've never publicly exhibited a piece I made at Pilchuck because it doesn't fit with my other work. It is a "product of Pilchuck". What I'm saying here is that the answer lies in our understanding of the nature of the finished product, but our **issue**-dilemma lies in the unfortunate traits of ego and identity. So in order to answer the question we need to be positive and humble about a question which is essentially negative and egotistical. But above all, we must be rigorously honest.

I use other people to blow my forms because I cannot blow glass. Did you hear that? **I cannot blow glass.** I know how glass is blown; indeed I often have to tell the glass blower when to pick up certain colours, and sometimes I assist the glass blower, but more often I leave it to someone who knows what they're doing.

This slide serves to introduce some of you to Billy Morris, and will, I hope, help you come to your own conclusion regarding the nature of the piece. The piece is titled "Billy Blows a Big'n" and it depicts Billy Morris working on a large piece for Chihuly. The form on which the image appears was blown by Resolution Glass in Melbourne. The plate was especially commissioned, and not bought off a shelf, it is signed by Mike Hook and myself, and is an exclusive piece, not usually made for any purpose other than for **my** work. There is no doubt in my mind that it is a fine piece of glass blowing - the intention however is for the **imagery** to be the main focus of the piece. You can decide for yourself if that is the case. Remember, **I cannot blow glass.**

(Next slide) The image shows Billy Morris sweating it out. The desert depicts heat, the precipice behind him symbolises his need to be aware of every move; the air line to the glory hole has been cut like an umbilical cord, representing a point of no return, because once you blow something **this** big you have to have made all your decisions - there is no going back into the hole for another shot, not even if Chihuly says you need to. So why the precipice again? Because Billy Morris is blowing an enormous piece of glass in an event which has been orchestrated in every detail by and for the greatest glass artist the world has ever known - not for himself - but for Chihuly.

The next slide is of one of my pieces on a form blown by Richard Morrell. Again, you can decide if the nature of the piece is in the blown form or the adaptation of the imagery to the form. Likewise this piece is a commissioned piece and being cased on the outside, has no function without the carving to reveal the colours underneath. (Show detail of piece).

The third slide is of one of my most recent pieces, and is painted Reusche enamel on flat opal glass which I have no doubt was made by somebody somewhere. This piece is essentially about identity.

And the last slide is a slide of Dale Chihuly as a kid.

So who is Dale Chihuly? Chihuly is a glass artist who as a result of a motor car accident lost one of his eyes. In spite of this disability, he has become the single-most recognised glass artist in the world. It should be understood however that it was not the result of a motor car accident which prompted him to use others to blow his glass, because he began using others as early as 1966 when he worked in Madison, Wisconsin, where he commissioned Fritz Dreisbach to make some glass sculptures.

His work, however, is so easily recognised, is so enigmatic, that last year I met a fellow by the name of Patrick Reyntians who visited an exhibition which featured a glass display cabinet containing over 60 pieces of Dale's work. In describing the exhibition, Patrick Reyntians said he had walked to the top of the stairs where he was confronted by all this "Chihuly".

How, as much as he was being witty, he has partly answered our question in that the term "Chihuly" refers to the nature of the stuff and not its makers. It is as if this "Chihulery" exists regardless of the identity of its makers, who incidentally no longer include Billy Morris. Billy Morris makes his own stuff now, and there's no doubt in my mind that he wouldn't be where he is today if it weren't for Dale Chihuly.

So who makes Chihulery these days? Is it another rising star? Someone who Dale perhaps discovered at another Pilchuck summer session? Does it matter who this person is? Wouldn't you expect that the point I am driving at would preclude any concern for the identity of the current Chihuly chief gaffer?

The answer is **NO!** Because Chihuly has made a **point** of working with a **specific** glass blower. Not only does he make no effort to hide the fact that he doesn't make the glass, he publicises the fact that he now conducts a team headed by Lino Tagliapietra, regarded by many as the current leading maestro of Murano - the greatest Venetian glass blower of the day.

So how does this work? How come if I've maintained so far that the problem is one of identity, that I've now waffled on about the importance of Lino Tagliapietra working with Dale Chihuly? The reason is because Chihuly has used the services of others in **good faith.** What a combination - Chihuly and Lino. No doubt both men were of the opinion that this combination could result in some of the most exciting glass ever made; and I'll bet you all that if there were **no** publicity, if there was **no** money to be made, if nobody but themselves knew they were working together, that these two men would still make glass together. They could not resist the opportunity to make glass in spite of their own identities, and that is the key to the whole issue - **we must make stuff in spite of ourselves.**

What exactly do I mean by this? At the risk of sounding hypocritical, I'd like to tell you a bit about my background. For 10 years I worked as an Art Gallery Director for a young, small, if you like "tin-pot", Regional Gallery. We collected only Contemporary Australian Art and in 1975 we spent more money on work by living Australian artists than any gallery in Australia second only to the Australian National Gallery in Canberra. After 10 years of this, I quit to make my own stuff, and as I had been to art school with Nick Mount, and as he was my nearest neighbour, I took an interest in glass. I've watched Australian and American glass grow from the time Nick went to America and came back to set up his first studio in 1975, to the present day. I have worked alone in glass now for 10 years on a full time basis, and in all of these years I have come to know a lot of people from all walks of life who are "obsessed", and I think it is fair to say that some of them are obsessed with their work and others obsessed with their success, and while ALL of those obsessed with their work are successful, few of those obsessed with their success care little about the integrity of their own work, and much about the integrity of others.

I don't want to dwell on this aspect too long - Warren has already spoken about ethics - but I would like to say this - the 10 years I had in arts administration showed me how a professional peer group can be dictated by an homogenous decision making process. That is, 6 Regional Gallery Directors will, as a collective, select a fourth-rate Brett Whitely over and above a first-rate painting by an unknown artist, in spite of which the unknown artist will continue to paint and gain strength. So I left the profession disheartened, and now you hit me with a question like this.

All I can offer in a positive light is this:

Become obsessed with your work, and let nothing, including yourself, stand in your way.

If you need something or someone to help you achieve an end, find and use them, but use them in **good faith.** This means working together.

Now here comes the really hard part. Avoid being drawn in by the success of others, and avoid identity at the expense of your principles. I know this is hard, because when you're invited to talk at a Conference for an organisation of which you're not a member, and consequently don't have any work on exhibition, and then you learn that the Curator of the Corning Museum is going to be present, and she's just written to your US agent and told her she's never heard of you - **it's hard!!!!** Or, if you find yourself concerned with a question like "When is a Chihuly a Billy Morris", stop and ask yourself 3 **more important** questions. **Why** am I concerned about this? **What** am I doing that I shouldn't be doing? and what am I **not** doing that I should be doing?

If I asked you to think of Picasso, you probably picture in your mind a known style, or a specific painting of his. I doubt very much that you picture a short bald man - the father of a purveyor of perfumes.

If I told you that Leonardo da Vinci didn't paint the Mona Lisa - that he only did the background - it probably wouldn't bother you, but if I told you that Rob Wynne did not have anything to do with glass blowing - that he simply had someone else do the blowing and he signed the pieces, **you would feel threatened.**

NOBODY is threatened by da Vinci because da Vinci is dead. The problem is **in here** - not out there.

I'd like to finish with a very short anecdote. Saul Steinberg is a very well known artist in Europe and the United States. He has a house in New York and an apartment in Southampton. One day in Southampton he noticed that there was a man with the same name living in his apartment block, so he decided to give this guy a call. So he dialled his namesake's number, and said "Hello, is this Saul Steinberg?" "Yes", came the reply. "Are you **the** Saul Steinberg?" "Well er, no" said the namesake. "Are you sure?"

So I sincerely hope that while I might not have given you the answer that you wanted, I've given you an idea of how we might **all** go about answering this kind of question.

And remember, it's not good enough to simply say you love art - Hitler loved art, but art didn't love Hitler.

PRODUCTION LINE: A MEANS TO AN END - by *Helen Aitken-Kuhnen*

On the whole I am personally, and I stress personally, not all that in favour of production line. At the risk of appearing blunt I feel it degrades and lowers the standards of a lot of artists' work. The time and energy one puts into a production line reduces the energy needed for exhibition pieces. This does not mean that there is no place for small series or production pieces, it's not always easy to live from exhibition pieces. But who says it is easy to live from production work?

First let us define what I mean by production line. Let us say that production line in the context of this conference stands for the artist/craftsman or woman attempting to produce an easily marketable line of work, either alone or with the help of employees, trainees, or apprentices in his or her studio.

Production line in a small studio consists of a range of pieces related in design and made in varying quantities; may also be referred to as bread and butter line or small series. Marketing the work in limited editions is also a variation on the basic production line utilising the idea of the print makers, and producing an edition of a piece that is signed and dated giving the piece an additional art market value.

It's not easy to make a good production piece: a lot has to be taken into consideration. Not the least the design of the piece. There are a lot of well designed and manufactured pieces on the retail market. The studio production pieces need to be aesthetically as good if not better than industrially produced pieces. It is not possible to compensate bad design with the label hand made. Hand made is too often used as a cover for bad design.

To compete with good design produced by industry, the studio production piece has to fulfil the same and additional criteria. Works in both categories have to be innovative in design and the making should be efficient with due consideration given to the relevant technologies available. The finished article has to serve the function it was designed for if indeed a function was intended.

The biggest advantage for the small studio production line is the flexibility of the small studio in satisfying niche markets and being a tool for the consumer to demonstrate his individuality. The manufacturing industry has also discovered this shortfall in the market and has embarked on filling this void with small designer production lines. To produce these smaller production lines industry needs to use similar processes to the studio artist and therefore increases its overall manufacturing costs giving the studio craftsperson more of a chance to compete with them.

It is quite an achievement to come up with an article that is original, well thought out and efficient in its making and function. Once such a product has been produced all the problems of marketing and selling have to be met.

Selling work on consignment has the advantage that the craftsman or woman is in charge of the whole concept, but this may be the only advantage. With consignment work the artist carries the whole financial burden, **waits** for the pieces to be sold, **waits** to be told they are sold, then **waits** to be paid. In this case what the artist is actually doing is stocking the gallery gratis.

Outright invoicing of the goods at the time of delivery, may constrain itself to very safe lines, but has the financial benefit of immediate payment or payment within 30 days. No need for long waits for payment and pre-financing of the work, as with work on consignment. Outright payment enables the artist to marginally lower his wholesale price in favour of a greater retail mark-up. Working from orders means there is in most cases less conceptual freedom but has obvious financial benefits.

For a production line to work effectively, the income generated from the production work should be sufficient to allow the time and space for the more involved experimental or exhibition pieces. The energy taken up with the making, distribution and financing of the pieces is considerable, and can overshadow the time and energy needed for the more substantial pieces. Production line can very easily take over with the push to keep on producing and keep on making money.

When does a production line finish and the exhibition pieces begin? Should there be a strongly defined line between production pieces and exhibition pieces? If there is no obvious pricing and visual difference then it can become confusing to the public. Often, so-called exhibition pieces can turn into production lines if they don't reflect a continuous artistic development in the works.

Production work can, for emerging craftsmen or women, serve a purpose by helping make ends meet **if** the pieces sell. The length of time spent working in the studio helps increase one's proficiency within the studio. It makes more sense than, say, waiting or cleaning. The problem being you may have to both finance the production work, establish it and then **also** finance the exhibition pieces, providing of course that is the intended goal. Often a few failed attempts to establish a production line can have a devastating effect on the designs and morale of the maker.

On the other hand, production line is not the **only** way to establish yourself. Having a good many exhibitions and spreading exhibition work around and establishing a name for good quality, well conceived, one-off pieces. And through this, building up a network of private cliental and commission work is another path worth consideration. It may not be faster than establishing a production line, but could on the other hand serve as a more solid foundation to build on.

Geoffrey Edwards - off the cuff, but a topical title!

Alexander Zoltan playing his Glass Harp during a well-earned break in the proceedings.

Graham Stone - the engraving workshop

THE ARTIST AND THE ENVIRONMENT - by *Graham Stone*

This is a vast minefield of a topic so in the time available we'll just be skimming the surface, but let me lead you in by explaining where my interest stems from. I have always had a strong sense of belonging here but it really took being outside Australia to bring into sharp focus how precious it is and that it "feels" different. I'm not talking about culture, but the way the land feels, especially in undisturbed areas. It's as if the plants are drawing up an essence and exuding it en masse. In such an environment, I feel spiritually "at home". The feeling varies from place to place, but nearly always radiates an unmistakably Australian flavour.

I have worked to try and conserve small plant communities and habitats in my local area, and this has entailed learning something of how biological systems work. It's given me some insights into the inter-relatedness of living things that school text books never quite managed. It's difficult to articulate, but somehow these insights have intensified both my own sense of belonging and my love of this atmosphere that is more than the sum total of the sights, sounds and smells of the Australian bush.

My appreciation and knowledge has grown over the years and it has begun to feed its way into my work in small doses. So far, I've mostly tried to simply give glimpses of the wonder of the natural order but I've yet to communicate that quintessential Australian feel that I experience in the bush. I may never do it justice, but I'd love to; and it's got to be easier than trying to do it verbally! I should perhaps say that I've no intention of ever restricting my imagery to environmental themes but because it has grown to be a significant part of my life it's inevitable that some at least would find its way into the work.

Our cultural legacy, the scientific approach, offers some rational clues as to why this country is so special, and an historical perspective helps put into context the changes that are occurring around us. No other continent has been so effectively separate from the rest of creation for 40 million years. On no other continent have marsupials diversified to fill all the niches occupied everywhere else by placental mammals. No other continent has the monotremes (an earlier branch of mammalia than our own and a vital link in our understanding of evolution). On no other continent has one family of trees come to dominate so characteristically such widespread and diverse habitats. Yet the 500 or so eucalypt species remain only a small part of the Australian flora. These are just some of the most obvious indications of an extraordinary biology.

Many daunting environmental issues face the world as you all know, and I'm not going to talk about many of them, but I have to mention the one that troubles me most and tends to get less media attention than things like Greenhouse; and that is the depletion in the number and variety of species. Obviously, gross human over-population and habitat reduction are the biggest causes but by no means the only ones. In the last 250 million years an average of 1 species per year has been lost to the world. We are now losing 50 per day! Present trends indicate the distinct possibility that at the turn of the century we will be losing 10 per hour. This could mean the loss of one third of all life forms within the lifespan of the younger ones amongst you. It is not, however, inevitable, and can be turned around.

