

GERRY KING · oz glass, ausglas, ausglass
a brief history of the development of the studio glass movement in australia

INTRODUCTION

On January 26th 1788 the Royal Navy Captain, Arthur Phillip and his 1500 strong contingent of soldiers and convicts arrived at Sydney Cove to give birth to a new British Colony. From that fateful day until the end of 1821 three new British settlements were established on what is now known as Australia. Other colonies were separately founded by free settlers. These individual flea-bite size intrusions on the "Great Southern Land" joined forces in 1901 to become one nation that eventually spread its influence over the whole continent. The early Australians were ignorant of the history, culture and achievement of the indigenous people. Indeed they were deemed as not being real humans in some British Government documents. Slowly this blindness is being cured but the damage is largely done and many Australians still know more of the history of other lands than that of their home.

Gerry King: *"Angela's Scarf"*, 1997

Another invasion occurred in the 1970's when several Australians returned from exposure to contemporary studio glass in North America and Britain. Their fledgling impact was strengthened by visiting exponents invited to spread the message to what proved to be a receptive audience. These two forces were joined by several of the remaining practitioners from the severely declining hand-blown hot glass factories, all of which have now closed their doors.

Yet another merry band, the more adventurous architectural stained glass practitioners "threw their lot in" with the embryonic Australian studio glass movement. In fact, the evolution of Australian contemporary glass is more attributable to this group than is generally acknowledged. Numerically superior and, with a longer history of contemporary practice, the "stained glass" practitioners may be likened to an "advance party" in that their forays into new ways to working provided an accepting atmosphere for the "hot glass" enthusiasts. This "federation" was consummated in 1978 at the first national gathering of "converts" to the new way of thinking about

Denis O'Connor assisting a student, 1978



and working with glass. Studio glass was actively encouraged and supported by the Australia Council, a government funded cultural body granting financial support to groups and individual artists as well as initiating programs intended to inflame interest in particular art forms.

Just as the far flung colonizing settlers of the 1820's eventually joined forces and took hold of the continent sweeping all before them, almost annihilating the indigenous culture and its history, the enthusiasm of the 1970's for hot glass dominated Australian studio glass and for a time imposed its own narrative at the expense of earlier activity in glass making. Glassblowing reigned supreme, window making was the preserve of an eccentric few and an unrelated tradesperson industry. Kiln forming was known of, practiced by some but cast as an alternative practice. The glory days of glassblowing, in hind-sight were short lived as kiln forming emerged as a national hallmark, while intentions, techniques and skills soon crossed the hot/flat/kiln boundaries.

History, as we now know is that which the historian determines as inherently worthy of recognition or seminal to subsequent events. There are several accounts of the emergence of studio glass in the Antipodeans, each subscribing significance in measures different from the other. This variance and not infrequently perceived ignorance and/or bias in critiques, journalism and minor literary works

present a two-edged sword for glass workers. While the value of and need for critical writing is generally acknowledged the "proof of the pudding" has to date caused a little indigestion amongst glass practitioners. This account then seeks to record events as remembered by those present. (There is of course, some considerable variance in accounts of a singular event by the multiple contributions to this text.)

PRE-HISTORY

That which is most commonly recognized as the beginnings of contemporary studio glass was preceded by a variety of modes of glass working. Of varying degrees of contribution to current practice they have been eclipsed by the dramatic burst into the spotlight of the flamboyant and egocentric glassblowing contingent influenced by American studio glass. Often overlooked and at times written as being non-existent, the history of Australian hot glass working, which was extensive, is recorded by Marjorie Graham in *Australian Glass of the 19th and early 20th Century*.

The British colonists soon recognized the potential of glass making as a domestic and export trade.

The first glass making in Australia is credited to ex-convict Simeon Lord who assigned John Hutchinson to research glass chemistry in 1812. Hutchinson, deported for forgery was a chemist of

some ability, though as it seems not of glass composition. Although Lord advertised for glassblowers in the Sydney Gazette of May 1812 and in June stated that more than twelve dozen perfect tumblers had been made, the venture discontinued in 1813. James King, owner of pottery and winegrowing establishments in New South Wales also imported glassware for resale. He was knowledgeable in industry requirements and sent a sample of sand to London in 1832 where Falcon Glass Works informed him that it was of superior quality for glassmaking. In 1854 two cut-glass salt cellars, made from this sand were shown in a preview of the New South Wales exhibits for the Paris Exhibition. They are now held by the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney.

Richard Mansfield advertised for glassblowers in 1847 in the Port Phillip Herald in order to develop the Melbourne Flint Glass Works. This company apparently failed and glassblowing in Victoria declined until the 1860's when it witnessed the growth of many successful factories. The industry was also well established in Sydney in the 1860's. Scotsman Joseph Ross had industrial experience in England and the USA prior to settling in Australia with the intention of making glassware. His first bottles were produced in 1866. John Faloner is recorded as having been the first to manufacture stained glass windows in Australia from 1866. The first glass factory in Adelaide, established in 1874 was unprofitable. It was successfully reorganized by Gustave Heinrichsen from Hamburg in 1888. The present automated bottle factory, now owned by the Australian Glass Manufacturers, occupies the site of the Adelaide Glass Bottle Works Company. A special demonstration in 1910 included a bottle blowing attempt by his Excellency the Governor of South Australia. The ensuing work was engraved and presented to this Vice-Regal glassblower.

Glass engraving is known to have been practised in Australia prior to the 1880's but it is from this time that the Englishman Frank Piggott Webb received public and critical acclaim for his portraits and foliage decoration of domestic ware. He demonstrated at exhibitions and trade fairs in Sydney and was awarded a first class classification at the Adelaide Jubilee in 1887.

The "collapse" of the glass industry in Australia was mooted in the Sydney Morning Herald from

1901. Industrial problems had seen four of the seven Sydney factories closed by 1904. Sydney based companies could then import bottles at a lower price than local manufacturers could offer. There was an upsurge in the 1920's provoked by the shortage of consumer goods during the World War I. The Great Depression impacted upon Australia curtailing further growth. From the mid 1930's to the outbreak of World War II glassmaking proceeded to meet the demand for tableware of all levels of refinement. The reduction of imported goods from Europe during the war had given increased opportunity for Australian glassware manufacturers.

This glassblowing lineage drew its last breath when the Philips Leonora factory in Newcastle, New South Wales was closed in 1982 though it did spawn some genetically linked offspring in its last days and after closure. The factory trained Denis O'Connor in glassblowing, while he was studying at a nearby art school. O'Connor later contributed to a demonstration tour by the American Bill Boysen and the glass studies courses in Melbourne, Wagga Wagga and Canberra while developing a studio practice with Rhonda O'Connor now located near Wagga Wagga. Julio Santos, a Portuguese/Australian master blower while working for Philips Leonora blew glass to the design of Les Blakeborough. A highly regarded potter, Blakeborough exhibited his own blown pieces with those he designed and had made by Santos.

Philips Leonora, known more commonly as "Leonora" in fact made many significant and generous gifts to the studio "movement". Almost as a parting gesture the soon to be discontinued company at management, design staff and glassblower levels made contributions to the new child. The technical officer, Charlie Catman gave advice to those seeking to build their first furnace and was supportive of individuals seeking to unravel the mysteries of glass making in a small studio. Glassblowers Michael Mulholland and Julio Santos demonstrated at the Hot Glass Gathering, the first national workshop conference organized near Adelaide in 1980. Mulholland "played to the crowds" by demonstrating glassblowing while wearing thongs, (a brief rubber sandal, normally worn at the beach) short trousers and a singlet, all-the-while smoking a cigarette. (Even in those early days studio workers had a more developed sense of indus-

trial safety than many factories.) Santos had been described by the factory management as specializing in "everything". This proved to be not too far from the truth and Santos has subsequently introduced many traditional skills to Australian studio glassblowers. After closure the factory corpse was progressively dismantled. A group of the former staff formed Australian Commercial Glassblowers which, despite State Government and Australia Council funding operated for only a few years. The equipment and some of the personnel next manifested as Lucinda Glassworks which produces lampshades.

Paul Haworth initially learnt glassblowing at Leonora before journeying to Sweden to enhance his knowledge and skills, returning to Australia to establish a studio at Wallsend near Newcastle in the early 1970's. At a time when several Australians were facing the difficulties of designing and building a furnace studio without the level of industrial support available in Europe and North America press coverage of Haworth's Studio demonstrated that it was indeed possible. A variant on the factory-to-studio development, Peter Minson had a family background of flame-worked industrial glass. He experimented with furnace working in the early 1970's in a studio with Mark Elliot. Minson retained an interest in furnace working and has operated several studios.

