

Abridged interview with Wayne Pearson: 07/03/06

Subject: Australian kiln glass with specific reference to 'style' and glass artists Deb Cocks, Warren Langley, Jessica Loughlin and Richard Whiteley

Initially my interest in glass was as practitioner. That is how I got into teaching glass. I studied for five years at East Sydney when painting was a diploma course. I was after light and transparency. I looked back to those paintings that were not working and thought paint was the wrong medium. Light is what I want. Glass gives that.

I came from a very different point of view to other people who thought glass was 'in'. It was that paint and pigment did not facilitate what I wanted. No matter what I did, it would not work.

I thought, "Where can I study glass?" The only person here at the time was Leonard French doing ceilings and windows in *dalle de verre* [slab/chunk glass].

For my fifth year I had to choose an elective. They did not have electives in glass and they were bowled over. They said I had to do more sculpture and painting when all I wanted to do was glass. They could not assess me. I said, "Just give me my elective hours". (I had a studio right behind the college at East Sydney in that little block of units in Forbes Street – I was the first student ever to have a place there.) I said they could come over and see what I was doing.

It was a mixture of stained glass and *dalle de verre*. *Dalle de verre* is a very thick slab glass like Leonard French was doing. So to my final year I actually exhibited the paintings that I had to, but I also exhibited *dalle de verre* panels and some stained glass. I thought that stained glass is too fiddly for me – it was not direct enough – but it was all I could access then.

I started looking at other schools (all over and anywhere). The ones in America were craft based. They were teaching at the beginning (or just after) of the emergence of the studio glass movement and people like Harvey Littleton were teaching it with confidence.

I was fascinated with the theatrics of the glass blower, but I did not really want to do that. I thought it was limiting. After all, that whole thing is centrifugal and how you centre the glass. Again that was craft.

I found out that there was a place in Stourbridge, England. It was in the middle of nowhere about fourteen miles from Birmingham. The 'black country' was the area where the French began the English glass industry. The French took glass there at the turn of the 19th century because 'black country' industry was already there (metal and everything else).

It was a weird place to go, but at that point Keith Cummings was teaching there. He was the person who became the glass guru, making fantastic works in glass in the early 1960s (at the same time as in America), but it was not recognized. He is not a

big person for seeking publicity and profile.

He was very knowledgeable. When I studied there it was fantastic because it was all I had to do. I was doing a BA Honours. When I did that you could choose three things as umbrella areas. You could either have *Craft* – which was learning how to blow glass, *Design* – drawing for the Design Board, drawing for the factories (they now don't exist) and *Experimental* which no one had really taken on, but I really wanted. That was with a 'dodgy' chance of what would I have in three years time. A lot of people took the safer options.

It was all within the Visual Arts School and it was really glass. It was called a Glass Honours Degree, but it was seen as a part of the visual arts course. It was discreet. The visual arts school was not only opposite in geography (across the road), it was opposite in everything else.

That is how I started. My attitude was always to experiment and try things. We would do our thing all week. I remember Keith would come down once a week (we would have a one hour appointment with him - that was it). It was good. It was hard for me because everyone there (except me) was quite reserved. I remember my first experimental project in the kiln when I stuck in all these rocks. They could not believe it – the scale and the size. "What is she doing?" But by the time I came back I had done the experimental work.

I had not applied for a grant to go over there, but on the week I left I put in something with the Australia Council. Moira Kerr interviewed me. It was not when the grant applications were due and no one knew my name, because I never mixed in any circle. She asked, "What I would do if I didn't get the grant?" I looked at her and said, "I am on a plane tomorrow". There was no question about that. It was not going to make any difference. I had taken one and a half years to save up by working at Doyle's Restaurant. It was incidental I found you could apply for grants.

I sent back slides at the very end of that year (not knowing where my money would be coming from). I was one of the very first people to get one of these grants, which were a really strong thrust in Australia Council in early 70s. They knew glass was starting.

People like Cedar Prest and Rob Knottenbelt landed on my doorstep over there. Warren Langley had gone through the American way – Warren did a short course at summer school with Dante Marioni's father, Paul Marioni (who was the much better known at the time. His son was not old enough to do anything then). Paul was a well known stained glass artist making quite cryptic and quite social points in current affairs within a narrative in his work (even though the stained glass process was very traditional).