That's the briefest possible synopsis I can give of where this artist is coming from as regards the environment. The scientific analysis is important for ammunition at a political level and the history of the earth and its atmosphere is important as a gauge of the significance of the changes, but for me it's really a spiritual thing that is the motivating factor.

All human activity has an impact on the rest of the natural world. Glass is no exception. I think it is important to say at the outset that I think we do far more damage to our environment as general consumers than we do as glassworkers. That's not an argument for ignoring the consequences of our professional lives, just an attempt to put things into perspective. Because we work in different branches of glass art, any damage we cause differs a great deal in type and magnitude. Probably the thing we have most in common is our inefficient use of fossil fuels for kilns and furnaces. This of course contributes to the increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide and no doubt many other pollutants.

In the case of float glass, which is what I mostly use, the main ingredient is, of course, sand. It's ironic for me personally that the types of environments I'm most fond of are the ones most damaged by glass production. In Melbourne, the sand comes from Lang Lang and as a consequence the area has lost much of what I regard as precious heathland but what many would see as useless scrub. At the new Ingleburn plant here in Sydney, the sand comes from the Tilligerry Peninsula near Oyster Cove and is in fact the last untouched sand dune on the peninsula that is being mined. (We're talking about the Port

Stephens/Newcastle region). The dune includes a woodland corridor between prime volcanic habitats that sustain a koala colony and many other wildlife forms. The damage is unlikely to achieve the proportions of some of the other industrial activities around the Hunter but of course it's one more little chip off the "living block". This is fairly typical of the kinds of issues facing resource management generally and for everything we consume there is a cost being paid somewhere, other than the purchase price.

Another ingredient in float is Soda Ash and this comes from Osborne in South Australia. I wasn't able to find out just what the impact on the area is, but in the case of Dolomite, again from South Australia, the mining at Tantanoola has been one of the factors which have substantially degraded the area. It was suggested to me though that mining damage pales into insignificance when compared to the ravages of rabbits in what is apparently inherently vulnerable country.

Limestone comes from Angaston in South Australia and from the Mossvale/Berrima region in New South Wales. The New South Wales operation is very close to Bungonia Gorge, so close that explosives used in the open cut could affect the cliffs. Certainly the gorge has been littered with everything from small chunks to massive boulders. The mining companies involved are Associated Portland Cement and Southern Portland Cement. One of the disappointing elements of their operation is that it appears that there is a viable alternative at Marulan, a less sensitive area but further from Sydney.

I'm not suggesting here that we should all give up glass or picket mining companies, but I do think it's helpful to have some knowledge of what our consumption means at the source. The good news is that a great deal of harm can be avoided without massive disruption. My child or children may never feel the warmth I do when I stand in a patch of open woodland for instance but by God I want them to have the opportunity and it just may be that their survival may depend on it.

Thanks for listening.

"The Makers": MC Neil Roberts with Tony Hanning, Warren Langley, Maureen Cahill, Helen Aitken-Kuhnen and Rob Knottenbelt

WORKING TO A BRIEF - WORKING TO A PHILOSOPHY - by *Lance Feeney*

The tradition of the commissioned artist/craftsperson stretches back into history. His or her role is to act as a conceptual, aesthetic and technical medium between the client and the proposed artwork. His/her brief is to interpret satisfactorily the desires, aspirations and dreams of the client.

But, is this all there is to the story? Are we, as commissioned craftspeople, nothing more than servile problem solvers, reliant upon the taste, perceptions and wealth of our patrons and benefactors? I think not!

I believe that as one works gaining experience, acquiring technical dexterity and flexibility, a knowledge of the mediums' capabilities and possibilities develop. One learns respect for the material being used, even love, standards are set, broken and reset and slowly over a period of time a highly unique and personal philosophy of making is developed.

I believe that it is the quality of this philosophy of making which is the critical key to the standard of work produced by an artist/craftsperson.

It is, however, inevitable for artists working in the commissioned arena, that during the making process they may be required to compromise both aesthetic and technical standards to satisfy the wishes of the client.

I wish to explore these possible compromises from the perspective of the commissioned architectural stained glass artist, to rationalise just how far a maker can bend his standards before the work produced suffers in quality.

The nature of glass's transparency is truly wondrous. When looking at glass, the chance conjunction with the external environment is magical. It seems to me that the illusionary quality of glass is one of its most unique strengths. The potential for using transparency, translucency and opacity and the distortion of image due to imperfections in the glass is endless. Yet consistently I am asked to use this illusionary material to practise most often colourised outlines, pictures of birds, Virgin Mary's, Edwardian garden scenes, complete with parrots and a seemingly endless list of other tasteless contrivances. Often the result is something resembling a glass comic composed of pseudo-renaissance imagery jostling garishly with some notion of abstract art.

It would seem that architects and their clients demand, in their indiscriminate zeal to sweeten their utilitarian environments, all the glory and prestige of this old and wonderful craft without any of its technical poetry and subtlety.

Stained glass is traditionally and essentially an architectural art. Its powers to heighten mood and perception within a building are powerful and varied, due to the illuminatory nature of glass and its ability to transmit coloured light. But such a power, when used unwisely, has the capacity to distort, degrade, and even destroy an internal environment. If we are truly working in an architectural context, we need to acknowledge our responsibility to our architectural framework. We are, or should be, environmental artists, manipulators of light and mood, blending our work to produce a total harmony between the building and its use, and not mere designers and fabricators of glass pictures and liturgical billboards.

I believe there is a problem when using an architectural medium like stained glass for those who slavishly wish to simply reinforce the current domestic or commercial fashion as decreed by Vogue Drawings or the architectural digests' editor. Not only is a fashion transient, but it is often unsuitable and inappropriate in a particular architectural situation.

It is sobering to remember that a bad or indifferent painting can quite easily be relegated to the cupboard under the stairs, until fashion dictates that it is, after all, a good painting. But architectural stained glass is intended to last forever, or at least until atmospheric pollution, fire, campaigning art historians, conservators, restorers or vandals conspire to get rid of it!

Our works are permanent and public, reminders of either our success or failure. An awesome thought, I think you will agree.

At the beginning of this talk, I mentioned the concept of servility. The relationship between client and commissioned artist, his job of realising the client's dream, and the inevitable compromises which surface during the designing and manufacturing process.

During this time the artist is required to sublimate, in varying degrees, his ego. He is not a sole agent. He is not able, in fact rarely allowed, to express himself exactly as he may choose. I would suggest that architectural stained glass is not the best choice of career for the ego-maniac or even the intensely ambitious. The architectural and applied arts are notoriously anonymous.

Unlike the gallery exhibitor with his or her signature neatly inscribed upon the work, architectural and public art is appraised and appreciated often without any need for knowledge of its creator's name.

I believe this lack of recognition, this inevitable need to sublimate one's ego and work anonymously, coupled with the medium's intrinsic aesthetic and technical difficulties, to be one of the reasons why few artists choose to use it seriously.

Also, we have permitted the blurring beyond public recognition the aesthetic and technical differences between architectural stained glass and domestic leadlighting in the name of economic survival and self-development. We have even mutely accepted the promotion and dissemination of an imitation product of dubious aesthetic worth to its namesake: we have witnessed the slide of this great and historic public medium into decadence. Is it any wonder more and more artists who are attracted to glass as a medium are choosing the object as a vehicle of personal expression? But, there are compensations!

The vista, although gloomy is not all bad. Balanced against the conceptual confinements of commissioned work is the great satisfaction to be gained from an activity which fulfils the needs and desires of others, particularly large groups of people.

This satisfaction is, for some makers, the necessary compensation for suppression of personal ideas and is not only instrumental in their will to continue making, but responsible for re-charging of the creative energy which is so vital to all work of quality.

Finally, I would like to talk about something which is very elusive and difficult to conjure, but, I believe, very important. When it is present and perceptible, it can eliminate a piece of work from the academically acceptable.

I believe this quality to be passion. Occasionally an artist is transported by inspirational and instinctive energies. There is a link forged between head and heart, mind and spirit. The artist is possessed. The work is felt totally.

This emotion, when harnessed with technical proficiency and design inventiveness, can produce work of enormous beauty. Unfortunately the very nature of the relationship with the client during the commissioning process makes this conjunction rare, but all the more special when it does happen.

In conclusion, I would like to say that despite the restrictiveness and problems which need to be overcome when working with glass in architecture, there are, and I hope always will be, artists working with architectural stained glass whose intent is to store and harness the energy, illusionary magic and passion of this wonderful and historic medium: artists who believe in its intrinsic powers to transform, transcend and humanise the secular and urbane deserts of the modern age.

TIMES ARE TIGHT!

Feeling the pinch? Would anyone be interested in a FASCINATING job that has become available, spending days and days drilling 1mm holes through the centre of 10mm glass beads - thousands of them - @ 40 cents per bead?

Contact Jeff Hamilton, Hamilton Design Glass Gallery, 156 Burns Bay Road, Lane Cove West, 2066.
Phone: (02) 428 4281

A CONFLICT OF INTEREST - by *Elizabeth McClure*

When Meza asked me to give a talk on the situation of teaching whilst continuing to do your so called "own work", we immediately launched into a very long conversation on all the pros and cons, discussing the possibilities of the "ideal" situation, and since we must have talked for at least 15 minutes, it seemed there certainly were things enough to talk about to fill the vacant 15 minute slot in the conference programme ... so - I agreed.

However, since then I have had my mind constantly turning over, wondering "what AM I going to say?" - "How DO I feel?". There are so many questions which have come to mind and somehow it seemed easy to address them in conversation, but a little more difficult to pinpoint the points of conflict for debate. The number of questions raised seemed to be turning over in my head like a Shakespearian soliloquy - and if you have read the synopsis, you'll know what I am trying to say.

I felt this a very apt way to describe the situation so many artists, craftspeople, designers, glasspeople, find themselves in as practitioners. I also found myself thinking that this is not a conflict peculiar to people involved in creative work. It seems it doesn't matter what you do, there is always a certain feeling of - what you gain on the swings, you loose on the roundabout!

As it is, I can only reflect upon my own experiences in practice since completing my studies. When I emerged from the unreal world of Art School into the real world, I made a kind of contract with myself to further my experience in glass, regardless of where it took me, or **within reason** what kind of work was involved ... (and look where it got me ... to the other side of the world, where I don't understand the sky at night!).

All this aside, it has resulted in 10 years of travelling and working, wherever, however, as a glass-blowing studio assistant, in factories, as a research assistant, as a designer, and as a teacher, lecturer, tutor, demonstrator ... whatever the institute decides to refer to you on the payroll!

No matter where, or which job, there has always been a certain element of compromise, either in the job or in my own work. Even at times when I have been able to, or indeed **chosen** to devote my time entirely to my own work, this has been supported by many and varied part time jobs, the strangest of which must have been selling Heineken beer and other refreshments from a trolley through the carriages of the *Shinkansen* (bullet train) from Tokyo to Osaka!

Now, that kind of job I would put into the category of the ... to be a part time or maybe a semi full time artist - part time job slot - even though I don't much like categories, it seems the simplest way to approach where we all sit and in which division of the long line of options of where and how we devote our time and how this ultimately affects our "own work", be it Art or Craft.

As I have heard someone describe the various levels of their own work into categories of minimum effort, maximum effect = excellent profit, or maximum effort perhaps same effect and dubious or at least questionable return - I think this theory also applies to those jobs we do to support our own work.

I feel that I have probably worked in most situations described in the synopsis. I have devoted my time full-time to my work, part-time with a part-time job, full-time teacher, part-time teacher, part-time job, full-time job somehow always **making** time for my own work though to which extent is the point of variation.

So - how does one deal with the necessary division of time and proportionate priorities? I have to admit I never find it all that easy and of all the situations I have been in I have probably found teaching alongside my own work to be the most complementary (since I'm teaching what I do) challenging, rewarding and possibly frustrating.

(Hearing Dana's talk earlier, it makes me feel somehow a little humble, pathetic or inadequate when I hear Dana talk of Libensky and his 27 years as professor and also to see the great and prolific work produced during that time, but it also gives inspiration and perhaps a sense of direction.)

Teaching is stimulating, fun, draining, exhausting, hard work and enjoyable. At this point in time I have chosen to teach - it is not only to supplement my income but something I want to do. I suppose because glass has given me so much enjoyment and opportunity that, if I can, I want to pass on a lot of what has been so generously given to me, to others joining the glass family.

I cannot say that I live in a constant state of dilemma, but there is certainly conflict. Often what is gained in financial security is lost in time available to devote to your own work and the accompanying difficulty in switching your attention from one job to another. I realise this is true of other jobs, but for my part, in teaching, the loss of time is accompanied by a draining of your own mental and physical energy, one is constantly giving support, ideas, encouragement, help, advice. Working with others requires a certain humility, diplomacy - knowing just when to criticise and when not, when to push a student or leave them. I suppose to some extent it is as demanding as the teacher allows or the student demands. It seems therefore that the main difficulty in operating a full time involvement in more than one area is the level of involvement in the work and this I would say dictates the level of conflict and compromise.

There is this old cliché, and I cringe to bring it to light, of "those who can do - and those who can't teach". Hopefully this has often enough been proved wrong as to be dismissed! I feel rather that the best teachers are those who are also "practising what they preach" as they say. This does not necessarily mean constantly exhibiting - but **doing**, being involved, believing in and being in touch with the subject to be taught.

Fortunately there are some schools who have tried to implement this philosophy in the training of students. In Canberra, where I teach, full-time means 3 days a week **contact** teaching ... I know, it sounds ideal doesn't it? But - there begins the string of pros and cons, the access to excellent facilities, great, but encouraged to work on your own work IN school means it is difficult to get away from students and their demands. I have often said I find it impossible to do my own work immediately after teaching, it sometimes takes time to get your head out of someone else's ideas and problems and on to your own. To constantly remain objective in observing students at work, to maintain one's own direction without being distracted. All the possibilities are there, and the positive sides of the situation are the endless challenges put to you by students' work, creating problems which might not have to be faced in your own work. The creative energy of being around people who are exploring and finding new ways of their own, opening your eyes and your mind further every day.