Artist and designer Douglas Annand included glass in his commissions in the 1960's and 1970's. He utilized a wide range of techniques and em-

ployed the skills of traditional craftspeople from industry. Though overlooked by many exponents of contemporary glass his works predicted the varying pursuits of the glass movement. Recognition or even acceptance of "flat glass" (ie leadlight, stained glass) as part of studio glass is uneven and subject to criteria which change with the times. To some the term "studio glass" precludes any involvement with window-making save perhaps a few notable practitioners whose approach and/or technique uniquely qualifies acceptance. "Stained glass", as it is most commonly known, has a history in Australia similar to its counterparts in Europe and comparable with early glassblowing in Australia. As the factory practice of glassblowing contributed to contemporary glass so it was with "stained glass" practice.

Stephen Moor and David Saunders were employed by the Sydney based Standard Glass Studio in the 1950's. Moor later provided "on the job" training to Paddy Robinson and Jeff Hamilton who became early members of the studio movement. (The accuracy of the term "movement" is open to debate. As it is descriptive of the group who wished to advance studio glass it is adopted for this text.) Hamilton's attendance at the first conference was sponsored by Moor and accepted as part of his employment. Moor was reportably sceptical of the new breed of glass artists. Saunders similarly provided training for Paddy Robinson, Pez Fesq, Rodney Marshall, Cherry Phillips and Lance Feeney, also contributors to studio glass from the flat glass persuasion.

Some direct heritage is attributable to the artist William Gleeson who established a now discontinued glass course in Melbourne in 1962. Printmaker Klaus Zimmer studied glass working with Gleeson and subsequently in the 1970's established the glass course at Monash University which now offers furnace, kiln and flat glass studies. (Most tertiary education institutions in Australia have undergone several name changes in the last two decades. In this account the current name will be utilized.) Leonard French, best known as a painter, completed a number of glass commissions. The most notable is the *dalle de verre* ceiling of the great hall at the National Gallery of Victoria.

Denis O'Connor in the first functional glass workshop at Caulfield Institute of Technology in Melbourne, 1978



Cedar Prest studied stained glass and leadlighting in England in the mid 1960's and later with the last of a breed of South Australian master tradespeople, Fred Hammill. Prest was a recognized contemporary glass designer/maker exhibiting from the early 1970's later filling a number of important roles in glass and contemporary arts administration. As a senior spokesperson for the emerging trends toward individual glass practice she influenced many pivotal decisions. Qualified in architecture from 1972, David Wright commenced glassworking in 1965 with experiments in leaded and stained glass. He sought resolutions not readily available with those means, turning to kiln working in 1966. His distinctive use of a slurry of whiting trailed from a cake-icing tool influenced others interested in exploring kiln forming. The ground was now prepared for acceptance of the seed sown by contacts made with the American hot-glass movement.

THE RETURN OF THE EXPATRIATES

The great distances between major population centres in Australia imposes a certain provincial isolation. Events deemed seminal in one capital city may be unknown in another. Participants view the beginnings of studio glass from their own perspective. Happenings thousands of kilometres distant can be without impact upon each other. The contention of correctness is traced to the earliest days of colonization. Even the National Day of Australia was celebrated under different names in various states until 1931. The bi-centennial celebration in 1988 marked the origin of the settlement which is now Sydney rather than the inauguration of the federation of the six states which now comprise Australia. The long founded dispute between the two largest cities, Sydney and Melbourne, each seeking primacy is evident in cultural perspectives honed from one provincially disposed attitude or the other. The early colonists of Sydney were bounded by the sea to the east and impenetrable mountains to the west. The Great Dividing Range, as it is now known demanded some years and various attempts before relenting to be crossed by the Europeans. The attitudinal divide remains as society is discernibly divisible into "the eastern states" and the remainder, by criteria varied to suit the circumstance.

The history of separate colonies merging as one and a great mountain range dividing both concept

and action is paralleled in the advent of contemporary glass. The new band of colonists alighted on these shores in the early and mid 1970's each forging a history in part separate but eventually fused into a national studio glass movement. The significance of particular events and players is variously recorded in both oral history and texts. There is considerable dispute of published accounts particularly those that emphasise the primacy of visiting American glassblowers who toured Australia demonstrating their skills and spreading enthusiasm for this "new" art form. The most direct influence on the birth of studio glass in Australia was undoubtedly the high impact all-singing-all-dancing hot-glass practitioners spawned by the American glass movement. The excitement generated by and in glassblowers drew together the strands now woven into the fabric of Australian studio glass.

Introduced to the hot glass movement in a workshop at Haystack Craft School Stephen Skillitzi returned to Sydney in 1972 from studies in Britain and the USA to build a furnace studio assisted by a grant from the Crafts Board of the Australia Council. John Elsegood undertook post graduate studies in glass at Alfred University in the USA. On return to Australia in 1972 he was appointed to lecture in ceramics in Wagga Wagga at Charles Sturt University where he introduced glassblowing to the curriculum in 1978. Gerry King similarly studied at Alfred University and subsequently in Canada returning to Adelaide in 1974 to build a furnace studio in 1975 with assistance from the Crafts Board. Maureen Cahill studied kiln formed glass in Britain at Stourbridge Art School returning to Sydney in 1977 to establish a course in glass working at the Sydney College of the Arts in 1978. Con Rhee, after completing a doctorate in botany in the USA was exposed to studio glass. He established a furnace studio in Canada from 1972 returning to Tasmania in 1978 to rebuild at Koonya, a relatively remote part of the countryside.

Of this band Skillitzi embarked upon a quest to publicize glassblowing giving demonstrations and lectures with evangelical devotion. While received with mixed appreciation his "Heath Robinson" equipment utilizing at times a domestic vacuum cleaner to provide air for combustion, did bring studio glass to the attention of a wide audience and some later notable participants. (This was an age of

craft fairs and the designer-maker ethos was much favoured. Similar demonstrations of craft skills, especially raku ceramics encouraged some viewers but discouraged others who sought a greater refinement of technique and aesthetic judgement than was necessarily available with a temporary studio.)

THE TRAVELLING MINSTREL SHOW

1974 was the watershed year for international visitors who exposed Australia to glassblowing as never before. (Known as the “cultural cringe” it is an Australian characteristic to assume that foreigners know more, do it better and have greater insights into the new, the exotic and the extraordinary. While this attitude at times represses Australian acknowledgment of its “home-grown” talent it does provide an opportunistic enlightenment of the ways and wherefores of other lands. Possibly a combined result of being partially grown from convict stock and both geographically and culturally isolated on a largely barren island the “cultural cringe” is only now dissolving. Traditionally Australian artists, authors, scientists, etc. needed international acclaim before being accorded recognition in their own land.) Regardless of idiosyncratic claims of supremacy in the founding of Australian studio glass the visit to these shores by American practitioners left a trail of enthusiasm and ignited further investigation by Australians who soon became significant members of the fold.

Sam Herman, formerly of the USA but then engaged at the Royal College of Art in London accepted an invitation to build a furnace and present a demonstration of glassblowing in Adelaide during 1974. He subsequently returned late in the same year and established a training program at The Jam Factory Craft Centre. The “Jam” (as the participants know it) was an early initiative of the government of South Australia providing training, marketing and studio accommodation to craftspeople in various fields. The first glass trainee, Rob Knottenbelt was joined in October 1975 by John Walsh, a qualified electrician, Tom Persson a fitter and turner and Peter Goss, a motor mechanic. Knottenbelt was perhaps selected on the basis of his insistence. The other selectees clearly contributed in the realm of their respective qualifications while learning to blow glass. All four continued working in studio glass

after the training period with Persson still maintaining continuous employment in the studio at the Jam Factory.

Ron Street, after academic study of glass, ceramics and sculpture taught glass studies at the Western Australian School of Art and Design and Curtin University in 1973-74. The course was short lived and although Street held exhibitions in Perth and Sydney by the 1990's he was unknown to many engaged in studio glass. Bill Boysen, funded by the Crafts Board and assisted by Crown Corning (another soon to be discontinued hot glass factory) toured a mobile furnace studio in a program known as “Blowglass”. The tour provided demonstrations in Queensland, New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory and Victoria. (The Great Dividing Range effect perhaps impacting upon the exclusion of South Australia, Western Australia, the Northern Territory and the island state, Tasmania). Boysen needed glassblowing assistants and accordingly provided training to Denis O'Connor, Nick Mount and Peter Docherty all of whom continued in glass working. Mount subsequently provided training to many glassblowing assistants in his own studios developing one of the most notable lineages in Australian studio glass. The mobile studio came to rest at the Sydney College of the Arts to provide glassblowing facilities in the course established by Maureen Cahill.