That is where Warren's influence came from. I remember him coming through the college in Stourbridge. You had people going to Australia Council where they say if you're getting this money you must see Maureen Cahill who is already over there – but I did not know that. I was not connected here. I used to clean in the early mornings at East Sydney. I would go to study in the day and I would start at Gordon's Restaurant in the city from 5.00 pm. I did not have any social interaction with artists here.

When I set up at Stourbridge, I realised there was nothing to do, except glass. That was a good thing – while everyone thought I was in swinging London, I wasn't. I remember going down High Street (I was a member of the Natural Health Association), I asked for a salad and the woman looked at me as if I was crazy and said, "Sorry cock, we don't serve those 'till summer". I was lonely and depressed.

I grabbed Keith to see something with the kiln. You could see he was not used to being touched (by the end of the three years, it was different). I found it difficult. I kept myself going by getting the White Magic Bus one-way to the Greek Islands. I had chosen England because I thought would not have cultural differences, but with my extrovert style I related more to the Greeks (without even speaking Greek).

I started doing all these experiments. When I came back I did kiln work because that is what Keith was doing. I came back went to work again at Doyle's.

At that time head of the Craft Council of NSW was Jane Burns, a formidable character in the Australian craft landscape. I went to see her and she sent me over to the director Sydney College of the Arts, Jim Allen who just founding courses for the college. I did not know what he looked like. I was going to show my portfolio and there is nuggetty guy in King Gee trouser shorts and singlet. He was putting in the bins (I assumed he was the cleaner). He said, "Show me your work", and I thought it was weird. Then I found out that he was the Director. It was holidays and there were no students. There was then only the one year at Sydney College of the Arts.

We started talking, and it was fortuitous for me that they had been thinking of introducing glass. Jim Allen was a visionary in every way and they had asked Sam Herman, who started the JamFactory in Adelaide, to quote for the college. He said \$25,000 to start a hot shop. Now that's nothing, but then it was a lot. (When I studied in Stourbridge, I used to blow, but it was not for me. My ideas come much faster than I want to spend learning centrifugal skill – so I thought I'd experiment with other processes.)

Jim took me on as a sculpture lecturer. He put me in one of his credit point courses – aluminium casting – as well. I said, "Aluminium casting?" He said, "Maureen you don't even have to anneal for this, just shove in the polystyrene and pour it." So I took that as a part-time teacher. He said that was the way to get in. That was very helpful.

I started glass as a minor study in '78. (I had already written the course.)

Because there are inherent qualities in glass?

For my ideas.

You were involved with kiln work rather than furnace work?

Because of the breadth of ideas that could come from that.

The conceptual base?

Exactly. I did not feel technique was the be all and end all. I thought you could always get someone to make some of the forms through blowing, but if you did not really know how to use glass laterally – well, what's the point?

I very much have an experimental strategy in the work I do myself. When I started course, I used to say as long as you don't blow up the kilns you can try anything. That is what I always liked. That is what got a lot of good work out at the beginning. I started that.

Mr Fujisi, before he passed away, chose an exhibition to go to a museum in Tokyo and Kyoto. I was chosen as Australian, plus three students at the time. That was in 1984 and Klaus only came to start Canberra in 1983. Our first SCA graduates were coming out in 1981.

That is where I go up to the next level. I started exhibiting the glass because we were making and looking at glass differently. Glass was big in craft shops – as little bowls in macramé. We had to get people looking at glass as an art medium.

At that stage studio glass existed as an adjunct to another crafts?

Exactly – as another craft skill. I will never deny that there is craft skill in everything about glass, but that is in the method. There wasn't any space to show glasswork in the way we were thinking – that is, not catering to people who wanted a bowl.

We found this place in Windsor Street in Paddington. We started as collective. There was Neil Roberts (since passed away), who was fantastic. There was Ann Hand - very sad, (she committed suicide). There was Andrew Neilson. There were seven of us, including Giselle [Courtney] and Keith [Rowe] and myself. Keith was the second year's intake of students and Giselle was the first year's intake.