Unfortunately the role of teacher is no longer solely confined to teaching and in times of cutbacks in education where staff are reduced, student numbers increased, we find that the so-called non-teaching time, time for professional practice of one's own work, is taken up with administrative chores or technical hitches -things such as having to build the furnace before you can teach glassblowing!

I suppose though, the hardest part is maintaining and developing one's own work. As a full-time artist you are able to devote your working life entirely to that, develop it and therefore probably produce and hopefully sell more. Obviously the two most difficult factors assuming we are overflowing with brilliant ideas (!) are -**Time** and **Financial Security**!

I think it is probably safe to say that **if** you are in your present situation and have divided your priorities by choice, then you are probably much more content. Even in the area of teaching, if you are there by circumstance and are doing it only for the money, then it can only lead to frustration. Teaching is **not** an easy option.

I am sure this will bring to mind other jobs of equal demand and involvement, and I feel that the same attitude applies.

Personally, I would like more time to devote to the development of my own ideas and work. I think that is mostly because of the way I work and I think it is probably up to me to **make** more time. I do not think I could teach continually for a long, long time or for ever, but for now at least I am content with my current situation.

In conclusion, I could probably say that I doubt there IS an ideal situation to suit everyone. Each of us has different needs and desires, and if anything perhaps the only way to solve any frustrations is to introduce the 48 hour day, an endless supply of money, happiness and peace of mind!

THE GIFT - CONTEMPORARY MAKING - by *Brian Hirst*

This talk was outlined in the pre-conference synopsis as addressing issues of personal aesthetic in the creative process, the bonding that occurs as a maker, and how it carries through to the market.

For many, concerns for making and concerns for marketing are different - they have different boundaries and therefore two distinct economies. For a contemporary maker it is easier to avoid the concerns of the market whilst involved in the creative process (for convenience I am not referring to cost-related commissioned work at this point). By comparison, general business practice considers the market in all stages of product development. If both contemporary maker and small business manufacturers produce an end result to sell/market, what is the difference between contemporary maker as a small business and small business at large?

Firstly, contemporary makers are involved in the creative process, the imaginative use of materials. This use of materials is usually a much higher skill level than is generally needed in other business practices. Admittedly makers tend to specialise in primary materials, i.e. glass, metal, wood etc. The second obvious difference between the two is a philosophic approach to maintain that relationship, i.e. the problems of business scale must be considered if this is true. Contemporary makers as small business entities limit their productions to economies of scale low enough to produce highly skilled work. They do not share general small business principles and aims to expand in the market towards big business or big business aims to become a monopoly. This monopolisation of the market is quite an alien concept (in general) to the contemporary maker.

The term bonding I used in the opening sentence - *the bonding that occurs as a maker* - is this creative use of materials and its aesthetic concerns coupled with the philosophy to maintain that relationship. The contemporary maker who maintains the bonds via sales outlet into the market place has not produced a product. The buyer has not purchased the item as a product. But, if this relationship becomes disjointed, and is not carried into the market with the bonds intact, the end result may be sold as a product. For this reason, the relationship between contemporary maker and sales venue/person is an important one.

This is my problem - "What does one call the *result* of the creative process that cannot be adequately described as *art* or as a *product*.

Curiously in recent times, big businesses have recognised the value of "bonding" in manufacture and has produced the name or designer range. In this strategy brand name products are replaced by designer-label products to infer the bonds associated with the name of a contemporary maker. The bonds between designer label and a mass-manufacture is a tenuous one, but the creative processes have been there at some time if not directly with a mass produced product. Maybe when designers lose contact with their materials, the bonds are broken and a designer label is really just another product of corporations like Kodak, Omo or the like.

By way of illustration, I'll refer to a conversation I had with glassblowers to resolve the dilemma we share in defining our work.

In preparation for a seminar at the NSW Craft Council on *Product Assessment and Quality Control - critically analysing your work for the market place*, I asked a local glassblower to comment on the title in relation to his work and his reply was, after a long pause - "You just make good stuff". The second response I solicited was by a European glassblower I had known many years earlier who happened to be visiting. Her reply was also coupled with a long pause; then out came "I only make seconds ... some of them go on the shelf, the rest go in the bin."

It took me a while to come to terms with this response. But on reflection, 10 years earlier as a student I had observed this process of selection between shelf and bin with a curiosity in exactly the way described other than one variation to hand me one piece as a gift. An unexpected reward for assisting in the making of her work. This small grey bowl I value for all the reasons one values a gift given directly from a maker one admires. My bowl was a gift, it was not considered by me to be a product. But what were the other similar items on the shelf I pondered? They were destined to enter the market place, or to be given away, as visiting lecturers sometimes do. Were they gifts or mere products because they were placed on the shelf to be sold at a later stage?

My source is no longer present to ask these questions, so I will pursue the issue further. At this time I will introduce you to Lewis Hyde whose book "*The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property*" can help us with a rationale of who we are as makers and how we fit into the market.

Lewis Hyde says *"Because of the bonding power of gifts and the detached nature of the commodity exchange, gifts have become associated with community and with being bonded to others while commodities are associated with alienation and freedom."*

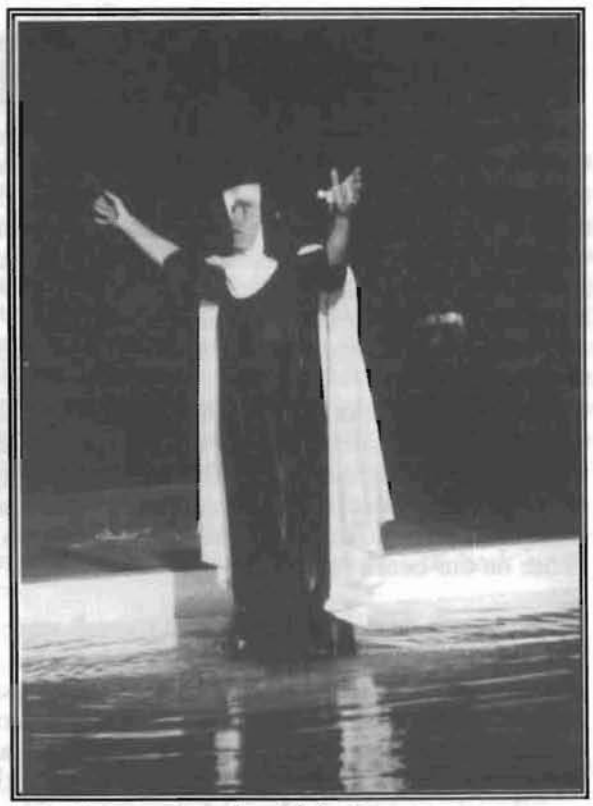
So this is what distinguishes my bowl in the early example from the one on the shelf. My bowl is bonded on an emotional level to the giver, which in this case is strengthened by the fact that it is also the maker. There are three levels of appreciation of gift in this example: the gift itself; the gift of giving; and the gift of making, i.e. the creative process. It is the last level which I find the most difficult to define. Based on a personal aesthetic, who could define the aesthetic process(es) involved with the individual evaluation as she holds her bowls up to the light before directing the piece to life on a shelf or death in a bin? I personally don't require a label to define my bowl - it is a glass bowl - a gift - all makers' work have gift potential, particularly when they are handed on with the bonds intact. More often than not they are sold in what is termed "the giftware market". Hopefully the bonds continue and are strengthened as time goes on and the piece continues through different hands. This particularly happens in situations where objects are handed on in a family tradition.

Again, I quote from the poet, Lewis Hyde:

"Artists who take on secondary jobs and artists who find patrons have, in a sense, a structural way to mark the boundary between their art and the market. It is not hard to distinguish between writing poems and working the night shift in a hospital, and easier still for the poet to know he is no Guggenheim. But the artist who sells his own creations must develop a more subjective feel for the two economies. ... He must be able to reckon its value in terms of current fashions, know what the market will bear, demand fair value, and part with the work when someone pays the price. And he must, on the other hand, be able to forget all that and turn to serve his gifts on their own terms. If he cannot do the former, he cannot hope to sell his art, and if he cannot do the latter, he may have no art to sell, or only a commercial art work that has been created in response to the demands of the market, not in response to the demands of the gift. The artist who hopes to market work that is the realisation of his gifts cannot begin with the market. He must create for himself that gift-sphere in which the work is made, and only when he knows the work to be the faithful realisation of his gift should he turn to see if it has currency in that other economy. Sometimes it does, sometimes it doesn't."

Thank you.

The Blessing - Opening Night Party



The Miracle - Opening Night Party

MEETING ANGELS: RECONCILING CRAFT PRACTICE AND THEORY

by *Anne Brennan*

Over the last four years or so I have confidently described myself as a jewellery practitioner with a deep interest in critical and theoretical writing. In the last six months, that has all changed. With my usual flair for turning my life upside down in one deft stroke, I have accepted a job as, and therefore **become**, a full time lecturer in Art Theory. The transition has sometimes been traumatic, sometimes edifying, but always instructive.

The immediate causes of trauma were obvious - the removal interstate; the sheer terror of taking on, at less than a month's notice, a teaching job for the first time, mastering a computer, and last, but certainly not least, the sense of overwhelming responsibility for imparting complex and important ideas to anything up to one hundred little brains who would rather be somewhere else. " Rather be somewhere else" - remember that phrase, as we'll come back to it in a minute.

However, I also identified a deeper sense of trauma, which took me some months to identify. It was, in some senses, an identity crisis, which lay in the dichotomy between my own continued self perception as someone whose practice and theoretical preoccupations were inseparable, and the view of others that I had made a radical shift in position. Before I had been teaching for very long, I was prepared to put it more strongly that than: I was seen to have **changed sides.**

Looking back on it, the first signs of this shift manifested themselves before I had even left Adelaide. Talking to a dear friend and colleague (whose work, I should tell you, is always informed by the most rigorous preliminary research and thinking), about the possibility that theory lecturers might work on the workshop floor with students, rather than being confined to a darkened seminar room with a projector, I was greeted by shocked silence. She looked at me that way you might if a dear friend suddenly delivered themselves of the opinion that Hitler was right and that all Jews should be bundled off to the gas chambers forthwith - a look of mingled incredulity, horror and compassion. **"Don't you think that would be a bit dangerous?"** she asked.

The idea that my new profession is somehow dangerous has been borne in on me more forcibly in my six months' teaching. Take those one hundred little brains who would rather be elsewhere, for instance. Partly, the reluctance to be attending theory classes has to do with a wish to be spending more time on the workshop floor. If that is regrettable, it is also understandable. They are attending Art School because they want to become potters or metalsmiths or painters, and probably never reckoned with the fact that they would have to engage with theory. That is a surmountable problem for me - I have discovered that the biggest part of teaching is assisting the student to overcome the great human fear of a new idea. However, this would seem to place theory as ineffectual, rather than dangerous.

What is a less surmountable preconception is the notion which has embedded itself in so many students' brains (would that what I am trying to teach them would find such a receptive home!) that everything that they think or make has come to them in a blinding, original flash - the unique product of their own intuitions and brainpower, with no reference whatsoever to their own personal histories, their educations, their positions within our society as the product of one sort of class or cultural background or another. My sister, who teaches First Year Studies at Adelaide School of Art, identifies this way of thinking as an "Inspirational Epidemic". In one of her more bitter moments, she described her students to me, "sitting around in all that Jungian bathwater ... the only way of keeping the water warm is by continually excreting in it".

However, the difficulty for me in dealing with this belief is an equally firm belief, a popular one for students and practitioners alike, that Theory is a bad idea, because it interferes with the clear creative flow, contaminating one's originality and spontaneity with the virus of intellectualism. The entertainment of a theoretical idea in some way, therefore, "controls" the subject, so that ultimately the notion that theory and practice might have something to say to each other is tantamount to entertaining the Thought Police on our bench tops.

This epidemic does not confine itself to craft students - most budding painters and sculptors suffer from it. But the difference is that whilst most lecturers in painting, sculpture and photography reinforce what is said in theory lectures to their students on the workshop floor, there appears to be a greater reluctance to do so on the part of lecturers in craft based disciplines. This is due in part, I believe, to an ingrained prejudice that students need to be acquiring manual skills over and above other areas of their education, but also because the empirical nature of most writing about the crafts precludes the notion of theory as something important or relevant for many practitioners.

Theory departments can easily become dumping grounds for the inadequacies and/or paranoias of the workshops. Students who become confused, or suddenly appear to want to change direction in midstream can be said to have become victims of theory, rather than being seen to be in the grip of a natural, if messy and inconvenient, stage in the education process. Every clumsily expressed, or badly resolved intellectual position can be laid at the door of theory, when in fact such positions would be no more supported in my tutorials than they are within the workshops themselves.

The essence of this misunderstanding appears to me to lie in the fact that we all bandy the word "theory" around without ever examining what it is that we are talking about. I therefore propose to spend the next few minutes discussing the various interpretations of the word which I encounter in my travels. It is worth making the point here that much of what I am saying, both about the misunderstanding of theory, and the alternative suggestions I have to make about its place and application to making, can be said to apply to the fine art world as well as the craft world.

Perhaps the most prevalent misconception about theory, of which many of us are guilty, is that it is synonymous with a narrow band of esoteric philosophical theory expounded by people with French names, who seem to conduct a busy troglodyte existence in the subterranean realms of the footnote and the bibliography. This assumption is not surprising, as the writings of the Structuralists and Post-structuralists are currently enjoying enormous popularity amongst artists and writers as a way of viewing, explaining, rendering more complex, and opening up other possibilities for working within, visual cultures. As a prevailing discourse, we tend to make the assumption that it is the only one.

Inseparable from this body of theory is its seemingly impenetrable language. The language problem is probably the biggest source of difficulty for most people coming to grips with the notion of theory. No-one likes to feel excluded from a discussion because they cannot understand the language, let along the terms of the debate, and a certain amount of resentment is understandable.

In some senses, the language issue is outside the scope of what I want to say, but I will say that there is probably a lot of useful work to be done to make this kind of discourse accessible to the interested reader. It is simply not true that people's failure to come to grips with the language of this particular branch of theory is always due to laziness - as practitioners, we have limited time and energy to spend teasing out and working through meanings, and it seems to me that the English language is a subtle and flexible enough medium to be able to convey meanings, even quite complex ones, in an accessible way. Where I think that the accusation of laziness **can** be laid at our doors is in the sloppy thinking so many of us are guilty of, whereby we assume that the quest to understand will not be worth the energy expended. If we are to expect theorists to come halfway by explaining their terms, then we must also assume that we should come halfway by engaging with their ideas.