Richard Marquis has contributed extensively to Australian glass, making several visits over twenty years.

In 1974 he demonstrated in furnace workshops, some built to his direction. He visited tertiary institutions in Western Australia, Victoria and Tasmania later returning to the latter to work for a year in a studio established at the Tasmania School of Art by Les Blakeborough. The program later faltered and the facility closed. Though it did have some influence on practitioners the opportunity to be of lasting significance in Australian glass education was lost. Marquis has continued to influence the development of Australian glass artists, particularly that of Mount who studied with him in the USA during the 1970's. Marquis last demonstrated in Australia in 1994. The impact of Herman, Boysen and Marquis, though disputed by some, has had a telling effect upon the acceptance of studio glass “down-under”.

*"Leonardo Glass Factory" in
Newcastle, NSW in 1975*



FROM SPOTFIRES TO BUSHFIRE

Australia is largely a hot dry land subject to frequent fires which sweep across the landscape charring all before them. In summer the danger of fire is high. On high-risk days small isolated "spot" fires, driven by wind and the developing momentum of heat causing foliage to dry may join together to form a fire-front kilometres in length. Devastation to the landscape is temporary but the constructs of the occupants are turned to cinder. Interestingly the indigenous population practised agriculture by deliberate burning to impact upon fauna and flora. To-day the pyromaniac challenges society and fuels more fires than planned burning and lightning strikes combined.

The torch was put to studio glass as a planned burn by the Crafts Board of the Australia Council. It sought to assist not only the initiatives of the returned expatriates and the new home-grown glass artists but also instigated a higher level of participation with the aforementioned tours, exhibitions of international works and in due course, travel/study grants to students of contemporary glass.

Although the rapid growth in quality and quantity is readily acknowledged agreement as to the hi-

erarchy of significance and the historic ascendancy of events is far from reached. Opinion varies as to the primacy of the quinary aspects of the birth of Australian studio glass. It was certainly impacted upon by five facets; the existence of glassblowing factories, spontaneous endeavours, the return of the expatriate, the like-mindedness of flat glass exponents and institutional activity by the Crafts Board and The Jam Factory Craft Authority. The various assertions of outright parenthood are without proof or substance.

FROM AUSTRALIAN GLASS TO AUSGLASS

By 1978 news of contemporary glass practice in Australia had filtered from one centre to another. The national association of craftspeople, (then titled "Crafts Council of Australia", now "Craft Australia") published an impressive periodical, *Craft Australia*. Contemporary glass was included with what was seen by some as a bias towards "art-glass" at the expense of the more traditional studio practice of leadlighting for commercial and ecclesiastical clientele. There was some nervousness that the "new kid on the block" would disadvantage those established in the tradition of window making. The new

“backyard” glass artists tended towards exhibiting, minor commissions and teaching to establish a livelihood. At least one of the established leadlight studios proudly advertised, “we do not teach”!

In 1977 Maureen Cahill, while studying glass at Stourbridge Art School had met Rob Knottenbelt, recently departed from The Jam Factory and supported by a Crafts Board travel grant as he surveyed contemporary glass in Europe and North America. On returning to Adelaide Knottenbelt met Warren Langley, who had recently attended a Pilchuck course. These three later conspired to organize the first Australian glass conference which eventuated at the Sydney College of the Arts in 1978. As much as any date may be taken as the beginning of the Australian glass movement it is this gathering of like minds which marked the bringing together of separate activities. The event commenced with a restaurant dinner during which strangers met, associates exchanged information and a certain jostling for position ruled the day as those wishing to be recognized as established glass artists sought the spotlight. Intended as a unique information exchange the conference drew comments from some inferring that their knowledge was complete and the notion of forming an association on the basis of sharing insights quite without purpose.

The conference per se presented an array of participants described as ranging from hippies to academics. Opinion on immediate and longer-term aims and how they might be met were as varied as the representative groups. Some long held commercial secrets were all but revealed in a manifestation of camaraderie seldom experienced by these competitors. Progress suffered from a lack of defined purpose and indeed conflicting opinion of whether the meeting was embryonic of a trade union, guild or artists co-operative. Some rather thought that this would be the one and only such gathering.

Lifelong friendships were forged in these few days and the path of Australian studio glass forever changed. A day trip to Leonora allowed demonstrations of glassblowing by factory staff and some of the visitors including Denis O'Connor, Nick Mount and Eva Älmeberg. The notion of formally establishing a national association was supported. Protracted lobbying and preselection eventually installed Warren Langley as the inaugural president. Interestingly perhaps the position has not since

been contested as strongly, possibly as a consequence of the gravity and onerous workload now developed.

The new association, against the advice of some participants who foresaw the significance of the decision, formally named itself “People in Glass”. The acronym “P.I.G.” seemed less than wise for a body likely to seek government funding and pursue directions not predictable at the time. An alternative title, “Ausglas”, which was intended to observe the German spelling as an act of solidarity with glass artists internationally was advanced. The other popular proposal, “Ausglass” using the normative English spelling was favoured by a significant number of attendees. The association had spontaneously formed without a constitution and with few members conversant with such matters. The new executive, established by decision of the gathering to be in the same state as the president, overturned the wishes of the meeting quickly abandoning the “P.I.G.” title. Eventually the term Ausglass: The Australian Association of Glass Artists was confirmed and lasts to this day.

Working without a constitution and effectively controlled in only one of the member states proved all but fatal for Ausglass as various members felt overlooked or excluded from the early decisive days. Nevertheless the association held together and conducted a second successful conference in Melbourne at Monash University in 1981 under the presidency of David Wright. A glass painting workshop by Klaus Zimmer and demonstrations by Anne Atkins (acid etching), and Richard Clements (flameworking), started a trend for subsequent gatherings. The demonstration of furnace working, rather a side attraction in 1978, became a formal and informative session exposing many to the technique and offering insight into specialties by Julio Santos, Con Rhee, Nick Mount, Richard Morrell, Gerry King and Stephen Skillitzi. Of particular note were lectures by Con Rhee on the economics of operating a furnace studio and Dr. Streeton, a respiratory physician, on potential health hazards for glass workers. Rhee’s lecture, although instructive, failed to demonstrate a viable economic model, at a time of hard monetary realities for those endeavouring to form a new style of self-employment. Streeton alerted the audience to some of the inherent dangers of glass working but was able to offer few solutions. An in-

structive tour of the glass collection at the National Gallery of Victoria by curator Geoffrey Edwards instilled him as a conference favourite.

The association, though able to attract some two hundred conferees from across Australia (and one from New Zealand), was still without constitution and agreed procedure, other than that the incoming president be elected at the bi-annual conference and subsequently form an executive in his/her home state. Additionally, each participant state elected a state representative to transmit information locally. The South Australian executive (1981-83) faced the hard task of bringing to bear the crudely expressed and diverse wishes of the members in the formation of a constitution. Contrary to the complaints of the first two years of the organization's existence some members opposed the establishment of a constitution on the basis that it would overly formalize and stultify an association of friends. The executive took its task seriously, meeting weekly for many months to establish not only the constitution researched by the treasurer, Graham McLeod but to plan a combined conference, workshop and exhibition. McLeod had studied glassblowing in London in 1974. A practising auditor, he serviced the new association well.

The 1983 conference held in Adelaide at the University of South Australia under the presidency of Gerry King augmented the 1981 program establishing a model continued until the present. With some variation the components of lectures, discussions, tours of glass exhibitions and studios, unselected members' exhibitions, selected exhibitions, auctions, workshops, international guests and public showing of members' colour slides has defined Ausglass conferences.

The members' exhibition included over one hundred works by some sixty exhibitors ranging in price from a A\$ 5.00 wine glass to Anne Dybka's glass engraving of three panels at A\$ 5,000.00. Other works were marked "P.O.A." or "Not for Sale". The showing brought together the most majestic of exhibition works by prominent members including autonomous panels by leadlight makers and unpretentious domestic production ware. This diversity added to the excitement of witnessing the growth

of Australian contemporary glass. Both the concept and the reality of the exhibition were highly regarded by members and visitors. Five works were selected for the permanent collection of the University of South Australia.

