

*At the time of this interview Ken Lockwood was the editor of Craft Arts International.*

I applied for the job of editor [*Craft Australia*] in 1980. When I took over there was no money at all coming to the magazine [from the Australia Council via the Craft Council of Australia]. During my three years as editor (without any funding) I managed to raise the publication to a point where it was financially self-sufficient and commercially viable through increased subscriptions, cover sales and advertising revenue. However, the situation was difficult, because within the Craft Council the magazine was perceived as a mouthpiece for whatever the organization, or the various State Craft Councils wanted to promote. It was clear, however, that in order for the magazine to prosper in its new 'financially independent' role it was essential to expand the readership beyond Australia's borders. The domestic market, in my opinion, was too small to support *Craft Australia* in its current form. I felt that it had to contain more international material in order to survive over the long term – and that as a self-financed publication it would probably fare better if it enjoyed increased editorial independence.

Understandably, at the time these ideas met with some resistance from Craft Council of Australia. Nevertheless, in placing the magazine on a firm footing, I felt I had served the organization's aims reasonably well. However, under the existing circumstances it seemed unlikely that the editor would ever obtain the autonomy and freedom to develop *Craft Australia* in directions that I considered necessary. I began to have serious doubts about the possibility of keep the magazine buoyant under the existing conditions.

I was interested in the contemporary crafts movement and the official magazine and I had made a commitment to *Craft Australia*. It was important for Australian work to be seen and taken seriously in other countries. To do that we had to show interest in the work of artists in other parts of the world; we couldn't simply say this magazine is about Australian work and keep it in one little controlled area. Yet that was the political message that the organization seemed to espouse. Of course, I rejected this notion. We needed to broaden out to the rest of the world – to accept and publish work by artists and designer/makers in the USA, Scandinavia, Europe and Asia. It was vital for us to include articles about work from all over the world. This was not taking it over, but showing a view of the world from an Australian perspective. This would encourage other countries to take an interest in Australian work and further cultural exchange – and that is exactly what started to happen. Australians began to receive invitations as artists-in-residencies in other countries.

Occasionally I had used work on the front cover of *Craft Australia* that was not by an Australian artist. In some quarters this was frowned upon and there was some talk about making it a rule that all work that went on the cover had to be Australian. I resented this interference because, as the editor, I was responsible for editorial content and ensuring the on-going viability of the magazine. I found the politics within the government funded body too intrusive, even though none of the funding was ever spent on the magazine. Oddly, there was no provision to prevent the organization from spending the magazine's hard earned revenue on projects unrelated to the publication. After three years, I reluctantly I tendered my resignation. However, my interest in contemporary crafts movement was undimmed and in association with my colleague, Jennie Thomas, we started *Craft Arts International*.

*What profile did glass have at that time?*

It had just begun to emerge in Australia. When I first started there was a lot of innovative textile work going on, a lot of studio weaving, embroidery and work with natural fibres. There was also intense activity on the ceramics scene. In fact studio ceramics was very strong, as was designer/jewellery and woodwork. At the time, apart from stained glass, Australian studio glass was hardly visible. Our early articles on the subject had to be sourced overseas. An obvious deterrent was the relatively high cost in setting up a hot shop (furnaces running around the clock). It was then that some of the colleges of advanced education and universities were beginning to offer courses in glass, such as the Chisholm Institute of Technology, RMIT and the SA School of Art in Adelaide.

When the Canberra School of Art [ANU] brought in Klaus Moje as Head of the Glass Workshop it transformed a lot of things because of the research he had been doing in the USA with *Bullseye*. The company was happy to continue its collaboration with Klaus because he had entered an institution where he could continue the research. They made a lot of their glass available to him that the institution probably would not have been able to afford. That relationship catapulted Australian glass into the forefront of world practice. That *Bullseye* link is still maintained today.