The second way in which we misunderstand theory is that we confuse it with the terms "criticism" and "reviewing". None of these words can be clearly isolated from each other, in the sense that each practice to some extent informs the other. However, criticism can be seen to be an evaluative process, during which theory may be invoked, of specific examples of **contemporary** practice. Theory is not tied to a contemporary arena, and may be applied equally to the historical field. Reviewing is a process whereby an individual records personal responses (albeit often well informed by **critical** and **theoretical** positions) to exhibitions, as a way of signalling their existence in permanent records such as newspapers, magazines and journals. Its validity as a discipline is problematic, but outside the scope of this paper to examine in depth. Suffice it to say that its confusion with the term "criticism", and with the persistent connotations of negativity which that word implies, and which some critics take as a self imposed dogma, means that the practicing community too often believe that the role of theory is to control and censor.

If it is easy to establish what theory isn't, it seems less easy to isolate what it might be. In order to circumvent the misleading associations which we have already examined, I took myself back to the dictionary. Here is the Macquarie dictionary definition:

> ***Theory*** *- 1. A coherent group of general propositions used as principles of explanation for a class of phenomena. 2. A proposed explanation whose status is still conjectural, in contrast to well established propositions that are regarded as reporting matters of actual fact.*

Here we have a definition which suggests propositions, rather than dogma, conjectures rather than inflexible facts. Theory, as defined by my dictionary, then, proposes that we embark on an investigation according to a set of possibilities, which may then be revised, or superseded by another set of hypotheses. These hypotheses

may be drawn from a range of disciplines: we may, for example, theorise a piece of work from a historicist perspective. Equally, we may use philosophical criteria - aesthetics or ethics, for example. The point to remember, though, is that theory is not history, nor is it an identifiable discipline on its own. Indeed, some current theory identifies itself as **a-historical** and **multi-disciplined**. Perhaps it might even be helpful to see theory as a sort of open document into which any system of ideas might be fed.

This interpretation allows us to entertain the idea that theory might be a set of knowledges which run parallel to the set of knowledges which constitute the nuts and bolts of making - that, in fact, in the process of making, there are two kinds of theory at work. It also allows us to see the possibility of a relationship between theory and practice which is not necessarily conscious.

If this seems a difficult notion to grasp, in the light of our polarised views of theory and practice, try thinking of it in terms of an analogy suggested by the theorist Donald Brook: some people enjoy debating the existence of God. Others see it as tedious and irrelevant. It is perfectly possible to live a full life without discussing the existence of God, or believing in Her. However, we all must acknowledge that a belief in the existence of God has tempered our entire culture - our lives are built on the boneheap of Christianity: our legal and moral codes, our artistic and literary heritages, the way in which we view other cultures, are all arbitrated by our Christian heritage. Therefore, to know about our heritage is to understand it.

When Bernard Leach wrote his *Potter's Book* in 1940, he was writing much more than an instruction manual. He was anxious to make the book convey certain views about aesthetics, philosophy and Buddhism which were a sort of hybrid of his experiences of working in Japan, and a selective view of the history of ceramics in Britain. For Leach, this approach was part of an attempt to restore a fresh spiritual and historical standpoint to the practice of ceramics. He says:

> *A potter's traditions are a part of a nation's cultural inheritance and in our time we are faced with the breakdown of the Christian inspiration in art. We live in dire need of unifying culture out of which fresh traditions can grow. The potter's problem is at root the universal problem and it is difficult to see how any solution aiming at less than the full interplay of East and West can provide either humanity, or the individual potter, with a sound foundation for a world-wide culture. Liberal democracy, which served as a basis for the development of industrialism, provides us today with a vague humanism as insufficient to inspire art as either the economics of Karl Marx or the totalitarian conception of national life, but at least it continues to supply an environment in which the individual is left comparatively free.* [9]

In positing the notion that ceramics could be revivified through an "interplay" between Eastern and Western traditions, Leach was availing himself of theory. He was prescribing a set of possibilities which were to inform the process of making. He invoked spiritualism, aesthetics, politics and economics as structures which already informed the making process, and suggested alterations and adjustments to change both the way ceramics was seen, and the way it was made. Leach's methodology, if that's the right word, has heavily influenced ceramic practice in Great Britain, and subsequently Australia.

That Leach's philosophy was not the only theoretical context for potters in Europe and America, we also know. The notions of reinvestigating the formal and sculptural properties of the vessel, as exemplified by Coper and Rie, and subsequently Fritsch and Brittain, in the UK, and the Dadaist roots of the Funk Movement in America, testify to this. All of these movements were invoking theory of one sort or another.

From this we can see that the process of theorisation is not necessarily a prescriptive one. It is merely the adoption of a "coherent group of propositions" which may come about because of the personal beliefs of the user, or as the outcome of a period of investigation and research, or even as a set of premises inherited from past teachers, parents, friends. This may be flimsy theory, but theory nevertheless, and of course, such positions are "up for grabs" in terms of other groups of hypotheses. We might, for example, want to query the validity of Leach's beliefs in the light of the problem of shifts in meaning when we appropriate images or techniques from other cultures. What all of these systems have in common is that they all use a framework of propositions constructed from knowledges other than those derived from the direct experience of making, which act as principles for explaining the class of phenomena we describe loosely as craft.

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9. B. Leach - *The Potter's Book*, pp 9-10. Faber, London - 1969

You might argue that you do not, in fact, make your work according to any school of thought, that you agree with my sister's Inspirationalist School: your work springs totally unaided from the depths of your instinct - you eschew all schools of thinking about art, and your only wish is to strive for the purest manifestation of your own creativity and originality.

I'm sorry, but you can't get out of it that easily. For a start, the proposition that it is possible to make outside the parameters of a theoretical structure still participates in the discourse of theory, and could therefore be seen to be a theoretical position. Secondly, arguments such as this are usually supported by propositions which spring from other disciplines: Psychiatry, for example - think about Jung and his ideas about the creative forces of the psyche; or the sort of psycho/sociological rationale which Dubuffet cooked up about the honest, untutored art products of the "savage", the child and the insane to justify his rejection of the dominant aesthetic discourse of his day. Such a collection of propositions could be construed as a theoretical position.

What I am attempting to point out here is that we all live in a web of theory - theory is omnipresent, informing all areas of our lives. It is part of a human need to order, to make explanations, to find patterns and congruences. And yet our culture has a very ambivalent relationship with that need.

I'm sure that most of us have heard that line that "artists need theory like birds need ornithology". This seems to me to be a misunderstanding of the whole relationship between theory and practice. It is certainly true, as I have already pointed out, that art does not need to be made with a knowledge of theory. Art and theory exist as parallel knowledges from each of which we draw as we wish and need. What I find difficult about this epigram is that it characterises the artist as some kind of instinctual being, for whom art making is a blind compulsion, and for whom intellectual powers are **unavailable** as well as irrelevant. It is as prescriptive in its separation of the act of creation and the act of the intellect as the kind of theoretical position it abhors.

Here's another line often quoted by anti-theorists. Remo have recently enshrined it in their shop window: "Imagination is more important than knowledge". Albert Einstein said it, and it is hard to quibble with the 20th century's archetypal genius. In fact it seems positively churlish, in view of his position as a great theorist. However, the statement is interesting in that it reflects how ingrained our tendency to separate the intellectual and creative functions is. I would suggest to Einstein that where would we be without knowledge to spur on the imagination, or indeed assist the imagination to make the brave leaps between what is known, and what is yet to be known? Knowledge without imagination may be an arid and soul-less prospect, but the notion of imagination untempered by knowledge seems a positively psychopathic prospect to me.

The link between knowledge and the imagination are what sets humans apart from other species: the ability to observe, hypothesise and act creatively govern all of our lives and choices. Here is a simple example of what I mean.

When we lose our jobs, it is imagination and knowledge which enables us to cull out the possible consequences instantly, rather than a month later when our savings run out. We can take anticipatory action: look for other jobs, sell the house, or set up an illegal bookie service. Our imagination is what enables us to implement knowledge from others' experience, which we may never have experienced directly. Memory is what enables us to act on, and learn from, our own past experiences.

I will return to the subject of memory later, but before I do, I want to return to those two quotes for a minute. What they each imply is that the creative discourse and the intellectual discourse are locked in a kind of polarised impasse, the predominance of one implying the negation of the other. I have already expressed my view that the two are inseparable halves of a complex totality: it would seem, then, that to ask the question seems more appropriate to ask what theory and practice can do for each other. I propose to answer that in as non-prescriptive a manner as possible, by talking for a few minutes about why I choose to work in a theory conscious way.

Socrates said that "the unexamined life is not worth living". As a lapsed Catholic, I can see a lot of merit in that. The up side of the much-discussed Catholic culture of guilt is the useful, if at times painful, practice of examining one's conscience. In the absence of a set of formal religious beliefs by which to measure my moral life, I have developed a loose set of ethical premises which I use to guide myself. Honesty in my relationships (as distinct from frankness) is one difficult guiding point. A sense of respect for other people's lives and needs is another - all of these principles then give rise to an identification

with certain more public and formal ways of thinking: feminism, an interest in the environment, the Peace Movement, certain areas of psychoanalytical thinking, for example. This web of beliefs provides me with a starting point for looking at the discrepancies and congruences, the destructive and enriching patterns which mark my life. To be able to see these, helps me to understand myself, and where I fit into the world, and understanding helps me to grow and change.

I have never really made a separation between my life and my work. It therefore seems inevitable that the kinds of methods I have used to structure my life should also structure my work, and the kinds of principles which govern my life should also govern my work.

Thus, at a time when I had painfully to examine the question of honesty within relationships, I made a series of objects for the mouth designed to impede speech. My reading of Adrienne Rich's essay "Women and Honour - Some Notes on Lying", designed to assist my thinking about my personal life, fed naturally into the work. Rich proposed that failure to speak was as much an act of lying as the deliberate utterance of untruths. Subsequently, Julie Ewington wrote about these works in a catalogue essay. She placed them within "contemporary feminist inquiry into the status of female bodies"[10] in particular, drawing parallels with their theories about the relationship between the female body and language. The female body, marked and governed by the function of its orifices, directs women's experience of their lives differently from men. This experience has no way of making itself felt within a patriarchal society which privileges verbal language as the vehicle whereby children accede to social life and sexuality. "If language is the prerogative of men, how, then, are women to speak?"[11]

At the time, I had not read the French feminists. Nor was it my intention to speak specifically about woman's relationship with the patriarchy, although, in addressing abuses of power within the work, the patriarchy was fair game for my commentary. It is often said to me that art and craft are visual languages, and that theory is dependent on the written word, and that therefore to write about art and craft is to privilege the written word over visual language by imposing meanings on works from a position external to the maker's intentions. My answer to that is that the written and the visual do not exclude each other, they just communicate different nuances of meaning. There is no absolute meaning inherent in any work. I certainly do not have complete control over the meanings within the works I make, nor do I believe that I should have. For me, the dynamism of a piece comes when I surrender control of a finished work in a public space, and others start to participate in the piece.

What Julie was doing, then, was participating in the work - adding new layers of meaning by pointing up the place my work took in a broader discourse about women's place in a patriarchal society. The role of her comments was not to police meaning, but to extend it. Perhaps it is this extending role which makes my double career as practitioner and theorist seem so natural to me: as a theorist, I am as much involved in a creative life as I am when I'm a practitioner.

All of this may not seem very relevant, at first glance, to those of you who have chosen to pursue the model of production work. At this point, it could be argued, craft just becomes another business, another process whereby commodities are supplied to meet a need which will be created, if necessary. If you see your working methodology this way, that's fine, but it is well to remember that your products are still open to critique, even if you argue from such a pragmatic base.[12] However, I think that theory has other things to offer the production craft worker, no matter how s/he conceives their working philosophy.

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10. J. Ewington - *"Unnatural Symbols"*, ex. cat. Zero At the Bone, Canberra Contemporary Art Space, Canberra, 1988

11. J. Ewington - Ibid.

12. see

    J. Baudrillard - *"The System of Objects"* in J. Thackera (ed) Design after Modernism, Thames and Hudson, London - 1988

    J. Baudrillard - *"The Ecstasy of Communication"* in H. Foster (ed) The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Post Modern Culture, Bay Press, Washington - 1983

    F. Jameson - *"Post Modernism and Consumer Society"* in H. Foster (ed) The Anti Aesthetic

As much, indeed, as it does to someone working in the way that I did when I made my mouth objects.

Theory offers us a way to examine our way of life, and the way in which our products and processes link up with our life choices. Think again about Bernard Leach. Leach offered a philosophy of life to the potter. In adopting the Japanese aesthetic, he was also taking into consideration the spiritual and philosophical baggage that went with it. As I pointed out earlier, this was his solution to the perceived lack of a spiritual basis to European ceramic traditions of the time. Thus, in his choice of forms, his use of specific glazes, his espousal of particular kiln techniques, even the way he was structuring his workshop, he was using the mechanics of his craft to invent new meanings, and make specific points. I can think of no other visual medium which can use its technology to make such precise connections between product and meaning. The fact of this connection is now beginning to make itself felt among fine art practitioners. Narelle Jubelin is a good example of someone who has exploited the meanings which accrue to the technology of craft to extend the meanings within the images she makes.

Jane Schneider, in her article "The Anthropology of Cloth" suggests that the subjection of traditional textile traditions to change through the incursions of colonising cultures can crystallise the hand made, and its object, as a political statement. She cites the example of Ghandi's campaign to revive the production of the hand-spun and woven cotton *Khadi*, and for the burning of English textiles:

> *"... Draped in* Khadi, *people of a vast subcontinent appeared homogenised, their various regional, religious, ethnic, status, age and gender identifies submerged in a colourless and untailored statement of spiritual worth"*[13]

Here we have an example of what Sylvia called the "practices of everyday life" reinstating themselves to make new and specific political meanings. The image of passive strength which this description evokes is a powerful one. If the connection between Ghandi's campaign and the predicament of a late 20th century production worker is not obvious, think of this:

Craft is a practice which is marginalised both within broader visual culture, and within late twentieth century post-industrial society. Sometimes such a position can appear to be without strength or power. However, just as often, voices from the margins carry their own very particular strength, as Jane Schneider's example points up. In the wake or the decline of Modernism, craft has the opportunity to reinstate and reinvent the visual language of ornament and the practices of handskills in a way which can lend point and vigour to already existing modes of representation. Production work acts as a kind of lexicon for this potentially political vernacular. Imaginatively used, it can be the forming ground for experiment and change, rather than the site of compromise and the status quo.