An engraving workshop by Alasdair Gordon, formerly of Britain and then of Western Australia introduced many to an ancient art revisited for contemporary utilization. John Elsegood taught an introduction to glassblowing in a temporary studio built for the purpose. John's twelve hour days earned the appreciation of his students. Flameworkeer Richard Clements, trained in Britain but resident in Tasmania dazzled beginners and experienced students alike with his mastery of technique, aesthetic adventurism and sense of humour. Surface decoration, both technique and intention was explored by Warren Langley and Tony Hanning to high appreciation. The experimental kiln forming techniques



Warren Langley and Brian Hirst in the Glebe Glass studio, 1981



Budgereee Glass, Adelaide, 1986. Nick Mount (standing), Pauline Mount (right), staff and the Mount children

workshop by David Wright imposed the twin virtues of courageous endeavour and meticulous record keeping. Guest artists Paul Marioni (USA) and Richard Meitner (USA/Holland) provided an international perspective furthered by participants from Japan and New Zealand. Meitner concentrated upon the "why" rather than the "how" of glass-blowing predicting future concerns rather than quenching the thirst of those anxious to absorb skills through every pore. (As skill acquisition matured subsequent conferences addressed more theoretical quests.) In lectures, demonstrations and a workshop, Marioni intrigued with single-mindedness and passionate discourse upon his intentions and outcomes in glass imagery. Newly arrived in Australia, Klaus Moje joined the conference and by showing two works in the member's exhibition introduced what was to become his pre-eminent influence upon Australia contemporary glass. A pre-conference workshop organized at a former foundry by owner Geoff New and leadlight worker Terry Beaston utilized Marioni's broad knowledge of furnace casting.

Ausglass had bred a monster. Although each conference is supported by a Crafts Board grant the

demands of a financial balancing-act now place an unmanageable workload on the president, secretary and treasurer. Ausglass executives now engage professional assistance for conference management yet these mammoth events still impose an enormous burden on key members often equal to a full workload for many weeks prior to and some time after the event. Until the full development of the university courses in Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra and Adelaide the Ausglass conference was the major glass studies education provider in Australia.

Ausglass conferences, Sydney 1985, Melbourne 1987, Melbourne 1989, Sydney 1991, Canberra 1993, Adelaide 1995, have built upon the consecutive success of forerunners consistently drawing some two hundred participants and now including gallery directors, curators, authors and collectors. The Ausglass Newsletter, brought to a higher level by Graham McLeod and upgraded to a magazine by editor Jan Aspinall, has become increasingly professional in intent and publication. The long-term and far reaching impact of Bronwyn Hughes and Graham Stone as editors during the 1990's has solidified this periodical as being of permanent significance.

EXHIBITION AS EVIDENCE

That there was indeed a contemporary glass movement in Australia was evidenced by national and international selected exhibitions. These attested to the progress of local participants and provided a "benchmark" against which one could measure one's own development alongside that of internationally recognized masters. Solo exhibitions became markers or points of guidance not only for the exhibitor but for contemporaries eager to accommodate the achievements of others.

In 1975 the Australian glass community was distinctly divided between those with experience of overseas glass practice and others familiar only with local achievement. Though this divide continued into the 1980's it was eroded by visiting exhibitions of international work. The exhibition "Glass" toured all states and territories of Australia in 1975 showing works by ten glass artists from the USA Sup-

ported by the Crafts Board, the exhibits intrigued and startled some viewers but lacked the level of development which might have been expected at the time. Australians recently returned from the USA and Europe were disappointed by the selection. Sam Herman, asked to provide a review for *The Advertiser* in Adelaide, puzzled as to what to write about work which, in his opinion, hadn't changed for years. A decade after the tour this author was asked by a curator to identify some glass held in storage. It was the same exhibition, unlabelled and of a level of development which would not have seen many of the works selected for an international exhibition at that time. A testimony not to the exhibition being of poor standard but rather of the high rate of progress in that decade. Similar rapid progress was evident in Australian glass as skills and intentions became more sophisticated with experimentation giving away to consolidation. Later in 1975 a touring exhibition "Adventure in Swedish Glass" displayed the consummate skills expected of European factory based glass designers and makers. Organized by the Australian Gallery Directors' Conference one of the foreseen outcomes was helping Australian designers to progress with glass. The exhibits were from Kosta Boda and Orrefors, the funding from The Swedish Institute and the Crafts Board. The Cinzano Glass Collection toured in 1981 showing glass drinking vessels from diverse ages and nationalities. The catalogue introduction proposed that "glass is probably one of the most important mirrors of the social habits of man (sic) in the western world". Possibly an overstatement, the notion does though illuminate the level of significance at times attributed to glass. Certainly this sentiment may be paralleled by expressions of enthusiasm by Australian glass practitioners for their chosen medium.

The first major survey exhibition of contemporary Australian glass, "WITH CARE" shown at The Jam Factory Craft Centre Gallery in April 1979 brought together furnace, kiln, leadlight and engraved works by some thirty-two exhibitors showing two hundred and thirteen works. Exhibits ranged in price from A\$ 13.75 for a furnace blown flask to A\$ 3,000.00 for an engraved work by Helmut Hiebl. Two minor controversies made or marred the occasion, depending upon one's perspective. The display of works made by Santos but exhibited un-

der the name of the designer Blakeborough offended some. Other exhibitors, recent subscribers to the designer-maker ethos of studio glass, immediately understood the paramount place of skill acquisition in good design and were less than accepting of works by two individuals yet attributed to the designer. (The return to co-produced and team worked glass was not yet envisaged as being within the parameters of Australian studio glass. Indeed the fundamental aesthetic demanded the glass worker be designer/maker/technologist/marketing manager/business director/workshop cleaner etc.) The affront was short lived, Blakeborough eventually discontinued glass practice and Santos "changed hats" leaving the factory situation to design his own studio works. The other story differs with the telling. Some exhibitors were less than pleased that the opening ceremony was disrupted by an actor performing as a messenger delivering a suitcase by a fictitious artist. Rob Knottenbelt, disenchanted by what he saw as Australian glassmaking blindly aping that of the USA withdrew from the exhibition and concocted a replacement exhibitor, "Mac Florriuci Millefiore". Mac Florriuci Millefiore exhibited a suitcase, delivered with the intention of disrupting the opening ceremony. The suitcase contained clothes, colour slides, padlocked glass recipe book, studded boots, dope pipe, airline tickets and a glass egg with feathered decoration. Knottenbelt "didn't envisage the explosive and vicious reactions this sculpture was to elicit from right across the glass community." He states that he almost totally withdrew from the contemporary glass community for the next seven years. Whether the event will be assigned a place in performance art history or forgotten as a youthful attempt at grandstanding is yet to be determined.

Entitled "Window on Galoa" a more sedate purpose ensued with the next large collection of Australian glass assembled by Joyce Ballard. In order to raise funds for a stained glass window in the church at Galoa, Fiji, she masterminded an exhibition of glass, paintings, textiles, blacksmithing, timber, leather, silversmithing and sculpture. There were ninety-six glass exhibits from thirty-three exhibitors which ranged in price from A\$ 10.00 for a production worked paperweight to A\$ 4,500.00 for a reproduction tiffany lamp by Neil Finn. Some of the works were later exhibited at the Eric Carr Gallery

in Perth. The catalogue included colour reproductions of the glass works as did the "With Care" exhibition. In this case the photograph of the stretched-neck bottles by Denis O'Connor were printed upside-down. A similar fate was later to be met by other glass artists and is perhaps a measure of how little is known about contemporary glass by publishers, authors and perhaps the public.

The Meat Market Craft Centre, a state government supported craft workshop, commercial sales and exhibition complex in Melbourne has hosted many important glass exhibitions. A series of annual/biennial exhibitions entitled, "Australian Crafts" showcased a national survey which included contemporary glass. These events provide a major stimulus to Australian studio glass. (The notion of the Meat Market was proposed by David Wright and supported by the Premier of Victoria who was also the Treasurer and Minister for the Arts.) In 1981 the Meat Market presented the "Contemporary German Glass" exhibition alongside the "Contemporary Australian Glass" exhibition which allowed perhaps the first close comparison of Australian flat glass works with those from the northern hemisphere. The "stained" glass from Germany here shown subsequently influenced many of the more prominent Australian "flat" glass artists. Ludwig Schaffrath, Johannes Schreiter and Jochem Poensgen each conducted workshops at various events which compounded the admiration of German contemporary "stained" glass. Berin Behn, Pel Fesq, Marc Grunseit and Lance Feeney later undertook study in Germany.

