

Media Specific

George Aslanis / Emma Borland / Dan Bowran / Samantha Cuffe / Kirstin Finlayson / Ros Harris / Nicole Heffes / Michael John Joseph / Jennifer King / Amanda McKenzie / Nadia Mercuri & Grace McKenzie / Rosslynd Piggott / Lee Pittella / Susan Reddrop / Alicia Renew / Yhonnie Scarce / Emma Sutherland / Jasmine Targett / Bethany Wheeler /

Initiating dialogue that surrounds contemporary art practice in relation to glass studio practice, Media Specific establishes a bond between traditional decorative arts and contemporary art practice. The selected artists work within the tradition of glass making, while utilising the medium when appropriate in order to communicate concepts and to visualise research. Embodying the diversity represented by glass practitioners, Media Specific focuses on the relationships and differences between contemporary and traditional concepts of glass media. Raising the question, is media specific practice abstracted into craft, because it is created with particular media and tradition?

Media Specific is an exhibition that aims to address surrounding dialogues between contemporary art practice and that which is considered traditional and decorative practice, by presenting twenty artists who work within the medium of glass, yet utilise abstract interrogation and ungoverned experimentation to realise their projects. The substance of glass is a seemingly untamable medium which continually finds itself in the lingering discourse of art verses craft. While many artists fight to stay relevant in the churning machine that is the arts, the proliferation of experimental and technological innovation enhances the arguments of traditional decorative techniques disassociating themselves from ‘freer’ forms of art. The polarity between these two concepts, lead to many conflicts between the materials when used as homogeneous cultural signs.

Glass poses many dangers and restrictions to the artist, from extreme heat and heavy-duty industrial machines that cut, polish and blast, to timely techniques and costly materials. With its luminescence, and optical virtuous the aesthetic and practice of glass presents a greater challenge as it is all too quickly categorised into ‘useful arts, decorative arts and industrial arts.’ In the same vain, the term ‘artisan’ is used against the skilled techniques that the artist is required to learn in order to be proficient with the medium, while ‘craft’ is used to separate the practice from the cultural production of art.

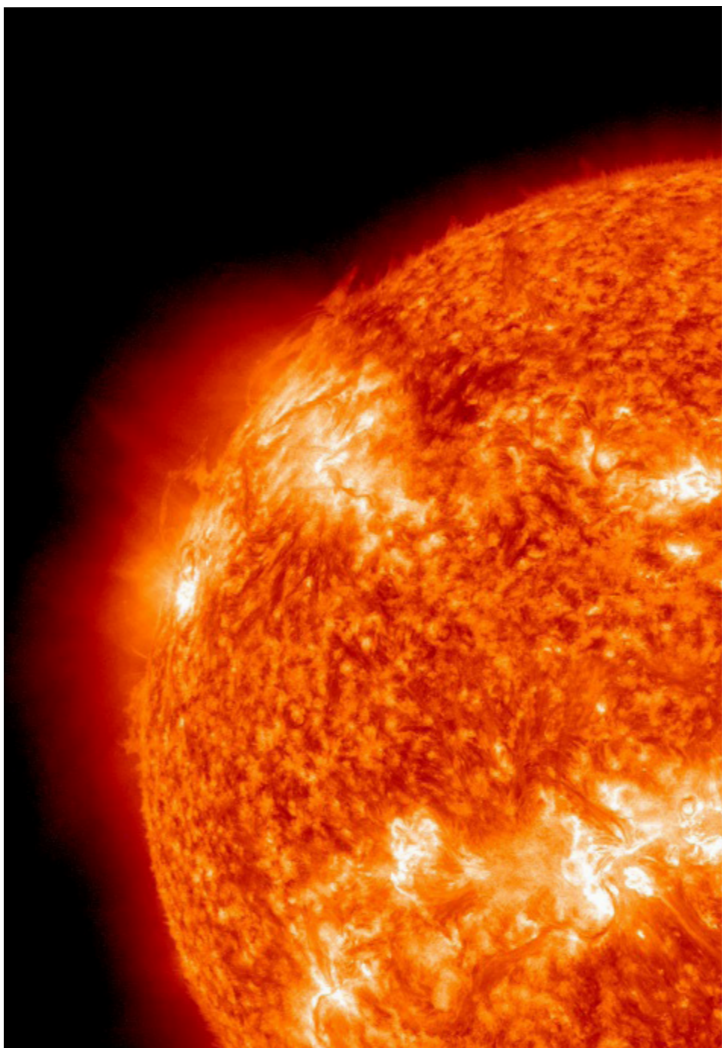


The eighteenth century philosopher Immanuel Kant increased the distinction between art and craft, with the ideal of craft as that which aims only to visually please, while further distancing craft from art by asserting that art is a product of genius and imagination, in contrast to craft which is procedural and intentional. This however may be precisely where the art of glass finds its definition comfortably within contemporary art practice. It is evident in the systematic technicity, that is to say in the union of centuries of technology and knowledge which has enabled glass artists to evolve the medium in order to communicate their concepts. It is also in the volatile nature of the substance and the antithesis between the natural and artificial that has enable artists to overcome an apparent aesthetic hindrance which has threatened to distract from the concept.

Historically a valuable material which has been manufactured since the first century BC, glass has been used for ideological, decorative and alchemic purposes. While some artists in **Media Specific** continue to reflect the deep history of glass with traditional techniques, others recklessly challenge the metaphysics of the medium. All twenty artists aim to essentially arouse an interpretational response from the viewer, therefore defining their practice as contemporary art rather than craft production.

Thus, in short, to anyone considering it well, all the effects of glass are marvellous. Considering its brief and short life, owing to its brittleness, it cannot and must not be given too much love, and it must be used and kept in mind as an example of the life of man and of the things of this world which, though beautiful, are transitory and frail.
Vannoccio Biringuccio, *Pirotechnia*, 1540

The Glass Studio thanks Emma Mayall, Assistant Curator, Contemporary Art, National Gallery of Victoria for opening the exhibition, Alicia Renew, Gallery Manager, Faculty Gallery, Kate McCaffery and all past & present staff & students of the Glass Studio for their roll in expanding the contemporary practice of glass over the past 31 years in the Faculty of Art & Design, Monash University.



Images (L - R):
Jasmine Targett, (detail) *The Similarity of Parallel Worlds*, 2011, video, blown & sandblasted glass.
Samantha Cuffe, (detail) *Warped Perceptions*, 2011, blown & mirrored glass.
Dan Bowran, (detail) *Core (blue)*, 2010, kiln formed & carved glass.
Yhonnie Scarce, *The day we went away*, 2004, blown glass & found suitcase.
Susan Reddrop, (detail) *Carnivora*, 2008, blown glass & metal hooks.
Above:
Kirstin Finlayson, *Childhood and other Disasters*, 2010, cast glass, resin casting, flame worked glass, silk & found objects.
Front page:
Ros Harris, *Addiction*.



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10am - 5pm Mon - Fri
12pm - 5pm Saturday
Closed public holidays
Admission free

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