Perhaps the most lasting value of Schneider's example, however, is the way in which it illustrates the potency everyday objects possess for human beings. The image of the *khadi* as a uniform of resistance is, on the one hand (as Schneider points out) a homogenising element. On the other hand, it serves to particularise. The humble, everyday garment points up the humanity of its wearer, and thereby the army of individual humans who make up Ghandi's resistance.

Think how often we use the everyday object to debunk pomposity. How, for example, we ascribe domestic objects as nicknames for overwhelming architecture: the Coathanger, the Sprinkler, or the Syringe. Such dubbing restores to us a sense of reassurance that we are in fact human, and that these objects are ours to control, not vice versa.

Think of the power of that army of South American women, marching through the streets, beating their saucepans, and clamouring for the restoration of their Disappeared sons, daughters, husbands, brothers, sisters and friends. Somehow, those saucepans chill the heart as an image of everyday people pushed beyond endurance - a vessel which promises food and nurture, turned makeshift battle drum.

And who can forget those mountains of shattered spectacles which brought home to us the reality of the loss of six million Jews? They were the agents which mediated between the bland statistics and six million human gestures, never to be repeated - the push of the spectacles up the bridge of the nose with an absent forefinger, glasses pushed onto the forehead so that tired eyes can be rubbed, borrowing the loved one's spectacles to read the newspaper ...

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13. J. Schneider - *"The Anthropology of Cloth"* Annual Review of Anthropology 1987/16

Craft belongs in the same domestic world as the everyday object. But because the domestic arena is essentially a private one, the domestic context of craft is largely ignored by the critics. A brooch or a jug seem to have little to do with the Great Matter of History, and are therefore unlikely to be taken up by the ambitious aspirants to the myth of the artist as hero. Perhaps, too, our stereotyped perception of the domestic arena as Woman's Place has been another reason why it should be a casualty of Modernist Mythmaking.

And yet, the human dramas to which these objects bear witness and which they often commemorate, are ones which touch us all, and affect our lives profoundly. They are the biggest events we are ever likely to be caught up in. The Delft plate given to me to commemorate the birth of my daughter marks an event which changed me physically, emotionally and circumstantially forever. It also measures time for me: its circumference is the same as her newborn head, a fact which I measure often against her cocky adolescent demeanour these days.

According to critics, the difficulty of writing about sentiment is its subjectivity. What conclusions can we draw, how do we get at the meanings of these objects which have hitherto dwelt in uncharted territories, if we have no framework of rules, conventions or commonly held views, even, to hold up our conclusions?

Kevin Murray suggests that the problems be overcome by finding a strategy which removes both the maker and the user from the centre of the picture, allowing the object to "activate" the relationship. Thus, in the case of the ring, for example, the question we might ask is not "why do people wear jewellery?" but "why does jewellery wear people?". Describing the difference between the way in which a tattoo and a piece of jewellery contain memories, Murray identifies the potential to forget as the crucial factor in the answer; he says:

> *"While a tattoo can be altered, it cannot be forgotten, unlike jewellery. As a material for inscribing romance, jewellery resembles an oral medium, whereas tattoos are textual. Just as a story in oral form requires re-telling to be kept alive, a piece of jewellery needs to be periodically remembered as it leaves and returns to its host body. Its very liminal position as at once part of and again separate from the body means that it must be thought of each time it is detached. The labour involved in this daily recovery of jewellery gives expression to the constancy of feeling in the relationship."*[14]

Once the host is gone, then, according to Murray, the ring must "find a new hand, or be committed to forgetfulness".

My own position is a little different. Murray's position pre-supposes no sense of continuity between hosts. What of the grandmother's wedding ring, handed on to the next generation? Bell and Hawkes' book *Generations*[15] describes the sense of "stewardship" women feel about the inheritance of heirlooms. Family stories accompany them, and their own are woven in, to be handed on to the next generation. Thus, rather than allow the object to remain at the centre of the picture, I see object, maker and user together at the centre, engaged in an inextricable collaborative interchange upon which complex meanings depends, and which gives the object an almost endless potential for carrying new meanings.

Of course, this position also implies that we take the subjectivity inherent in such a relationship, and accept it, warts and all, as part of a discourse of meaning for the crafts. If we are to accept this state of affairs, we might have to look at other ways of writing about craft, ways which permit a more open ended perspective. I would suggest that fiction, or the open format of the essay might serve our purposes better in terms of teasing out the meanings vested in the objects we make.

David Malouf, in his book *Antipodes*, writes beautifully about the life of the truly orphaned object. We have all come across them at one time or another - the strange implement in a second hand shop, whose function is not apparent, but which is redolent with some kind of mysterious purpose, or the photograph of nameless bearded patriarchs and crinolined matriarchs, found under the floorboards of a new house. These objects have a strange focus, suddenly. They acquire a new, reflexive meaning for us, beautifully detailed by Malouf in this passage, with which I would like to conclude:

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14. K. Murray - "*Selling off the Family Jewels: Room for Sentiment in Victoria's Financial Crisis*", unpublished manuscript intended for Agenda

15. D. Bell & P. Hawkes - "*Generations: Grandmothers, Mothers and Daughters*, McPhee Gribble/Penguin, Melbourne - 1987

In Trust

There is to begin with the paraphernalia of daily living: all those objects, knives, combs, coins, cups, razors, that are too familiar, too worn and stained with use, a door-knob, a baby's rattle, or too swiftly in passage from hand to mouth or hand to hand to arouse more than casual interest. They are disposable, and are mostly disposed of without thought. Tram tickets, matchboxes, wooden serviette rings with a poker design of poinsettias, buttonhooks, beermats, longlife torch batteries, the lids of Doulton soup tureens, are carted off at last to a tip and become rubble, the sub-stratum of cities, or are pulped and go to earth; unless, by some quirk of circumstance, one or two examples are stranded so far up the beach in a distant decade that they become collector's items, and then so rare and evocative as to be the only survivors of their age.

So it is in the life of objects. They pass out of the hands of their first owners into a tortoiseshell cabinet, and then, whole or in fragments it scarcely matters, on to the shelves of museums. Isolated there, in the oddness of their being no longer common or repeatable, detached from their history and the grime of use, they enter a new dimension. A quality of uniqueness develops in them and they glow with it as with the breath of a purer world - meaning only that we see them clearly now in the light of this one. An oil-lamp, a fragment of cloth so fragile that we feel the very grains and precious dust of its texture (the threads barely holding in their warp and woof), a perfume flask, a set of taws, a strigil, come wobbling towards us, the only angels perhaps we shall ever meet, though they bear no message but their own presence: we are here.

It is in a changed aspect of time that we recognize them, as if the substance of it - a denseness that prevented us from looking forward or too far back - had cleared at last. We see these objects and ourselves as co-existent, in the very moment of their first stepping out into their own being and in every instant now of their long pilgrimage towards us, in which they have gathered the fingerprints of their most casual users and the ghostly but still powerful presence of the lives they served.

None of our kind come to us down that long corridor. Only the things they made and made use of, which still somehow keep contact with them. We look through the cracked bowl to the lips of children. Our hand on an axe-handle fits into an ancient groove and we feel the jarring of tree-trunk on bone. Narrowly avoiding through all their days the accident that might have toppled them from a shelf, the flames, the temper tantrums, the odd carelessness of a user's hand, they are still with us. We stare and are amazed. Were they once, we ask ourselves, as undistinguished as the buttons on our jacket or a stick of roll-on deodorant? Our own utensils and artefacts take on significance for a moment in the light of the future. Small coins glow in our pockets. Our world too seems vividly, unbearably present, yet mysteriously far off.[1]

1. D. Malouf - "*Antipodes: Stories*", Chatto and Windus, London - 1985

This article was based on a paper presented at the Ausglass Conference, *Contemporary Making - Current Thinking*, St. Andrew's College, University of Sydney, in January 1991. I am indebted to Julie Ewington, for her generous sharing of ideas and material, to Dr. David McNeill for listening to me and clarifying some of my definitions, and to Warwick Freeman for providing me with the piece by David Malouf.

EXHIBITION

The Glass Artists' Gallery is interested in hearing from artists who wish to participate in ***Wearable Glass 1991***. This year the selected exhibition will open first in Sydney at The Glass Artists' Gallery from October 1st to 27th and then tour to the Jam Factory Gallery December 15th to 24th.

Those interested should contact Giselle Courtenay or Ivana Jirasek as soon as possible for further information.

Write to: 70 Glebe Point Road, Glebe. 2037, or phone: (02) 552 1552

FUNCTION? - by *Grace Cochrane*

Just before I start, one of the reasons one likes one's friends is that they generally share your opinions. And that's what's happened this week. On the first day, Sylvia said many of the things I had in mind, and Anne has just done the same thing. I hope between us we haven't destroyed everything for Susanne.

At the same time, so much of what I have alluded to in this paper has been illustrated and discussed very well by other speakers during the week, and by others again in conversation. This makes me think that if one of the aims of these papers was to "find out what other people think", and "find the common ground", then it seems to me there is very little difference in the *process* of how all people go about informing themselves about their field in order to be better at it, whether practitioners, curators, historians and theoreticians.

Now - Function. This is a mean topic.

Why is function an issue? Is there a problem with function? Is there a new issue to do with function that we need to discuss? Is it that we don't like function now? Or are we re-evaluating function? Do we actually know what it means any more?

It's a mean topic, because function is one of those words like skill, process, craft - and even sculpture, art and design - which has changed its meaning with the passage of time. It joins those other words like truth, beauty, genius and taste, which affect our assumptions about the ways in which we look at objects and understand about art and artists.

Function has been a particularly important issue over the last few decades, a time when the artworld has called the tune for what was seen to be of value, and that generally has not included skills, processes and a concern for materials. In fact for most of that time it did not include objects, let alone those that might be ornamental or decorative, never mind functional.

Function has been at the centre of all those discussions about what people are doing, think they are doing, or want to do. It is impossible to talk about function without talking about all those other issues - art, design, production, form, materials, industry, taste and status - as well.

However, I suspect that the issue I am really meant to address is *non-function*. Because it is non-functional work which so many people have aspired to in the recent crafts movement; non-functional work in the form of "personal work, conceptual work, exhibition work, experimental work, real work, sculptural work, one-off pieces, spiritual" that so many have insisted are most important to them. Despite the fact that functional work, as Elizabeth McClure pointed out yesterday, can also be personal, real, experimental, one-off and meaningful.

People have tended to sign non-functional works (as well of course, as their functional exhibition pieces), but not always their production or commissioned work. They have sought exhibition of these works as sculpture in art galleries rather than shops or public places, and they have sought the discourse of the art world - the language, the journals and the catalogues - for their validation. Making non-functional works, it appears, more closely identifies people with the status and values of the (international) art world. Non-functional work gives *real* status as an artist, even over and above production of functional exhibition pieces.

Non-functional craft-work, made as art rather than utility or ornament, became an aspect of the crafts movement from about the mid-sixties - about the time dealer galleries were set up, and the international art network developed. At this time works were often organic, expressive, free-form objects, particularly in glass, but also in wood, ceramics and in textiles.

But it has been coming under fire for some time. Non-functional, as you know, has usually referred to sculptural forms although the term also applies to works that are painterly, narrative or even performance-oriented. Non-functional work has freed up, in countless imaginative ways, a great deal of traditional production, but it has also always been pointed out that simply being non-functional doesn't always make something art, regardless of what is intended in making it, how it is described, or where it is exhibited.

Here are some examples of recent questioning of non-functional work; I have deliberately avoided glass examples, although they exist as well.

In June-July last year, Caroline Miley wrote: *"One of the most noticeable pieces of work in the Meat Market's recent Easter exhibition was a hessian mat of depressed aspect. A piece of old tarpaulin, complete with rings, had had several layers of hessian and canvas loosely tacked to it, and laced across with thin*

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strings to form a rectangle". After further description of the addition of paint, she continues: "*The whole object displayed none of the qualities of virtuoso craftsmanship traditionally admired in conventional craft objects, and was presumably intended as a statement of negation of the necessity for such qualities ... Very well: but what did it replace them with? Addressing purely formal qualities without emphasising craft techniques perhaps? The composition was dull and obvious, the surface disgusting, the colours and textures uninteresting. Perhaps it was a 'conceptual' piece? If so, the concept was also both obvious and dull, and limply imitated concerns extensively worked through in fine art during the 1960s. It wasn't a craft object, and as a piece of fine art it was a failure ... It was, however, a good example of recent prevalent tendencies in craft exhibition for displaying pieces of pseudo-art hanging on the walls*". (Craft Victoria 20/203 June/July 1990).

And in 1987, in the USA, Glenn Gordon observed that while making furniture could be a melancholy exercise in economic futility, he was not convinced of the idea of seeking shelter from the situation by selling itself and the world, on the idea of its being art and an endangered rarity. The supposition that furniture was sculpture produced work that was generally unconvincing as art, and pretentious as furniture. "*The problem is*", he said, "*that while we are plunged into the romance and the art of it, the furniture in such showrooms as Knoll, Stendig, Thonet, Atelier International, Casina etc. is still for the most part better designed, visually and functionally ... Ours might be more exquisitely wrought, but theirs is not so cursed with having to be clever ... It has the composure of objects that know what they are. Most art furniture meanwhile languishes in galleries like over-ripe fruit in a bowl, overdone and too anxiously 'original' ... Art furniture at its best is breathtaking. At worst it hyperventilates with the most desperate novelty ... but if you are only out shopping for the Emperor's new clothes, naturally there is never a problem - you can always get a perfect fit*". (American Crafts 47/1 Feb/Mar 1987 p20).

Earlier, writing to the JMGA newsletter in 1981, Elena Gee criticised the ideal where one-offs were made for a worth-while income, but where much work in galleries was useless from the public's point of view. Necklaces were large, uncomfortable and over-conspicuous, rings and bracelets were designed entirely from the side, and work was displayed on models in black off-the-shoulder gowns that were hardly worn any more, so that work was only good for collecting by galleries. She urged that if jewellers wanted to sell they had to consider the public, that it was too easy to make self-indulgent work and blame the public for not buying, and that it need not necessarily mean compromising the basic idea behind design. (JMGA newsletter 3 April 1981 p29).