Arising "from a concern to promote the development of glass in Australia" the highest impact was delivered by the exhibition "International Directions in Glass Art". A Crafts Board project organized by Robert Bell, curator of the Art Gallery of Western Australia but selected by glass artist Michael Esson, it was well received by the glass community in spite of controversial circumstances which finally excluded Australians from exhibiting. The procedure of one glass artist selecting an exhibition has not since been popular in Australia with Ausglass normally deferring to curators in the interests of parity. Various accounts accord high significance to the change in intention and practice engendered by the exhibition when witnessed by Australian glass artists. The exhibition toured to Perth, Melbourne, Syd-

ney and Brisbane in 1982-83 showing works from Czechoslovakia, England, France, Holland, Italy, Japan, West Germany and the USA. The exhibitor Kazuko Eguchi, from Japan attended the opening in Melbourne and presented a lecture on Japanese glass at the University of South Australia in Adelaide. She later studied at Monash University and has since become a resident of Australia. Marvin Lipofsky visited with the exhibition presenting lectures in some cities. The measure of the influence of this exhibition may be evidenced from 1983 in the Ausglass conference exhibitions which have marked the interests and attainments of Australian glass within the parameters of the particular perspective imbued by the theme and/or curator of each event.

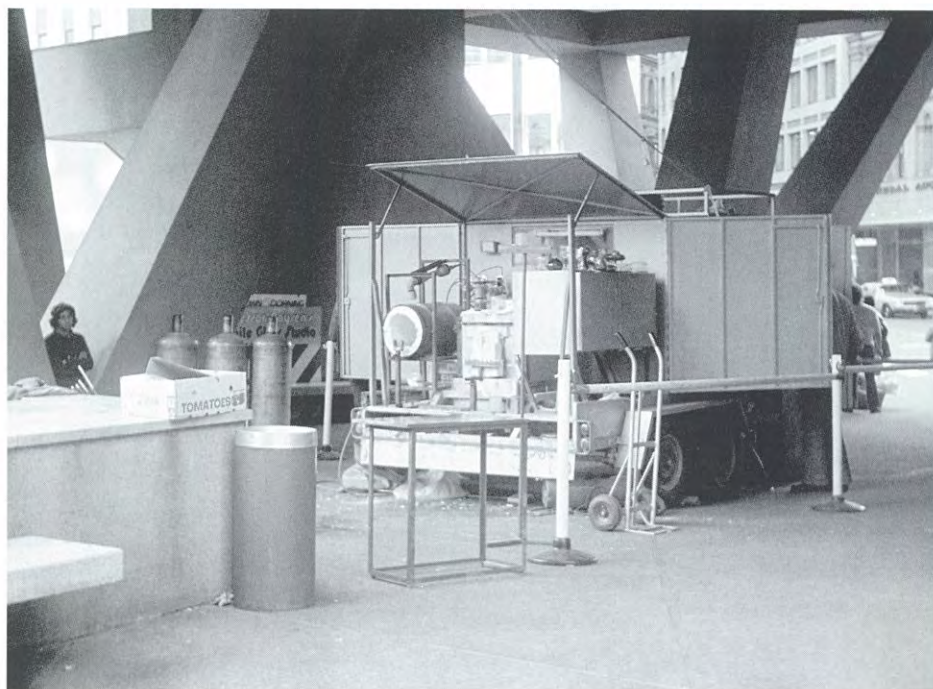
Less appreciated than they may be for the impact upon Australian glass development, the survey exhibitions shown by the Wagga Wagga City Gallery from 1981 presented a frequent update of the developing style, technique, intention and diversity of glass practice. As much as any event they may be considered as documenting the progress of contemporary glass in this country.

NATIONAL ART GLASS COLLECTION

Australia is a coastal settlement. All of the major cities and eighty per cent of the population lie on the fertile ribbon of land between the sea and the inland arid plains. The few regional cities primarily occupy the hinterlands of the coastal mountains and live in the cultural shadow of the capital cities. Regional centres are not unlike city-states surrounded by an ocean of land. Various known as agricultural or transport centres they rarely develop reputations for cultural excellence. They are characterised by colloquialisms, as being "in the middle of nowhere", "beyond the black stump", "the back of beyond", or as having "two pubs and a dog", a "pub" being a hotel or tavern.

Wagga Wagga, an aboriginal term meaning "place of many crows" is the name of a city of some fifty thousand people on the edge of the Hay Plain. Hot in summer and cold in winter it is the site of an air force base. Unlike similar cities it is now nationally and internationally known for its contribution to contemporary culture. John Elsegood initiated a studio glass course at Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga campus in 1978. He had undertaken a mas-

*The mobile glass trailer set up and ready to go.
Sydney, NSW in 1974*

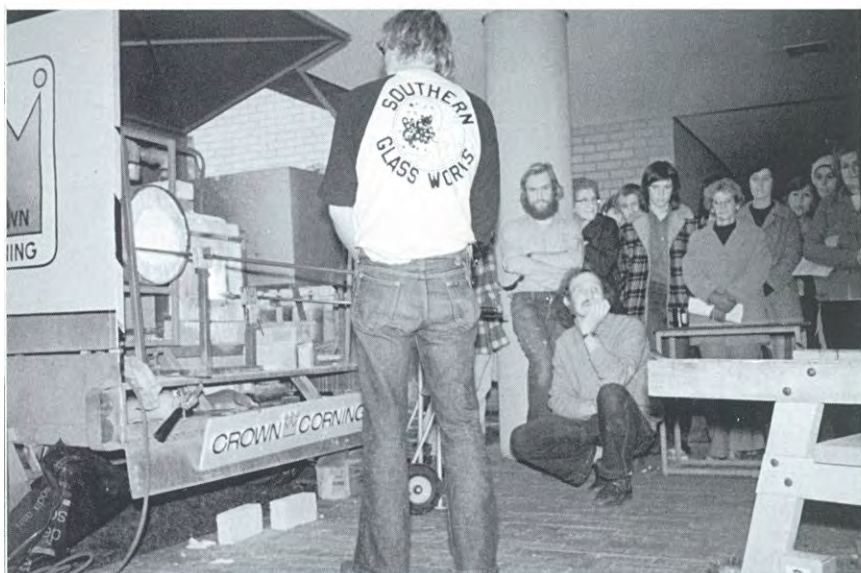


ters degree in the USA during 1971-72 studying glass with André Billeci. As is commonly the case Elsegood's glass program grew within the ceramics course that he was appointed to establish in late 1972. He had hosted the Blowglass tour by Bill Boysen and Dennis O'Connor when it visited Wagga Wagga in 1974 and the glass studio was experienced by a variety of Australian and international glass artists during the latter part of the 1970's. Elsegood took a number of his glass students, including Judy Le Lievre, to the 1978 National Summer School organized by the Crafts Council of South Australia to join a hot glass workshop which was offered by Stephen Skillitzi.

With a background in fashion Le Lievre had undertaken art studies as part of a career change. Appointed as Director of the City Art Gallery of Wagga Wagga in 1979 she instigated the collection of contemporary Australian glass. The Australia Council at that time supported the development of specialized collections in regional galleries. The Gallery Board of Trustees bravely accepted the challenge of developing the national contemporary glass collection and has now a level of responsibility normally associated with state galleries. The collection commenced in 1979 acquiring works by Australians, visiting glass artists and from touring exhibitions. Ti-

tled the National Art Glass Collection in 1992 it has added to the O'Connor piece first collected by some one hundred and seventy pieces by 1995.

Le Lievre instigated a program of national survey exhibitions of contemporary glass. The first in 1981 showed the works of twenty-four exhibitors using furnace, leadlight, kiln and flame techniques. The majority of the ninety-two works were however from the furnace and utilized the vessel form. Of the twenty-four exhibitors, seventeen are still professionally active and highly regarded while four work with glass in other capacities. The remaining few have moved away from glass, largely for financial reasons and/or family commitments. Subsequent survey exhibitions in 1983, 1985, 1988, 1991 and 1994 have received diverse responses from artists, critics and the public. While certainly the exhibitions in total have been highly successful and seminal to the establishment of Australian Studio Glass they have not been without detractors. The difficulties faced by a regional gallery in managing a nationally significant event are clear. In comparison with a state gallery the regional gallery has a comparatively low budget, few staff, major freight expense and less notoriety. Perhaps not fully recognizing the major contribution to Australian contemporary glass made by the City Art Gallery of



Bill Boysen and Denis O'Connor demonstrating glassblowing at the mobile trailer workshop in 1974

Wagga Wagga and particularly that of Le Lievre some prominent artists have at times not responded to notification of selection of exhibitions. Every story abounds, the truth undoubtedly lying between the extremes. Some artists have developed national and international exhibiting commitments precluding them from the opportunity to produce works for a selection-process exhibition in a regional centre. Some express dismay at being unselected in a given exhibition and have reservations of the competence of the various selectors. (Though there are different invited selectors each time).