I had contact with Peter Minson in 1980 and it was all very experimental in what he was doing, but it was interesting in that every piece was different. That was my first contact with that kind of glass. Then of course there were people like Warren Langley, with whom I had a lot of contact in those formative days. Warren was totally committed and producing exciting work, but it was a constant struggle owing to the prohibitive costs associated with working in large-scale studio glass. Even though Warren was probably the first Australian glass artist to exhibit overseas, he realised it was necessary to find another revenue stream. Eventually, after he started designing and producing architectural glass in partnership with his brother, his situation improved. He realised that to stay involved in making studio glass for exhibition you had to have more than one string to your bow.

This was affirmed when we met Bertil Valien in about 1982 (or 1983) at a time when Kosta Boda had sensed there was a growing market for contemporary studio glass. The company told Bertil that if he was prepared to design products for the factory for six months of the year they would let him do what he liked for the rest of the year. They would exhibit his studio work in London, New York, or Paris and he would still be paid in the normal way. He told me that was the best he could have wanted because he knew that if he went out on his own and tried to make his work a small workshop he would be struggling. He was working for the factory and the market for six months then he got to do what he liked for the other six and he had all the technicians working with him to solve any technical problems.

I have never forgotten that. When glass artists come up to me and started bemoaning the fact that they were struggling with the cost of materials and gas and everything else, I would say they needed to create a production range that would keep the orders coming in all the time. You can cost that on your art, but to try and make it on your 'one-of-a-kind' art pieces alone is difficult unless you happen to enjoy a high profile among curators and private collectors.

*Another income is teaching.*

This was an attractive alternative for those fortunate enough to secure a position in their chosen field with a college of advanced education, or university. But it was always a sore point of contention among those in the field who didn't have a second income stream and whose livelihood was dependant on what they were able to sell through galleries, exhibitions or markets. When the latter had an exhibition the prices reflected the reality of their situation. Those employed in a CAE [college of advanced education], or university could have an exhibition where their prices could be more competitive because they weren't reliant on a decent margin on sales as their sole income – but the exhibition, regardless of sales, was a significant addition to their CVs. That uneven playing field caused a degree of friction. Some independent practitioners tried to get the Crafts Council of Australia to take some action on this, but what could the organization do?

*What was the feeling around glass in those early days?*

There was a company in Sydney that used to import a lot of glass. I think it was called *Yenken Sandy*. Along with a huge inventory, the company used to import the *Bullseye* glass. We used to visit the showroom during evenings when someone from *Bullseye* would give a talk about new developments in the medium (Klaus Moje or Boyce Lundstrum). I could see the potential there. But *Yenken* seemed more interested in commercial plate glass, and I got the impression they were trying to be more involved in supplying stained glass, which at the time was growing in popularity. In fact, it was the main area of glass activity when I entered the craft movement. We ran numerous articles on the subject. Lots of people were learning how to do it.

Early on it was mainly stained glass, fusing and slumping. Take Peter Crisp for instance. He was a student of Maureen Cahill [Sydney College of the Arts]. Of course other people did it too, but he was the first one who came to our attention when he was making vessels that were slumped. He still makes them, but he now does them in *pate de verre*. The mind boggles to think you could slump *pate de verre* into such delicate forms and preserve its granular texture.

*Glass in the early eighties was experimental?*

It was at a time when the first students were starting to graduate from courses available at CAEs. Peter Crisp would have been one of the first ones to come out of a tertiary course on glassmaking. We met him when he was still a student. That was when I was at the Crafts Council and I ran an article in *Crafts Australia* on Peter's work. Shortly after Jennie Thomas and I left the Crafts Council *The Waterford Shop* in Martin Place offered to stage Peter Crisp's first solo show. This was unheard of really, because the only other place that would have done something like this was the *David Jones Gallery*. Stephen Morris had a solo blown glass exhibition at DJs about this time that was a complete sell out – unbelievable for that time.