Very recent is an account in Janet Mansfield's new ceramics publication about an exercise where Dutch artists were invited to spend some time in the ceramic factories in Delft, in a Contemporary Delftware Project.

Of the ten people who worked there, all but one opted to make unique artworks, rather than a viable proposal for functional Delftware for mass production. The reviewer's conclusion was that "traditionally, art has a three-fold purpose: to ... please, to ... teach and to ... move. I rate" she said, "a utensil which is perfect in terms of its form and content as higher art than an imperfectly understood work of art with claims to autonomy". (Jetteke Bolten-Rempt, Ceramics: Art and Perception 2, 1990 p81).

How is it that we got to this stage? Why has the production of non-functional work been so important? And more importantly, what is provoking the questioning of *non-function* now?

To start with, everyone working in any of the arts is a product of a history of attitudes about what art is or what we think it should be, what artists are or what we believe they should be, how values are placed on works produced in different media, what values are placed on skills, processes and attitudes to materials - and certainly on function, and what we think our work does, or should do.

Whether or not you know this history of attitudes, and whether or not you think it is important, you are still a product of its conditioning, both consciously and unconsciously. Creative endeavour (making things, representing things, interpreting, communicating, and symbolising) is part of our society - and we are conditioned by our society.

Examples of conditioned aesthetics include our notion of the golden mean as an ideal proportion; of perspective as a necessary dimension; of harmonic scales as right to the ear; of classical form; of colour harmony (red and green should never be seen etc.). Things that "feel right", we believe are truths (like the Gothic style Cedar Prest mentioned in relation to the design of windows). But we only need to look at the artefacts and listen to the music of other societies, and consider their religion and notions of social organisation and so on, to realise there are other "truths".

So we are conditioned by society in what we understand about art, and that changes from time to time, country to country. What we believe is art is not necessarily what is believed in China, southeast Asia, Iceland, Chile or Samoa. And what we believe is art is not necessarily what your great-grandparents would have agreed with.

A key issue for us has been the development of the notion of the artist as an individual, and as Sylvia Kleinert pointed out, even the idea of the artist-as-genius. We all know that the word art originally meant skill, and that there was once no differentiation in value and status between art and craft. That really is irreversible now - that water is completely under the bridge; we can never return to those days.

But over a very long time, there has been a consistent (and I believe artificial) separation of both *ideas* from *skill* (which Klaus Moje discussed), and also *meaning* from *function*. From the mason's lodges and guilds in medieval times, where standards of both work and content were controlled; through the Renaissance, where artists become separated from society in that they not only made their own interpretations of traditional subjects, but also came to be regarded by others as independent thinkers and creators; to the development of the notion of art for art's sake in the late 19th century - this separation has persisted, to the extent that now we almost think it's true!

The 19th century, in particular, was important because so many of our present attitudes and our institutions were formed then. Here, the reinforcement of the notion of the artist as an individual was tied up with social, economic and political changes in society. The rise of the merchant class, and its aspirations to improve itself, made changes in art patronage and the art that was required. Artists rejected association with industry, and rejected the function of art which served the purposes of the new middle classes.

At the same time, with the development of new processes and products through industry, there had been a desire to embellish products with decoration or "applied art", a practice which reached extremes by the middle of the century around the time of the Great Exhibition of 1851 when their excesses were heavily criticised. As a counter movement the return to medieval ideals through the Arts and Crafts movement of the late 19th century was a reaction against the loss of hand skills and a revaluing of creative labour. In its motivation and context, this movement was very similar to our own post-war crafts movement, and sometimes, for that reason, called the Crafts Revival.

Particularly relevant to glass was the Art Nouveau style of the late 19th century, with not only wonderful windows, but also the work of superb practitioners like Emile Gallé and Louis Comfort Tiffany. These people represented not only the values of being individuals, but also those of highly skilled craftsmanship. Later, the Modern movement, and places like the Bauhaus, worked towards the development of a machine aesthetic. Here, the "individual" was more a member of a team working for a client to make a product for consumption, although histories tend to also document these designers as "individuals".

Added to this sequence of events, all of which were imported to Australia, has been the progressive education we have all enjoyed in the 20th century, where we have been encouraged to learn by doing or by experience, to value ourselves as individuals (even as personalities), and to express ourselves in a climate of free speech and (more-or-less) free choice. We all value this democracy: as individuals, albeit within a society.

These complex and lingering attitudes and values about art, craft and industry, and their reinforcing institutions (schools, galleries, organisations), were dragged through into the developing crafts movement in the post-war period, and - whether you realise it or not - have helped form your ideas about what you want to do, and how you want to do it - as individuals who have something to say, and want to control the way you say it.

In the early post-war years, apart from families like the Boyds who approached ceramic production as artists, painting mythological and fanciful images on their (functional pots) as well as making ceramic figures, most people's objectives were, in fact, to produce honest, simple domestic products that reflected an attitude towards a particular way of life that valued beauty in simplicity and function.

This attitude was exemplified by the writing of British potter Bernard Leach, who combined an aesthetic of medieval English ceramics with the philosophies of Japanese folk ceramics. His philosophies were shared by many craftspeople and also architects into the 60s, and his example of an independent studio-lifestyle is one which many of you follow.

That strong and influential stream ran parallel to the development of the dealer gallery/critic world of the international art market, of which Australia was, or aspired to be, part. After the war, New York represented the new and the free, and freedom of expression in art, exemplified in the work of the

Abstract Expressionist painters, was followed by similarly motivated expressive textile, glass and ceramic workers. Labino, Chihuly, Herman and Co. are part of this group.

Also running concurrently were the continuing glass production industries in Australia, employing hundreds of skilled people from the 30s into the 60s and 70s, making largely utilitarian wares for domestic and industrial uses - beer-glasses, milk-shake glasses, headlamps for Holdens (and heads of Phar Lap), lamp glass, and windows for public and private buildings. At the same time, the innovative modern glass, particularly from the Scandinavian and Italian glass industries, was also brought to Australia in these years, the different modernist forms providing completely different aesthetics and experiences. And modernist artists, both Australians and migrants from Europe, started to work in stained glass as well.

Conflicts and contradictions were reflected in the way art schools were set up, the way art and craft were written about, in the objectives of shops and galleries, and in the aims of the organisations that were formed.

So you - as craftspeople, artists, designers and individuals, are not any of those things in a traditional sense, but (to use appropriate terminology) are the equivalent of a very complex "batch" of ingredients; and to mix metaphors, some of these ingredients fuse well in a range of different combinations, and some fall apart under stress.

In glass terms, the "batching" of the complex ideals and practices of art, craft, design and industry give you a rich experience on which to draw. But as you know, in order to work in any one of those areas (of art, craft, design, industry) you have to understand what each means, and how it functions at that time. As Dana Zámečniková said, if you want to make glass sculpture, you must study glass **and** sculpture. Or glass and industrial practice. And how each one "functions", changes as tastes change and as values change. Society is very good at changing the rules ... just when you think you are getting the hang of them.

For example, although art, craft and design overlap, each generally has, or has had, different purposes, audiences, markets, languages, histories and production processes. Those of you I know reasonably well, I *know* have shelves of books related to what you are doing - not just the technology - but the social history of the forms and techniques as well, accounting for the ways in which these technologies change society. You know the ancient uses, beliefs and rituals associated with the forms or images. And generally your work is informed by that complex understanding.

Glass has functioned in as diverse ways as simulating precious jewels and crystals or painted porcelain, commemorating events and parables, kings and saints, symbolising beliefs, celebrating "nature", providing vessels for ritual events, and providing containers for everything from perfumes and poisons to quack medicines. (One account which we should all heed, explains, for example, how we can tell what heavy drinking habits people had in the Middle Ages, deduced from the number of drinking vessels excavated compared with everything else ... and what's more, seeing these vessels were designed not to stand up, every draft must have been quaffed in one gulp.)

For those of us whose knowledge is less specific or detailed, we usually still have a perception, or glimmer of understanding or visual memory about some of those elements which contribute to our understanding of what you do, and what we think glass is.

So you know your area. But if you *combine* any of the areas - *art* and *history; craft* and *design; art* and *craft* - the task is more complex because you have to understand how **each** area works and what it means. Or more specifically, in your case, *glass* and *sculpture, glass* and *painting* or *printmaking, glass* and *industry*.

Skills without ideas, or ideas without practical resolution or acknowledgment of the specific qualities of the materials you are working with, generally don't work. And combining the special knowledge you have of glass, with misunderstood knowledge of what is really going on in those other areas, doesn't work either. The work must then be considered in the terms of that area - whether painting, sculpture or industry - at this time.

As you know, Jenny Zimmer is one who has been critical of these misunderstandings, both at the last Ausglass conference where she asked what was wrong with ornament and decoration if that was what glass was good at; and in the recent *Sydney Review* published in your last Ausglass magazine, she again argues for a need for proper analysis of form, function, ornament, style, media and techniques for practices where these aspects form part of their history. She is critical of those who deny these elements

in their work and believes that reluctance to ascribe value to them is one of "the most interesting aesthetic prejudices of our time". (Ausglass Summer 1990, p7). In fact, these points are now also being discussed in the wider art world; people are asking for a return to the values of visual languages.

So how do we understand these changes? What's happened? What's been going on?

Two or three areas of theory inform my point of view about what I want to say about how art functions - or about how art appears to *function* now. Theory is, after all, simply a way of explaining things.

Firstly, sociological theory and cultural studies have pointed out that all those truths about art and artists, like skills being boring, only some materials being important, and the love of materials being irrelevant, were simply socially constructed ideas. Society formed them. Like the ideas that said women and Blacks were not equal in importance or intelligence and should not have the same opportunities as white men in the western world. And as we know, those ideas and values can change.

Social and cultural theories argue that all histories or points of view are valid. Glass history, for example, is just as important and valid as painting history. Vessels for example, have as long a social and ritual and spiritual function as sculpture, and mosaics and windows have as long a social and ritual and spiritual function as painting. (But they are not being discussed along with painting, sculpture and architecture in university fine arts history courses.)

Secondly, of course, psychology and psychoanalysis, very recent sciences, have explained in part how it is that we are motivated to want to do certain things, including a desire for creative expression. And it has been clear in the last few days just how dearly everyone values this need.

Then Marxism explained that expression of this need was the right of everyone, not just a select few who left everyone else to do the manual work, through the "alienating" division of labour in industry. (Which is not the same as people in a shared workshop enjoying doing the aspects of the process they do best, as has been discussed earlier at this conference.)

And lastly, semiotic theory, which has been around for a while, but which we only started reading in the last 10 years, reminds us that what we say may not be the same as what we mean or understand. What **you** make with a particular meaning in mind, may not be what I understand from it. Our experiences of the images and forms may be different. I once coloured a photograph pink and yellow, because those colours reminded me of my childhood in the New Zealand hill country. To an American friend these colours meant the polluted skies of Los Angeles.

A rose: we know what it looks like, we know what it smells like; we know how to spell it (which is one sort of symbol), but it may mean or symbolise an expression of love (especially if it is red) or an expression of national identity (if it is English). It's the same with a leek, a koala, a kangaroo, a kiwi. Roland Barthes, in his little book *Mythologies* (1957), discussed the fascinating, underlying and usually unconscious meanings, or codings, of familiar things like soap-powder foam, steak and chips, the Face of Garbo, margarine, the family of Man and the Lady of the Camellias. After *Mythologies*, you can never believe anything at face value again.

And it is the same with our beloved perceptions about materials and their traditional functions. You cannot consider an object made in glass without bringing a million western world perceptions to that object, about what you expect and understand glass to be. Glass can be fragile, transparent, opaque, reflective, fluid, reinforced, bulbous, flat, sharp, powdered, jewel-like, icy, frosted, brilliant, shell-like, and transmit clear light or all the colours of the rainbow.

Some *forms* are particularly associated with glass - certain vessel forms like bowls, platters, goblets, vases and beakers; beads for trade and decoration; and of course, windows. These forms and their functions become part of our consciousness about what we think glass is. Consider for example, all the "glass" words we use which affect our way of perceiving the world around us, and the relationships we make within that world ... a cold glassy stare ... affection mirrored in one's eyes ... shattered at the news ... opaque (or transparent or reflective) meaning ... a window to the world. Glass is part of our lives. Can we now imagine a world without plate glass, neon, spectacle lenses, mirrors or wine glasses?

Conversely, a window made of lead changes your ideas about windows; a goblet made of Huon pine (which contains a natural insecticide) changes your mind about goblets. These misuses of familiar forms and materials were the things Marcel Duchamp was doing when he placed a urinal in a gallery, and a hatrack on the floor, altering our perceptions about familiar objects and how we expect them to function.

So to get back to Function ... Function is most generally seen or discussed as utility, implying a practical use for something, or whether it works or not - whether an object can contain the porridge you want to eat, hold you up when you sit on it, feel good when you drink your wine from it, decorate you in a way you think will best reflect your identity, or keep you warm when it's cold.

At its most critical, functional ideals discredit an object if it won't pour without dripping, if it tips over when you put the wine in it, or scratches the table when you stand it up. At the time when architects, designers and craftspeople were rejecting decoration on objects, the dictum was for form to follow function, something which is still close to our beliefs, although these days we like some fun on the things we have around us as well.

Rules are developed about these functions. What we called criticism in the 70s, was generally measurement against the rules or "truths" - for that time. Teapots had to submit to the pour-test and so on. And "criticism" is one of the words that has also changed. Now we prefer "discourse", or "informing one's work", implying a dialogue of all the elements which help you understand a work, not necessarily judge it. And here, Geoffrey Edwards' account of the range of approaches to a reading of Klaus' work was a good example of this discourse.

You can't always totally ignore those specific critical aspects of function either, because they form our perceptions about what feels right, and there are very few in the avant-garde who get away with breaking all the rules successfully. Mostly, it just produces bad art. Using Duchamp as an example, you have to understand something very well in order to successfully subvert it.

But function is much more than this. Any work functions in that you want it to mean something - for yourself probably first, but also for others. In all art and craft production, the relationship between the maker (you) and others (the audience; the market) has changed. Work used to be made within groups which shared a common symbolic order, and that still happens in some societies.