The gallery is considering changing procedure in future and concentrating on other than survey exhibitions. Indeed specific exhibitions have been developed since 1990. Le Lievre managed a touring exhibition by seven glass artists which was shown in Germany, Holland and Luxembourg from 1990 to 1992 from which works were purchased for private and public collections. Studio design or limited edition series exhibitions were shown in 1992 and 1993. Deliberately infiltrating a more commercially viable intention these exhibitions provided intercourse between the maker/design and the consumer. The 1996 exhibition shows a selection of the collection. Touring to six galleries in four states the works of the thirty exhibitors include fourteen from the original 1981 exhibition. The Wagga Wagga exhibitions and collection illustrate both the contribu-

tors to Australian studio glass of high quality and the various "comings and goings" by international visitors.

As Ausglass has "bred a monster" in forming an association and conference which taxes its resources the Council of the City of Wagga Wagga has now a project which demands more than it necessarily has or would want to provide. The significance of the collection, the exhibitions and the publication which accompanied the 1996 touring exhibition is such as would be the envy of many a major centre though the responsibility for this fragment of history is onerous. Change is afoot, there are plans for a new gallery building and Le Lievre is within sight of retirement. The City Council and perhaps the glass artists are faced with careful deliberation of the support required for this seventeen year old historic documentation to enable it to best meet the demands of the future.

PRIVATE GALLERIES

"Challenging the traditional notion of glass" is both the motto and the underlying philosophy of the Glass Artists' Gallery established in Sydney during 1982 by Maureen Cahill and five of her graduates. As members of the co-operative eventually went their separate ways Cahill became the sole Director. The gallery has developed a distinguished reputation in Australia and the USA Exhibitions range from those by highly regarded professionals to graduate shows. In recent years the gallery has been instrumental in establishing major awards for selected group exhibitions and exporting glass works to international art fairs, exhibitions and private collectors.

Distelfink Gallery established in Melbourne from the 1970's as a craft gallery witnessed the growth in importance of glass as an exhibition and production media. Australian craft had been dominated by ceramics but with the increasing popularity of glass with Distelfink clients it was soon producing a higher monetary turnover than other media. The gallery is presenting its seventieth glass exhibition in 1996. Though the business has changed hands several times existing records indicate that the first

glass exhibition was by Peter Goss (one of the first Jam Factory trainees) in 1979. During 1980 there was a group exhibition by ten glass artists and in 1981 a multi media exhibition which included glass. Exhibitions by Warren Langley/Nick Mount, Julio Santos, Gerry King and Les Blakeborough also occurred in that year. 1982 saw another group exhibition and individual shows by David Wright, Richard Clements and Tony Hanning. Also shown that year was "The Best of British Studio Glass".

Adelaide and surrounding districts housed a number of craft galleries which showed increasing quantities of glass. Studio 20, in Blackwood devoted one display area to production glass and showed glass exhibitions or mixed exhibitions which included glass when possible. By the 1980's thirty per cent of turnover was generated by glass although there were some fifteen crafts exhibited.

GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS:

THE JAM FACTORY AND THE MEAT MARKET

Although a restrictive society in many ways social reform has at times been advanced in Australia. It was the second country (after New Zealand) in which women were able to vote. Don Dunstan as Premier of South Australia led many social and cultural developments. Dunstan was a "man for-all-seasons", an outstanding parliamentary debater, accomplished public reader of poetry, visionary legislator and champion of the arts. He spearheaded the Jam Factory Craft and Design Centre scheme with the intention of developing a craft-based industry. The basic idea had been formed by Dick Richards, Curator of Asian Art at the Art Gallery of South Australia. The group which developed the scheme included Cedar Prest. The early aim of establishing an access point for furnace working didn't survive the realization. Sam Herman, as the founding director of the glass workshop brought with him the contemporary American ethos of studio glass. There was some mismatch between the aim of producing production blowers working to an exhibition aesthetic but with a craft-industry intention. While the project was successful in that the workshop has graduated some highly regarded glassblowers and has maintained its viability there were many years of "teething" problems. The early "locked door" policy of the glass studio was not well regarded by those trying to build their own studio or wishing some access to the facilities.

Regardless of its shortcomings the glass workshop has made a major contribution to studio glass. Trainees from many parts of Australia have benefited from the opportunity to learn the techniques and management of furnace glass while receiving a stipend. Further opportunity to generate income is provided both in the workshop and through the wholesale and retail agencies of the Jam Factory. This is of course a far cry from the situation of the first generation of Australian glass artists who travelled to the other side of the globe largely at their own expense. Former trainees have taken widely diverging paths. John Walsh has maintained a production blowing practice. Peter Goss took furnace working to Queensland in several ventures. Rob Knottenbelt practices both production blowing and a separate sculptural practice. An early trainee, Neil Roberts has moved away from customary contemporary glass practice and now occasionally incorporates glass with many materials in sculptural works.

The glass workshop has at times been a meeting ground of diverse glass practice. Stanislav Melis from Slovakia joined the team as production manager and after Herman's 1978 departure became workshop head. Czechoslovakian Pavel Tomecko initially established his cold working and kiln casting workshop adjacent to the furnace studio and contributed to that aspect of Jam Factory capabilities. Tomecko brought a new dimension to glass practice in Australia. Peter Tysoe had worked in England as a sculptor and from 1966 included glass in architectural commissions. As the head of the glass workshop from 1985 he increased the practice of casting glass. The workshop has been led by Nick Mount since 1994 and has developed the access hiring opportunities often used by former trainees as a significant contribution to their income generation.

The City of Melbourne is the finest example of Victorian architecture. Built at the height of the Victorian era it has avoided the ravishes of war and natural disaster. One of the most majestic of buildings housed the meat market. This grand venue is now the Meat Market Craft Centre. High ceilings, cobbled floor, intriguing metal fittings for handling carcasses and a particularly sensitive refurbishment warrant a visit even without the attractions of the craft workshops. Never intended as a training scheme this government supported institution op-

erates on a "user-pays" system which includes a furnace studio and cold/kiln working studio. The furnace facility was established by Richard Morrell in 1982 as a private studio. Trained at Stourbridge School of Art in his native England, Morrell had earlier taught at Monash University. The studio later became available for hire allowing many aspiring glassblowers to build competency without the necessity of establishing an individual workshop. Pauline Delaney took the management role in 1988 having trained at Monash University and the Jam Factory.

The cold glass workshop was established in 1965 and managed by John Greig. From a stained glass background he established a coffin kiln which later influenced the development of kiln working at the Meat Market. At first assisting Greig as a part-time supervisor Graham Stone eventually took the managerial position which he holds still. The workshop continues to be a crossroads of glass artists and offers week-end workshops to beginners and those who wish to diversify their mastery of technique.

Both these institutions have faced difficult times as government policies reflect downturns in the economy and are increasingly dependent upon funding sources other than government grants.

EXPORT QUALITY: MADE IN AUSTRALIA

Nick Wirdnam arrived in Australia in 1983 to teach furnace working at Monash University. His perception that there were some committed and enthusiastic glassmakers struggling for public recognition whilst others with international credentials had little national identity is no doubt insightful and supportive of the cultural cringe theory. In Australia imported goods are thought of as superior and according to the mores of the "cultural cringe" products designed for export are similarly considered to be better than that intended for local consumption. That this is so is evidenced in advertising and product labelling. The term "fully imported" is employed to entice purchase of motor vehicles and "(brand name) export" labels enhance prospects of beer sales. The notion that to have glassworks selected for international exhibition is the true test of the excellence of the maker is popularly held. A fair measure it is but like most competitions it often excludes as many or indeed more than can be included. Glass artists who work with architectural commissions

and those who make quality domestic ware are often denied acknowledgement. A full history of Australian contemporary glass would include many earnest and successful participants operating beyond the documental parameters of exhibitions, teaching and for that matter, inclusion in texts.

Irrespective of that deliberation the history of Australian glass being exhibited overseas is central to the development of studio achievement. The multifarious relationship between Australian and New Zealand glass began early. In conjunction with the 1983 New Zealand Glass Conference the exhibition "Pacific Glass" included Langley, Mount, Wright and Zimmer. Of importance to the exposure of Australian glass was the 1984 exhibition "Glass from Australia and New Zealand" organized by glass artist Klaus Zimmer and Jenny Zimmer, an historian, author, critic and academic. An adventurous project by any standards it relied upon a range of financial and other support. Interestingly the Australian Opera contributed funds from two benefit concerts. Forty-five Australian exhibitors were selected from almost one hundred applicants. Originally destined for the Hessisches Landesmuseum in Darmstadt it also toured to Switzerland and France.