Peter's solo exhibition at *The Waterford Shop* coincided with the launched our new magazine *Craft Arts International*. At the outset, owing to the surge of interest in hot glass activity, we were in danger of becoming a glass magazine. A cursory glance at the first three of four issues and you'll encounter names such as Stanislav Melis, Stephen Skillitzi, Gunnar Cyrén, Scott Chaseling, Maureen Cahill, Michael Keighery, Rob Knottenbelt, Colin Reid and Setsuko Ogishi, to mention a few.

*Glass was in the public eye?*

Yes. *Orrefors* were advertising regularly in the magazine and most of our early material on glass came from overseas. We interviewed many of the artists during our visit to Sweden and Finland – including Miles Helston, Olle Alberius, Gunnar Cyrén, Lars Hellsten, Jan Johansson, Eva Englund and Anne Nilsson. On returning to Australia we published their work in the same issues containing glass objects made by Australians. It was quite bizarre, but it struck a note of authenticity at the time and has since proved to be a seminal influence on the development of studio glass in this country.

*You gave Australian glass equality with overseas work.*

Yes, I thought it was important. I knew that people in Australia at that time would take all this in. It was definitely a source book. People were telling us that it was already happening and they were telling us that as a result of appearing in the magazine they were approached to conduct workshops, or they had received invitations to teach at Pilchuck, or been asked to give a series of lectures and demonstrations in America.

[Still referring to the magazines] Here is an article on works from the *Louvre Museum*, which I found relevant. This is ancient Roman glass. Here is the first exhibition of overseas studio glass to tour Australia. Here is the first exhibition of Australian studio glass to tour overseas.

*What leads you to place an artist, or a work in this magazine?*

That it is relevant to what is going on at the time. It is work that we recognise as being of the day and we hadn't seen anything like it before. It was cutting edge in some way, or it was a group or individual who was actually eking out a niche that was sustainable. In other words, they were serious. We felt that by giving them exposure in the magazine it would help to further develop what they were doing.

We used to go to an awful lot of exhibitions. In those days there seemed to be more people who were willing to write for the magazine that weren't professional writers, but they were so excited by what was going on they wanted to put something down. That is how we used to get most of our material. It wasn't necessarily professional writing, but at least it was informative and recorded what was going on.

It was Australian work and it was actually being sold alongside *Lalique*, *Kosta Boda* and *Daum* at The Waterford Shop. This was in 1985. I was telling artists this was a direction they ought to consider and take seriously. But the Crafts Council was less enthusiastic. They wanted studio glass to be taken in a different and more critical vein with stronger emphasis on unique exhibition pieces. In venues like this the manager was telling me that he was pricing quality Australian work at comparable levels to the top name French and Swedish glass and it was selling well. In those days they couldn't keep up with the demand, because whenever a VIP gift was required, clients would make a beeline for The Waterford Shop and seek out glass objects made in Australia.

*The Waterford Shop would have been high-end decorative arts.*

Definitely. In making art glass at that time the opportunities for exposure and sale were very slender, but high-end decorative work could fetch good prices at the right venue.

*Your magazine focussed on high-end craft.*

Most definitely, we avoided featuring work in the magazine that was regarded as handicraft, or produced by hobbyists. Early on we decided it would be a category that we referred to as visual arts, regardless of the medium, or whether it was flat or three-dimensional. It is strongly orientated towards the use of materials and the application of traditional skills at a professional level. We have also included printmaking, painting and sculpture in the magazine since it was launched in 1984.

*Do you categorise work when it comes in?*

The girls do so for practical reasons (so it is easier to find later on). But categorising work by medium, or process can be misleading. The maker's intention has to be taken into account. It could be sculptural work, or it might be a form of ornamentation or jewellery made out of glass – but you can't say it is "glass" because it just happens to be made from glass. The object is more than the medium – that's the drift.

This is something we have been bumping against for more than 20 years. We have to look at it differently. For instance with indigenous art, do we have to identify it as such, i.e., 'Indigenous Art', or is it just art, or is it just painting? Of course, it is art, but it is indigenous art in that it is tied up with ancestral beliefs – their spirituality and Dreamtime. It is not just painting, as we know it. But it is certainly art, and it possesses an ineffable quality.