The jewellery, textiles, carved and modelled figures and so on of the tribal peoples of for example Africa, South America and Asia, and Aboriginal Australians, often labelled primitive or naive with their usually abstracted forms, succeed so well because the makers know their subjects so well. They share the spiritual and symbolic content of the objects with their group, and they also fully understand their materials and the processes of working with them. The way it used to be in western societies.

We no longer work in such confined symbolic orders; we work (or believe we work), particularly with non-functional objects, in more personal and often obscure symbolic codes. With functional work, on the other hand, there *is* a shared expectation of what the object is, so maybe that makes it less challenging, although in my view it needn't be so.

Just because an object has no utilitarian function, doesn't mean it has no purpose. *Everything that is made is functional.* Artists may believe that as individuals they are making all the decisions and that their work is indeed a personal expression of their psyche. In reality they are working within a distinct artworld framework, one which has the history I have just described, and one which has a clearly defined market, specific expectations of success and well-established myths, or at least beliefs, about what an artist is.

So there is still, after all, a shared social order. None of those expectations or values are truths; they are all socially constructed; and they can change. An old friend of mine said some years ago, that of course *art is what you say it is, and that changes.* But of course, also, *art is what everyone else says it is* as well, and that also changes. And your intent alone may not be enough. Art functions as symbol; whether it is a vessel, a garment, a work on a wall, a window, something in a frame, or an object on or off a pedestal.

However personal, symbolic or obscure your work might be, I would argue that it still functions within your expectations of the (current) artworld. Even if you believe you are working against the traditions and values and current practices, you are still placed within that artworld, and your work functions within it. Mick Carter, who teaches at this university, has recently published a small book called *Framing Art* (Hale and Iremonger, 1990) which provides one of the best explanations around for how all this works.

He is one who has pointed out that art functions, or has meaning as a combination of a whole lot of different histories. There is of course, most importantly, the specific history of you as artist; the complexity of all your attitudes and prejudices, your experiences and skills, your class, race, gender, age, place, time, education and opportunity.

Then there are the parallel experiences of those in the audience. They may have completely different attitudes and prejudices, experiences and skills, class, race, gender, age, place, time, education and opportunity.

And the meaning of the work depends very much on the perceptions everyone holds about the materials you use; in your case, glass. I cannot accept the view sometimes expressed, usually with non-functional work, where people claim that the material is irrelevant to their idea. That may be what they intend, but the maker is not the only contributor to meaning. The meaning of the work is also to do with perceptions about its materials, its form and the processes used to make it.

We also have perceptions about frames, about plinths, and about titles for work, and all these elements, peripheral as they might seem, also contribute to how a work functions, or has meaning. You cannot, I am afraid, escape the history - and perceptions - of the materials you use.

What the work means is also affected by where it is located. The same work functions differently in different contexts. A bowl may be just one of many in your studio and one in which you may keep your old lunch wrappings; in a museum it would become a precious object only to be touched with white gloves, spending most of its life in a basement and coming out to be placed on a plinth under a spotlight and considered in that special way reserved for objects on plinths in museums; or it may function in some ritual festival like a christening if it is placed in for example, a church. Its meaning, and its function, changes because of its location.

There is a book called *Within the White Cube*, (Brian O'Doherty, The Lapus Press, San Francisco 1976) which discusses the diabolical ways in which art galleries take works from the context of their production and ascribe new meanings to them by the way they are exhibited inside "white cubes". Mick Carter also talks about the imposed narratives of some galleries, where we are forced by the geography of the place (entrances, exits, ramps, one-way traffic, etc.) to follow a sequence of events, a chronology of art/craft history that has been decided for us. Someone else has written about the ways in which you can tell when you are in the presence of great art, by the silk tasselled cord in front of it, or even more clearly, by the security guard beside it.

It is not just craft forms, or craft materials which are to do with function. Paintings have functions too, and so do sculptures and buildings. And the functions are not just utilitarian, like providing a patch of the right colour for a wall in a public place, or a three-dimensional object for a corner - although they do function in those ways as well.

There are other ways in which art works, or functions, whether or not it is utilitarian. John Berger, for example, in discussing all those old paintings of landscape, cattle and horses, still lifes of dead birds and bowls of fruit, explains that they represent what the owner of the painting is able to possess. That's why they wanted the paintings. They function as measurements of the owner's success. (Ways of Seeing, BBC and Penguin 1971). What about Alan Bond and his Irises? What about the cultural exchange missions which make the way easier for politics and trade? Art is not innocent.

Then again, Mick Carter describes the difference in value placed on representations of the famous painting, the Mona Lisa. To a student at his university, or to us, even a mediocre slide of this work in a lecture theatre represents something that we know to be an important icon in art history. To an Italian migrant family in Australia, a reproduction of the work in their home is more likely to represent an icon of national pride, a cultural identification with their country of origin.

And yet again, I recently bought a wooden figure of a bird, made by one of the Tiwi people on Bathurst Island. It's a tallish bird, and it leans against the wall with its chin in and its tummy out. I know that these figures mean something quite specific to the Tiwi people, although this particular one is not a ceremonial object; it was made for sale. Samuel Portaminni works securely within the shared understandings of the Tiwi people. He knows his wood (a very heavy iron-wood); he knows the ochres he uses and he knows these birds. He knows how they stretch their necks to preen their feathers or to swallow fish. He knows how they rest, with their chins on their breasts and their wings folded behind, their tummies out and their shoulders hunched. He has no idea who will buy his work, or what they will think about it, but he knows he has a market.

I know a few things about the Tiwi people but not a lot. I like the things I know. But I bought the bird because it reminds me of myself, and a particular resting attitude I am partial to. Its function has changed, because of its new location, and because my experience and expectation as audience is different from that of its maker.

So where does that leave function and non-function for you?

I believe that successful work in glass comes from really understanding your own experiences, attitudes, values and research and the society in which you are living. This includes an understanding of materials and processes, and making them work well - even, and perhaps especially - if what you are trying to do is to cross boundaries or be subversive. It means *knowing* that these materials carry cultural associations with them, and *understanding* the contexts both in which you are working and in which you are placing the work.

In that sense, we are all practitioners; trying to do the best we can, in whatever work we are doing, through being as well-informed and well-practised as we can. (Well-practised in both skills and intellect, as Klaus said, and I would add that we have to work hard at both of them.)

Scratch most curators and writers, and you find a maker underneath somewhere. And similarly, scratch a glass person and there's generally a strongly held and well-informed personal position underneath, whether one chooses to call it a set of values, a code, a philosophy, or a theory - or in the case of a funding body, as Noel Frankham has described - a policy. During the course of these three days I've decided that they all mean much the same thing, and whatever we call it, we need it. It helps *explain* things.

Of course we are all products of the 20th century and want to make our own statements. But as far as glass is concerned, when function appears to be an issue, we probably need to remember that utilitarian and ornamental function is inescapably part of what glass means. And that also, despite how we aspire to what might appear to be more aesthetic or intellectual art practices, we need to remember that there are many kinds of function, and that those things are functional as well.

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST - MARGARET RIVER, W.A.

Expression of interest is invited from professional practising craft artists who wish to become involved as tenants and/or investors in an exciting new craft development in the centre of Margaret River, on the south-west coast of W.A.

Situated amongst magnificent jarrah and karri forests, Margaret River has become one of the State's most popular destinations. Small vineyards and wineries producing some of the world's premium wines, a beautiful coastline, caves, chalets, country style restaurants and consistently challenging surf combine to provide an ideal holiday venue and an inspirational workplace with a relaxed lifestyle for artists and craftspeople.

On one of the town's most prestigious, strategically well positioned sites, a complex of gallery, alfresco garden restaurant, and a number of studios and workshops will be built in a way which will complement both the setting and the creative forces generated by the participants.

Ian Dowling, an experienced and successful Western Australian potter, is firmly committed to the project. Ian presently works with a team of craftspeople making a range of attractive functional stoneware at the Margaret River Pottery.

Crafts of a complimentary nature to this project are sought and include people working in ceramics, hot and cold glass, wood, leather, fibre, textiles, precious and non-precious metals, basketry: although professionals of a high standard and working in other mediums may also be considered.

An important aspect of the project is that it offers the opportunity for artists to share in the decision making process and running of the whole complex and naturally the financial rewards following from that.

While the present proponents do not require capital input from those working within the complex, it may be possible for other artists to become partners, giving them additional security to work in their chosen craft into the future while benefiting financially from the other aspects of the business.

Enquiries:
For further information on the opportunity to be involved in this dynamic project, please contact:

Geoff Constantine	(097) 47 2848, AH (097) 57 2724
Ian Dowling	(097) 57 2848, AH (097) 57 2698

or write, including any relevant information and photographs, to:
Ian Dowling, P.O. Box 197, Margaret River, W.A., 6285

INTERNATIONALISM IN GLASS: Too Much Common Ground

by *Susanne Frantz, Curator of Twentieth-Century Glass, The Corning Museum of Glass*

When Brian Hirst telephoned me a year ago to see if I would speak at the conference - my first reaction was, oh yes, yes - I have never been to Australia - put me on the program for anything. Then I put the idea at the back of my mind. The load of materials I eventually received said that the conference theme was "Contemporary Making-Current Thinking". That sounded ambiguous enough to allow me to come up with something sort of interesting. Then a short while later I received a letter from Lance Feeney that asked me to address my criteria for selecting objects for the collection. That is always a good exercise too, although it usually does not provide the sort of answers that an audience of artists is looking for. Finally, last September, Brian asked me if it was alright for me to entitle my talk "Internationalism in Glass - Too Much Common Ground", and I told him that I was not sure what he meant by that, but it was late at night so I said go ahead. A few weeks after that the reality started to sink in when I received the preliminary programme and realised how much more "high-brow" your conferences are than the Glass Art Society. How could I dare to be on the same agenda as "The Getting of Wisdom", or "The Inter-relationship Between Theory, Practice, and Criticism"? Those friendly Australians were willing to cover the ridiculously high air fare for me to come all the way down there and say something worthwhile. What could I possibly say that would justify their importing me in from Corning? Being the conscientious soul that I am, I found the responsibility pretty weighty. In fact, I was paralysed by fear and decided it was all a terrible mistake. I had nothing to say that could not be better said to you by your Nola Anderson, Grace Cochrane or Jenny Zimmer. Besides, I did not have a swimming suit and I expected everyone was going to be mean to me because of my book. To say that Australia did not figure prominently into it would be rather a large understatement.

Seeking enlightenment, I read through the 1989 Ausglass conference report and was not surprised to learn that Ausglass faces the same conflicts of interests found among the membership of the Glass Art Society. One organisation cannot hope to meet the needs of various interest groups. Especially when sometimes those interest groups do not have the insight to see that their interests are inextricably bound up by those of the others. The reading really got me riled up and I realised this was too valuable an opportunity to waste. DO I think there is too much common ground in international glass? No I don't, at least stylistically, because I do not feel a yearning for national or regional styles. In the tiny studio glass world, with so few schools, teachers, publications, galleries, public collections and such a short history, there are bound to be close ties. The most influential centre for glass learning worldwide is the Pilchuck School, and it prides itself on an international faculty and student population. It is difficult to think of another medium with an equivalent centre. So, yes I do see common ground, but not too much (at least stylistically).

Ten days ago, for the seventh year in a row, I spent 2 days looking at approximately 3,000 slides from 35 countries for our annual publication *New Glass Review*. It is a good opportunity to consider internationalism in glass. The fact is, that among those slides it is almost impossible to discern any national or regional styles. The same is true for the work from Australia. In years past the jury guessed that anything looking remotely like Klaus Moje's work was from here, and it often was. The situation has lessened, at least among this year's entries, and I congratulate you.

But there IS international common ground of a different sort that bothers me, and, to my surprise, it is a note that has been touched on repeatedly throughout this conference. The common ground to which I refer is a matter of widespread confusion among glass people about the purpose of their work and what it means to be an artist. It is confusion about what you make and why you make it. When you are not clear about these matters, your work suffers, and so will you. The two most glaring ways this situation manifests itself is in the mistaking of decorative objects for art. Hand in hand with this confusion is another matter of concern. It is the general preoccupation with money, if not a downright mercenary attitude, that saturates the glass world from top to bottom. These two maladies are closely linked, and I suspect this situation is fall-out from the American studio glass world and our education system. Why do I point the finger of the responsibility for this confused situation to the United States? While I do not want to belittle the American contributions, I must say that our art and craft education system has, in a sense, backfired.

One of the great advantages that glass and other materials traditionally related to the crafts have had in the U.S. is that our art departments, where these subjects are taught, are incorporated within general universities, not art or technical schools. That means that the person throwing a pot next to you might be a philosophy or a veterinary major. This plan has had a tremendously positive effect in enriching the mix of students in art departments and broadening their education. It also helped to rapidly promote the studio glass movement in the United States. However, because our art departments are not considered trade schools, American students are not required to acquire the technical skills that German facschule students, for example, must. An American art student in any medium is encouraged from day one to think of him or herself as an artist with a capital "A" - not a craftsman, or god forbid, the most insulting title: "decorative artist".

During the 1960s, when American studio glass pioneers went out in the world promoting the gospel of hot glass as a medium for the artist they, being products of this system, were equally adamant about the idea of glass ART. Craftsmanship took a back seat to expressing oneself and making art.

That was not a bad position, especially for the time. If you recall that for 3,500 years technique had been everything, it was now appropriate to encourage experimentation and dispel a fear of the material. Also, the equipment and opportunities for training were generally so poor that there were not many alternatives to simply pushing, pulling and dribbling the hot glass. Very few people knew of, or were able to attend, European training facilities, so naturally the emphasis would lie in areas other than technique.

The philosophy that everyone making something in glass is an ARTIST continued for the ensuing 30 years. What we have ended up with in the United States, and now worldwide thanks to our fervent proselytising, are thousands of hard-working people busily expressing themselves by making personal shrines, fetishes and tormented forms while all the while longing to be sculptors. Craftsmanship has not been completely overlooked. There is a smaller, even more industrious group of highly skilled artisans who have found their niche in obsessive technique and innovative technology that they too believe constitutes art.

The consensus remains that if one calls oneself an artist, then what one makes is art. I would like to question that premise. Although art certainly must be a personal expression and is ideally well-executed, accomplishing those two objectives alone (no matter how sincere your motives, no matter how hard you work, no matter how personally meaningful it may be) does not necessarily add up to a serious work of art or make one an artist.