The Triennial Exhibition "World Glass Now", shown at the Hokkaido Museum of Modern Art in Sapporo from 1982 has included a steadily increasing number of Australian exhibitors. From one participant in the first exhibition (Klaus Moje, resided in Australia from 1982) to nine in the 1994 event the Australian presence culminated in the major prize being won by Brian Hirst.

OUT OF THE SPOTLIGHT:

GLASS NOT NORMALLY DOCUMENTED AS HISTORICAL

Understandably exhibition works enjoy the attention of writers, critics and the public. Beyond the realm of the well-known practitioners lie a multitude of production glass makers, an assortment of commissioned artists and specialized service providers. Just as certain glass artists might be predictable for inclusion in selected exhibitions, collections and texts there is a virtual underclass who have in their specific manner contributed to the folds of glass history yet are frequently unknown to the public. Others straddle both worlds occasionally having their exhibition pieces included in documented

events but maintaining a separate practice of unrecognised utilitarian works.

Production glassblowing studios have been established which now employ groups of practitioners. There exists a lineage of production glass providing careers and training for contemporary glass workers beyond the exhibition world. In 1982 Canadian born Colin Heaney established a workshop in Queensland which employs up to ten others in the production of iridised works retailed in and beyond Australia. There has been a ricochet effect in glassblowing as the early participants moved around the country. Chris Pantano established another Queensland furnace studio in 1986 and with employees produces works much sought after in commercial craft outlets. Pantano was introduced to glassblowing by one of the original band of Jam Factory trainees, Peter Goss. He continued the interstate interchange in 1993 when employing Jonathon Westacott, a Jam Factory trainee from 1988. Westacott was introduced to glass in New South Wales by Alex Mitrovic, a former student of John Elsegood.

John Walsh, after leaving the Jam Factory glass workshop in 1976 blew glass in a sequence of studios including the Paris Creek Workshops, a co-operative venture near Adelaide, a shared studio with Rob Knottenbelt and his own establishment near Mount Gambier, South Australia. Alongside this glassblowing career of some twenty years he has more recently opened a craft shop trading in many craft media. John has targeted a discernible market, that of the gift or home decorating item within the budget of most Australians. His studio has produced countless thousands of items each to find its way via craft shops and gift stores to the eventual consumer. This is not the stuff of which glassblowing legends are made though it has a dramatic impact upon the public perception of the nature of studio crafts. There are many production glassblowing studio workers who do not, or do not yet produce works which attract the attention of a public other than that of the craft shop customer.

Perth, the capital of Western Australia is bounded by the Indian Ocean, has Africa and the South Pole as neighbours and the Great Deserts dividing it from any other major settlement in Australia. The Nullarbor Plain (without trees) is crossed by one road and the world's longest straight stretch of rail-

way line. The most isolated city in the world it is central to what must then be the most isolated glass artists on the planet. Western Australian glass artists regardless, or perhaps because of the great physical isolation maintain contact with the "outside world", though their endeavours are less well known and infrequently recorded. Since 1981 Alan Fox, another exponent of the iridised ornamental piece has been wholesaling work in Australia and overseas from a studio now employing six glass workers. Seldom acknowledged, production glass studio workers have a historic narrative rich in endeavour and achievement. The Melting Pot Glass Studio operated by Gerry Rielly since 1990 is the culmination of glass studies cobbled together from courses, training and employment in three states. He now has four employees training in glassblowing and sells works across Australia, South East Asia, Japan and the USA. Fox and several colleagues formed Freedom Glass in 1982, (now known as Hiclass), which produces sheet glass for artistic use.

One might well debate the difference between an "exhibition" and a "sale". Glassworks are offered in both contexts though there isn't necessarily absolute agreement of which is which. The production glassblower may have five or six "exhibitions" a year all showing the same category of works or indeed the same works. The glass worker primarily concerned with "one off" or individual works, as might be expected, shows less frequently and normally when a new direction or nuance is resolved. Individuals who engage in both practices are generally known by one facet of their work or the other. Those recognized primarily as production workers tend to be less well documented than colleagues who stand close by but beyond that demarcation. Keith Rowe graduated from the Sydney College of the Arts eventually becoming the sole operator of the Glebe Glass Studio in Sydney. The facility had for some years been shared with others under the auspices of the Crafts Board and his former Alma Mater. He has more recently relocated the workshop to Blackheath, beyond the grasp of inner-city suburbia. Rowe's prolific output and long-term tenancy in studio glass has enabled the aesthetic and technical fineness to evolve. While he does exhibit, attend and facilitate workshop conferences the basis of his reputation is the production work. In any such categorization there may be judgement of the

quality of one group of work in comparison to the other, yet this alone does not necessarily override the perceived place of a given glassworker on the production/exhibition continuum.

Even further from centre stage are those who dwell both in the mainstream commercial arena and the art/craft sphere. Where to end the definition of studio glass lies a problem intentionally avoided in the establishment of Ausglass which, while entitled an artists' association opens membership to glassworkers of any category who may wish to subscribe. Adornments Embossed Glass, operated since 1980 by Judd Chatfield has specialized in sandblasting and acid etching. The financial viability of the studio is divided between preparation of decorative traditionally patterned sheet glass for architecture and service working for studio glass workers seeking acid polishing of their own works while (wisely) avoiding the potential hazards of the technique. Chatfield is an Ausglass member of long standing and although not benefiting from exhibition participation has contributed generously to the association.

There are some "associate" glassworkers who operate on the fringe of studio glass. Ross Duncan registered Gippsland Glass Studios in 1986. He built his first studio in the mid 1970's from information largely gleaned from correspondence with practitioners in the United Kingdom and the USA Duncan then travelled in the USA and Europe acquiring glass experience. He has since moved in and out of contemporary glass, making furnaces, trialing various notions and hopes to launch an access workshop in 1996 on a property near Melbourne. Duncan is one of a considerable number of "fellow travellers" who participate in Ausglass regardless of their removal from exhibiting and fine art.

On the periphery of the light are a growing number of "Sunday Market" glass makers who have acquired a narrow range of techniques yet produce vast numbers of works for weekend or public holiday fairs. Much of this work is of the most unfortunate level of misjudgment in both technical and aesthetic terms, the makers seldom holding any formal education in glass studies. Some though are the product of weekend workshops or "leisure courses" of reputable education centres. The ultimate wisdom of generating an under-story of low quality works for the immediate gain of fee-for-service courses is questioned in some institutions.

Removed entirely from the spotlight are a new breed of glassworkers recently entering the market place. There are at least a few business-minded operators who, having evidenced the technique and application of studio glass have assembled small factories which can compete technically if not aesthetically. There is room for concern that works of a lower quality and of accordingly lower price range will usurp the market. Disconcerting though it may be, a comparable history of ceramic craft would give support to the notion that the level of appreciation by the public increases with exposure and that the lesser work loses market share.

CAMEO ROLES

The attention given furnace working and now kiln working has at times overshadowed other notable contributors to studio glass. This was redressed to some extent by the 1987 exhibition "Life Through Glass" billed as the first group exhibition of Australian glass engraving. Showing works by engravers Anne Dybka, Alasdair Gordon, Annette Kalnins, Paddy Robinson and glass calligrapher Cecil Renfield, the event acknowledges in part the connection between this historic technique and contemporary glass practice. Dybka and Robinson are well integrated into the contemporary glass community by attending conferences, exhibiting, teaching and combining with other members on particular projects. While engraving is regarded as being an ancient technique, traceable for some five thousand years, its revival is comparable with furnace and kiln working, but aspects such as the subject matter, commercial commission and ornamental decorative objects generally tie it to perceptions more traditional than most studio practice.

Robinson trained in stained glass in Ireland before arriving in Australia in 1965. Her work in stained glass studios is previously noted. From 1973 she has operated her own studio and has taught at University level from 1980 to 1988. Currently operating a studio with Neil Finn her thematic interest involves landscape and the human figure. Her public reputation arises from figurative sculptural engraving. The stained, painted and leadlight windows and three-dimensional commissioned works which provide her income are nourished by the experimentation required for exhibition works. Neil Finn occupies a unique position in Australian contemporary

glass. His interests and talents are multifarious embracing leadlighting, kiln working, wholesaling/retailing and lead cane manufacturing all with a commercial viability beyond the studio sphere. His company, Bent Glass provides curved sheet glass for shop fittings and architecture. Finn has provided sponsorship to events and individuals and been involved in large commissioned sculptural works.