*Do you find you are slipping into a specific language when you are talking about pieces?*

I don't think so. When we went to see the Anish Kapoor exhibition [London] there was tremendously excitement taking place. It was the media launch, but with the photographers and the journalists, it was as if a major celebrity had suddenly made an impromptu appearance. But it was the work and its amazing presentation that aroused the interest. It was the first solo show of a living artist ever to be held at the Royal Academy in London. And it was as though Kapoor had broken all the rules you could imagine and in doing so ensured that the show was a tremendous success – it broke all previous attendance records at the Royal Academy.

We went through it with one of our writers, an artist/academic. I asked him what he thought of the show and he said with a wry smile, "Well, it's a circus". (Laughs) I said I thought it was fantastic. When I saw Kapoor interviewed a couple of days later on the BBC, it increased my admiration of him as a person and an artist. He was doing what he believed was important and having immense fun at the same time. They asked him where it all came from and he said you must have the courage and be willing to gaze into the depths of the abyss. Nothing may emerge, but you just have to do that. I mention it because this was in the Royal Academy and it blew peoples' minds.

If it weren't for the excitement we would have quit years ago. We would not have gone on with the magazine. It has always been like that. It has never been too intellectual for us. As much as we can, we stay away from sterile conceptual art. If it has some life in it we will deal with it, but if we look at it and find only clichés or stunts, we regard it as "defunct" and won't touch it. We would do the same with an object. That is how generally I tend to view work most of the time – I expect to be engaged with a work in some way – it may be on a visceral, emotional, psychological, or lyrical level.

All of the contributors who write for *Craft Arts International* on a regular basis are extremely well informed and professionally involved in the visual arts. Their articles may have a critical, or a narrative slant, depending on the subject, but we always aspire to illustrate them as lavishly as space will permit. Generally, the artists and the authors seem to be satisfied with the end result

*The work may be surrounded by a number of things that are outside the thing itself.*

That's true. On our recent trip there was another exhibition on at Tate Modern. It was called *Pop Life*. The names in it were Damien Hirst, Tracey Emin, Jeff Koons, Andy Warhol and several others who were not as well known. My response to that show was negative. The critics in the papers the next day also panned it as being abysmal. Although there were 'big names' and much hype attached to it, the show fell inexplicable flat. Yet on seeing the show on *Turner and the Masters* at Tate Britain (although I had previously seen so much of Turner's work) I was enchanted. The gallery had put so much scholarship and research into assembling works that depicted the same scene from the same vantage point, but which had been painted up to a hundred years before Turner. The paintings were hung side-by-side, or in groups of three – one by Gainsborough, one by Constable and one by Turner. People were spending days in this exhibition.

*Can I ask about 'image' verses the 'work' itself?*

That is fraught with contradiction. I have been a judge on a number of occasions where the selection was by projected slides. If you are in the business you usually know who has made the piece. There you are picking it, not from the slide, but from what you know of that person's work, because the slide might be of poor quality. People have come to me and said that the work shown in *Craft Arts International* magazine looks better than the work they have see in the advertised shows. In other words, we, or the photographer, are accused of glamorising the work (laughs). It is seldom the case, because if you are dealing with really good work it deserves to be well photographed, but this is not always the case. Consequently, we do occasionally devote considerable time 'optimising' an image that we feel shows it in a more accurate light. It is either that, or we don't use it. We couldn't do that in the early days, because we didn't have the facilities.

*Are you seeing current directions in glasswork?*

Glass is still a growing field. From our point of view it is still dominant. There is more energy in it than there is in ceramics. There is more excitement and stimulation and experimentation going on with it. There will always vessels made out of it of course, but it is being used more as a sculptural medium and I think it has tremendous potential in that area. I am always turned on when I see glass sculpture. It somehow grabs me and I spend a lot of time dealing with it and weighing it up, engaging with it in someway on various levels.