It sounds so basic - but how many of us really grapple with it? How often do we talk about the meaning of art? What I propose to do today is urge us all to undertake some self-examination. What follows are some entirely subjective and unfashionable thoughts in these days of art careerism.

I expect a lot from art. I am not sure if there are any everlasting, unchanging values and I doubt that there remain any basic criteria of judgement that we can comfortably settle into for art. What was art in the past would probably not be art if made today. A lot of people (especially my mother) ask why art cannot just be about beauty? The answer is that there were times in the past when beauty was enough - but not since modernism. The nature of art changes and we cannot go back. Beauty without meaning no longer constitutes art.

Perhaps it is indefensible to attempt to define art at all, but to me that is a nihilistic and cynical position. I will say that art should be about ideas and it should have integrity. In this post-religious age in the West, much art has lost its spirituality and universality. Interestingly, it has assumed some of the importance that religion once held. Some of my descriptive terms for art do have an uncomfortably spiritual ring to them. One wants to believe in art. You may think I am ascribing metaphysical qualities to art that are not there, and that these words are sentimental claptrap, however art is the only thing humans make that they do not need to eat, breath, and clothe themselves to survive. Perhaps that is just the reason it has importance beyond its physicality.

I ask more of art than I do of objects which were created specifically to function and/or give pleasure to the eye, such as the decorative arts. The best crafts, design, and decorative arts, share many of the same qualities I attribute to so-called serious or fine art. In fact, those things inspire emotion and pleasure in me more often than does fine art. I want to live with crafts and decorative art. I like them better than most art, but I also like chocolate more than I like vitamins. I do not demand that the decorative arts

and the crafts make me think. That is not to say that they do not, I just do not insist on it for the object to be successful.

I have given you only the sketchiest glimpse of what makes art for me. Ultimately the decision is made by each one of us as the viewer. Your criteria does not have to be the same as mine. I cannot prove to you why I think something is art. That is like trying to prove that a joke is really funny. An artist makes an object as what he or she believes is art. That object is sent out into the world. The viewer then has to work to decide if the object meets his or her own needs for art. It is a risk for both artist and viewer, and both parties can make mistakes in judgement.

I have found that those of us involved with glass seem to avoid the subject of the meaning of art as much as possible. Because the glass world is indeed such a small world, negative commentary is usually taken as a personal attack. Sadly, at times it is a personal attack or just self-aggrandising bickering. Even though there are cries for "more criticism", when that criticism is thoughtful, but still negative, it often leads to an ugly encounter and hurt feelings. Believe me, the artists are not the only ones who come away feeling vulnerable and wounded. This situation does not exactly foster an atmosphere of free expression. I have stopped writing exhibition reviews, in part, for this reason. I trust that as more and more outsiders write about glass, this situation will lessen. Although I doubt that there is much value for the artist in having the flaws of his or her works pointed out to 500,000 newspaper readers, none of us have any right to exhibit work or publish a book, and then be outraged if it is not universally well received. Just because we consider ourselves artists or authorities certainly does not make our efforts successful in **anyone** else's eyes.

We also hear lots of calls for the development of a new vocabulary for assessment of our field and for a medium-based aesthetic. I used to say this same thing, but my position has changed. We already have adequate methodology for crafts, for design, for decorative arts, and for art. I cannot think of anything artistic made out of glass that does not fit at least one of these groups. I am not sure we need a new language to handle the properties of transparency or vesselness. The vocabulary being sought already exists if only we would resurrect the field of decorative arts and overcome our aversion to it.

For me, very little of what has been in glass so far is truly art. Not for the reason stated by the Ausglass executive committee in their conference synopsis that stated "Fine art principles of painting, sculpture and architecture have a questionable relationship to the unique qualities of glass". I find that a puzzling statement and believe it to be dead wrong. There is nothing in the inherent qualities of glass as a material that prevents it from becoming a work of art.

Nor am I saying that most glass fails as art because of poor quality (which of course is the truth). I do not need to remind anyone that the vast majority of all that is made with glass in the name of art goes beyond the generous description of "failed art", right into the category of irrelevance, if not junk. That is true of all media and has probably been true as long as the idea of being an artist has been appealing. Besides, such work is experimental and is a necessary effort along the path of improvement. You have to make junk to learn. Right now I am not talking about those things, so please indulge my notion that from now on the objects we are discussing do have at least some merit to a wider audience than the maker.

In years past I used to flog the idea that glass artists were not getting the recognition they deserved because of prejudice against the material. Of course we all know that there has been and remains some prejudice against craft-related materials by persons in all parts of the art world from artists to collectors to curators. However, there are now so many artists using glass I no longer see discrimination as an important factor. We cannot use it as an excuse anymore.

So if there is not some gigantic plot against the material, why do so many people working in glass suffer from lack of recognition as artists? Well, it could be because they are classic examples of the unappreciated artist way ahead of their time, but more likely it means that they are not making the art that they thought they were making.

The first thing everyone working in studio glass has to face is that they are makers of luxury goods which can only be purchased by people with disposable income. As far as the physical necessities of life go, there is no reason on earth for anyone to acquire anything made today in studio glass. Even the most unpretentious production glass studio makes scent bottles, paperweights and vases which have equivalents (made in a factory in Poland or Brazil) that in many cases look and function equally well or better, and can be purchased for a fraction of the price. Most studio glass that sells ends up as decoration in a corporate or government space or a lavish home.

Amongst the successful luxury glass goods made today are sub-groups with divisions that are not always clearly defined.

(a) There is the microscopic group, almost invisible, making art.

(b) Then there is the much larger group of aesthetically pleasing, handmade, functional objects such as tableware, furniture and jewellery.

(c) By far the majority of objects made in glass studios neither fulfill the expectations of art nor have any ostensible function in the traditional sense. However, they are pleasing to the viewer and are a pleasure to live with - they are decorative. No-one wants to admit that they are not sculpture, but they are not.

I do not wish to spend this time exploring in depth why crafts and decorative arts seem to be the poor relations of the art world. There are legitimate and illegitimate reasons why this situation persists. The fact remains that these groups are different in intent and whether their value is less or not is another matter. You might assume that my making such a point out of refusing to accept everyone as an artist that I am one of the traditionalists who ranks the various arts, making some more important than others, resulting in an art circle more exclusive than ever. I am indeed saying that some things are art and other things are other things, but not on the basis of the material from which they are made.

So here is the situation: we have lots of people beavering away with glass, some expressing themselves, some making purely beautiful things, some making useful things, a few actually making art - everybody calling themselves an artist. Believing an object to be a work of fine art enhances the position of all those involved. Almost everyone from a baker of wedding cakes to a masseuse wants to be an artist. Who would not? What greater compliment has there been since the Renaissance? Collectors and curators want to think they are acquiring art. Galleries and auction houses sell fine art to a wider audience (not to mention an audience willing to pay more).

During the 80s, a different slant was added to the "everybody is an artist" attitude. It was one which rather quickly trickled down from the rest of our culture into the university art departments. The new idea was that art making could be a career and a business. "Art Stars" became part of international café society. Large numbers of collectors started investing sizeable amounts of money. People already working with the material set up cottage industries with numerous assistants to help them produce their "art". Students started getting concerned with making a living off art and teachers were asked: "Can I make a living if I go to art school?", "How do I market my work?", "How do I run a business?". These ideas took root so firmly because a few of the more enterprising glass makers (and again we have to largely thank America for this dubious achievement) were able to make a living promoting their merchandise as "glass art" to a fresh, uninitiated public. The most profoundly influential role models for glass makers, at least in America, have been master entrepreneur decorative artist Louis Comfort Tiffany and his successors.

The idea of viewing art as a vehicle for making a living in combination with the attitude that anything can be art, perfectly coalesced in the glass world to create the situation we now have. It was inevitable that the attitude would work its way into the educational system. The concept of art as something higher has come to be considered romantic, mythologised hogwash.

As a person who likes to think she is concerned with art, I hate to see Ausglass program topics such as "The Contemporary Craft Industry", "Fostering the Environment for Professional Practice" and "Production Work: A Means to an End". What does all this have to do with making art? I will tell you - **nothing**. However, as a person who is also a card-carrying member of this schizophrenic field, I am also very concerned with decorative and functional objects and the welfare of those people making them. As such, I welcome these topics as necessary.

So who cares if people make art or craft? Who cares if people want to make money off art? Well, this

is why I care: because when it comes to earning a living, craft making and decorative object making are reasonable, if difficult, ways to do it. They have historically been intimately linked to fashion and the market place. Craft making, design, and decorative art making are not corruptible by money. They cannot be corrupted because they do not claim to have a higher purpose - they are meant to be useful and to please a wide audience. Compromise is part and parcel of their job. Consideration of the buyer is entirely logical and honourable. The crafts and decorative arts are made to work, to please, and they are made to sell.

I realise that in many ways some art has also always been a commodity, however I am taking the liberty of making a purely subjective value judgement and saying that the purpose of art today should not be to make money. It is a fact of life that we all have to make money to survive, and we all need a certain amount of ego gratification. But my argument is that art should be one thing kept sacred. The only way it can be protected is for you, the maker, and all of us who have a stake in it, to refuse to let it become a commodity. None of us should prostitute art. As I wrote that line, a visiting curator looking over my shoulder said "You had better watch what you say, those people are your bread and butter". I disagree. None of you are my bread and butter, and neither is your work.

What we all need to do is think hard about what we are doing. **Why** do you make your art work? Hopefully it is because you must. Because you would make it if you had to sneak up in the attic to do it. You would make it if you could only do it with a pencil and a scrap of paper while standing on a bus. Because you would make it even if no-one else ever appreciated or even laid eyes on it.

Think of a dancer. A dancer has nothing tangible to sell. How many people want to buy a videotape of a performance? All a dancer has to market is that performance, and even then must provide a space, costumes, choreography, music and lighting. Few have the option of making a living solely off their work. What is the dancer's equivalent of running a glass studio? There is none. I suppose running a dance school would be the closest comparison, but how many of them earn even a fraction of what a production glass studio nets?

Dancers cannot fake their art. Sure, some are adept at gaining publicity and patronage, but if they are posers, it becomes clear very quickly. They cannot hide behind faulty technique by saying it is irrelevant to their self-expression. Likewise, even if they are physical machines, their perfection will not make up for a lack of passion. Dancers also have the physical boundary of age that, after a point, no amount of talent and experience can overcome. It is astounding that anyone at all becomes a dancer. Dancers do not agonise over whether what they do is art or craft. There is no doubt that good dancing must be both. Their art as merchandise does not enter into the debate.

So where does this leave you? No, I am not telling you that you have to suffer for your art (although maybe it isn't such a bad idea). The crummy, horrible fact is that in our world there is no way to count on using real art as a livelihood. If you do that, you will compromise, and once you have done that you have sold your soul. When you put your art on public display, like it or not, you must be willing to submit to the scrutiny of the public and everything it entails, both positive and negative. If you decide to put your work up for sale, and it sells, that is fine. But if you start counting on it to sell, that thought will creep into your thinking and poison your art.

What I am advocating you to do is what artists have always done to maintain themselves and their work. That is, to keep your art for yourself and seek your fortune in another field. Artists are teachers and designers for good reasons. Lots of people have production businesses that are kept completely separate from their art, and lots of people have jobs totally unrelated to art. No doubt it is a compromise, but at least it is one that keeps their work independent of the market place.

I do not suggest earning your living some other way as a first-rate alternative - in fact I hate it. How much talent has been squandered while grovelling away to eke out a living at a deadening job? I think of Franz Kafka's precious time thrown away working in an insurance office. How many artists have had to wait until they were old and more financially secure to concentrate on their work? How many women have put their art work aside to raise a family? Sometimes if it is put away too long, it dies.

I doubt it is necessary to remind anyone here that a person does not become an artist to have a comfy income. You become an artist because maybe the only time you are really happy is when you are working on your art. It is not a Bohemian illusion that you must be prepared to make sacrifices. If you want a family, if you want a steady income and a health insurance plan, if you don't have rich parents, then you are probably not going to be able to spend full-time on your work and your work will most likely suffer. Art making takes time. It should not surprise us that behind most full-time artists there is a family trust fund or a working spouse (usually a wife) and a support structure providing care (also usually a wife). It amazes me that people can be so simple as to wonder why there are so few prominent women, minority artists and working class artists. The reason is almost invariably one way or another related to money. Of course, even the amenity of a trust fund and the indulgence of a caretaker are no assurance that art is going to be made, but they certainly make it a lot easier to try. We cannot leave art making only to the rich and the nurtured.

What a gloomy picture. Believe it or not, my objective today has not been to depress. What I am hoping to do is be realistic. My hope is that clarification will make for better work and happier people. You would be wise to examine yourself and to make conscious choices now rather than waking up in 20 years wondering how in the world you ended up doing something so distant from your original ideals or even asking what happened to your creativity? It is difficult, but my message is that **you must keep your integrity**, no matter what it takes. Do not waste your energy trying to be something you are not.

Here are some suggestions. They are not complicated, and they are not guidelines from Wittgenstein, Hegel or Benjamin, but here they are.

Try to figure what you are doing, why you are doing it, and what it is you really want to do? It sounds simple, but is an incredibly difficult and often painful exercise.

Accept the fact that what you think you are doing might not be what other people think you are doing. Frantisek Vizner thinks he's a craftsman - I think he's an artist. Lots of people think they are artists and really should be making telescope lenses or miniature golf courses. When it comes to making decorative art, Jenny Zimmer hit the nail right on the head in her 1989 Ausglass talk when she said "Today's decorative glass is right up there with the best of it". Why not embrace the fact that you make functional or decorative work? That way you are free to think about the market, adapt your work to requirements of the buyers, and save yourself untold frustration.

If feedback from other people means something to you, and if you sincerely want an honest opinion, then show your work to others and ask for their thoughts. Otherwise, put it away. You are not obliged to exhibit your work.

If what you truly want to do turns out to be building a career, then please don't try to do it as an artist. Feel free to indulge in some other, more commercially viable, type of object making. If you do so, by all means, do it in a professional manner.

If you sincerely believe that you make art, then do it. Do not let me or anyone else dissuade you. But, please do it for yourself, not because you must sell it to survive.

Was it a case of "Sink or Swim" for the outgoing Executive at the Opening Night Party?