Anne Dybka is the exemplar of Australian engraved glass. Renowned for her work she has provided training to Robinson and Kalnins. Dybka's abilities range from fine intaglio to bold free-form or abstract works some metres in height. A background in fine art studies in her native England, employment as an artist and designer of both ceramic and glassware and eventual arrival at engraving after experimentation with kiln working all led to the establishment of her own studio in 1973. By virtue of her employment at Crown Crystal Glass Company she might also be regarded as providing one of the links between the now extinct factory glass works and the current studio practice.

AMAZONIAN ANTIPODEANS

The growth of feminism in Australia approximately parallels the development of studio glass both in terms of the calendar and in the recognition of individual women as leaders in their field. There are many women who are now key players in studio glass. Indeed, that this is so has been evident at successive Ausglass conferences as the "boys club" aura has given way to an obvious high regard for women practitioners, theorists and administrators.

From the onset Cedar Prest established a leadership role in the revival of stained glass as studio practice. She later took the onerous role of Chairperson of the Crafts Board of the Australia Council (1980-1983) at a time when studio glass was emerging in Australia. Prest has cultivated community projects in which local residents collaborate with her on the design and fabrication of large windows in both suburban and remote areas. The first such venture was the Parks Community Centre in Adelaide in 1979-1980 in which the library windows now depict and lament the destruction wrought upon nature as western society imposes its own mark upon the land.

The contributions of Maureen Cahill are yet to be fully recognized. As a gallery director, teacher,

exhibitor and ambassador she is impacting upon the overseas recognition of Australian studio glass at an increasing rate. Aided by Craft Australia Cahill is nourishing an international market for Australian glass of the highest order. With a population of only seventeen million Australia affords limited opportunities to sell glass works of significance. Leading exhibitors have, since the 1980's relied upon a growth in international sales.

Shar Feil worked in leadlight, managing a restoration and commission business while experimenting in kiln forming. In the early 1980's she published the first edition of the text "Warm Glass", a technical compendium for the kiln worker. A monumental task for its time the book is the result of her own experiments and the gleanings of the wisdom of others.

Judy Hancock has a background in ceramics, particularly porcelain ware. She has been a "back-bone" member of Ausglass for many years, serving twice as an executive member. Her own glass is primarily flame worked though she did undertake training at the Jam Factory.

There are thankless tasks in any field and those of curating exhibitions, seeking funding and advocating the inherent value of contemporary glass are within that gambit. Often contribution is most clearly recognized in hindsight and it may well be the case that the glass community will best appreciate the endeavours of Judy Le Lievre, Director of The City Gallery of Wagga Wagga, some time after she leaves that role.

Professor Jenny Zimmer has for many years contributed to the fledgling glass movement as writer, critic, exhibition manager and conference speaker. As one knows one's self from viewing the mirror a movement such as contemporary glass learns of its nature and direction in response, at least in part to those who hold and angle the mirror. In her many roles Zimmer has allowed such reflection.

THE PACEMAKERS

Alongside the Amazonians stand mere males who have also "set the pace" of Australian contemporary glass. Warren Langley, first president of Ausglass has led the push into overseas exhibiting and more recently into commercial activity. His Ozone Glass company now manufactures architectural ornamentation and signage. Always a leader in technical ex-

perimentation Langley has continued to produce arresting sculptural works.

Nick Mount offered "on the job" training to devotees of glassblowing most of whom have established successful practices. Long recognized for his ability in glassblowing Mount has set a standard for studio production against which others measure their own work.

Self-taught in flat glass and kiln forming Ian Mowbray has since the 1980's presented challenges to the viewer with his bizarre glass works and innovative technical achievements. Often overlooked by exhibition selectors in the earlier years his bold works include "storm-in-a-bottle" sealed vessels as found in tourist souvenir shops, yet vested with the qualities of an art work. He is now working on equally odd themes such as underwear suspended in solid blocks of glass. Mowbray has shown the extreme approach in his work and consequently provides a test of the parameters of contemporary glass. His influence upon other glass artists is yet to be traced but his successful partnership with the late Vicki Torr is highly regarded. While enrolled as a student of glass studies Torr took coursework with Mowbray and between them some of the highlights of Australian glass have grown.

Arriving from Germany in 1982 Klaus Moje has been influential as an exhibitor, teacher, administrator and advocate of contemporary glass. The integrity of his exhibition work is well documented. In many ways he was "the right man in the right place at the right time" when he joined the Canberra School of Art to develop the glass studies program. During his tenure the school attracted able students many of whom are now prominent exhibitors. Moje established many international links for Australian glass by organizing exhibitions, visiting artists and study abroad opportunities. He has been a senior spokesperson for contemporary glass advising on numerous projects.

When Ausglass formed constitutionally one tenet was that members should not select the work of other members for exhibitions. Noble position that it is it transfers that onerous task to others. Not infrequently the others so imposed upon are curators of public museums or galleries. Often included Geoffrey Edwards, Curator of Sculpture and Glass at the National Gallery of Victoria, has, as much as a selector may, had a profound impact upon Aus-

tralian studio glass by virtue of the many important exhibitions of which he has been a jury member. His influence is compounded by sustained and insightful writing and lecturing let alone curatorial duties in his own gallery.

From the remote reaches of Western Australia the Curator of Craft and Design at the Art Gallery of Western Australia Robert Bell has contributed significantly to studio glass. His exhibitions "International Directions in Glass Art" in 1982 and 1992 have made consequential impact both in this land and by opening the doors to international recognition for Australian and overseas participants. Bell has been a main contributor to Crafts Board and Craft Australia projects along with aiding Ausglass and Australian contemporary glass over many years.

FROM TINY ACORNS...

The foregoing is embedded in the early days of studio glass. More recently there have been important works and considerable achievements by the new members of the fraternity. It is symptomatic of the rate of growth of contemporary glass that a brief statement such as this falls far short of recording every worthy player. By virtue of being an examination of the development of contemporary studio glass inevitably participants more recently involved are woven less into the fabric of the tale. Nevertheless to finish the weave some outcomes of the early developments are unavoidably inherent to the telling.

There are now three discernible generations of Australian glass workers. The first generation spring from three sources, those who were introduced to contemporary glass while overseas, through the transfer of knowledge from the closing factories, or those who engaged in their own experiments at approximately the same time. The second generation are those who were inculcated in the ways of contemporary glass by the first generation or by the various visitors to these shores. We now have a bevy of graduates from the Universities and former trainees from the public and private studios. This third generation are now making significant contributions to Australian and international contemporary glass. The reality of classifying all participants into one of these categories is a little less neat than might be expedient but it serves the purpose well enough.

The future is in good hands. The younger generation, although chronologically not necessarily so,

have made meritorious use of their education, some returning to teach, others to establish studio practice which in turn trains more entrants to the field.

There are now notable private collections of contemporary glass in Australia some rivalling the smaller public collections. While it is far from easy, graduates from the institutions now establish livelihoods based upon studio production. Exhibition works are becoming more sophisticated as technique acquisition gives way to concept refinement. There is now considerable written account of studio glass. In the preparation of this statement the books, *Australian Studio Glass, the Movement, its Makers and their Art* by Dr. Noris Ioannou and *The Crafts Movement in Australia: A History* by Grace Cochrane have been constant points of reference to compare dates and details. Much of the groundwork is covered in these tomes. While there are many points of view held by the participants in the development of Australian studio glass the framework of events is portrayed in these and other accounts. The

documentation supplied for this statement from some twenty-five participants is similarly gratefully acknowledged. Particularly useful accounts are also to be found in the catalogues of the exhibitions initiated by The City Art Gallery of Wagga Wagga, especially the 1995 publication, *National Art Glass Collection* and in *Design Visions* published in 1992 by the Art Gallery of Western Australia. Further publications of note are, *Glass, A Contemporary Art* by Dan Klein and those by Ausglass, Craft Australia and Craft Arts International.

Australia now senses a maturing of nationhood. The issues of becoming a republic and removing the Union Jack from the national flag are argued resolutely from both stances. Many seek to position Australia, socially, politically, diplomatically and economically in Asia rather than maintain the image and self-concept of being a part of Europe removed only by distance. Studio glass similarly is maturing to see itself as other than a colony of the northern hemisphere.

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