That was our collective. We were in Paddington from 1982, but we did not want to stay there. We were too limited. The woman owner wanted us to paint the walls bisque and all that stuff, but we did not have anywhere else. We were folding – having not taken up the lease again. Keith had his studio in Mitchell Street, Glebe. We were walking down there one day and this (now Glass Artist's Gallery building) had just been built. This was in 1988.

Keith did not want to keep going. He was having ideas about Blackheath. So Giselle and I took it over in 1989. She stayed there for about another two years, but she met Rodney Monk (from Public Art Squad) and married him. He is a partner in her business now.

I did my first glass installation. It was suspended from the ceiling. (It could never go anywhere else.) That was when they had a glass biennale every two years. Judy Le Lievre was the head of Wagga (Regional Gallery) at the time, asked me to do a big installation. That had never been done before. I did a very big piece down there, called 'Breakthrough'. In fact Powerhouse Museum bought it. I don't think they will ever put it out because they will never have the space. It is in boxes.

The whole idea is working with multiples and overlapping. When I show slides a lot of my work is reduced to the 2D. That is not what I am about. You must see the actual pieces. The whole thing is about spatial relationships – just as important as the actual pieces themselves. The elements are equal. I use light as a medium and I use glass as the vehicle to show how I can direct light.

It is more to do with light giving volume through the way the work is placed. By the shift of certain elements you can actually give something a much larger volume, because you are playing with optical illusion through transparency and refraction.

The ambiguous quality in the glass?

Yes.

What is it about the glass that brings clients into the Glass Artists Gallery instead of a traditional painting or sculpture gallery?

The 'what' has changed over the years. We always had 'bread and butter' lines. Someone could go out with a small object – sometimes functional – but now we don't have that so much. What we are hoping is that people are looking for one-off work that really does capture those intrinsic qualities of glass.

I always say, when people come in, light gives glass life, which is very different to a painting. What you are trying to promote are those values, those qualities, which can only come from using glass. Even though they might not come in with that kind of attitude, I hope that by talking to me I make it possible for them to understand why they are looking at it.

I am not talking about the 'collectors'. The way people select work in America is unfortunate. They just ask have I got 'that name'. For instance, there was a very small (not a very good) piece by a certain artist in this cabinet. When these latest American collectors came out, they wanted it to have 'one of those' to have that name in their collection. It is a false base for collecting. They have no personal interest in the work. It is quite competitive way of looking at the work. Sometimes there is no appreciation for the aesthetic. There could be if they appreciate one more than the other. I find it unfortunate when I am dealing with people like that. That is not what this gallery is about.

Giles Bettison was a fourth year student when I took him overseas to Wheaton. Nobody had seen him then. I educate people. I am a practitioner. I am aware of what the market wants. I can actually help. I like the idea of helping new artists. I like to assist customers to appreciate glass. Hopefully then they can be the first ones to see these artists come up and watch them grow even larger.

Have you criteria when looking at work?

Yes. Sometimes, I throw that criteria out if I think someone has appeal beyond that – for instance there are the Denise Pepper pieces, that are wallpaper with pate de vere. Until you have seen them you might not appreciate them – I always try to keep an open view.

I like the fact that people can be experimental. I do not get in the way, I do not want to give people pre- conceived demands. I want to leave that with the artists. I am attracted to people who use (glass) in a challenging way.

The unfortunate thing about a lot of American artists is they repeat things, because they can get top dollar for it. I have a concern when you ask artists what their work is about and they have the same answer twenty years later. I would like to think they move on. Artists like Neil Roberts who passed away, but whose ideas are not just about glass. He used glass very well, but sometimes these artists are not recognised because we tend to pigeon-hole these people as 'glass artists'.

The Glass Artists Gallery was given that name, because at the time we were trying to get affirmative action for artists who were working glass. It is not what the name should be now, because people can be artists working in glass, or not. It is not a good name, but because people know that name it has use as a marketing tool. We have not changed it – but I am very aware of that issue.

If you are challenging ways of looking at things, there are going to be some doubtful results before you get to those that work. I don't think that is bad. I don't think you can say that so and so is not doing any good work anymore because it was not like the first one. To me an artist should always be searching and looking out for new ideas.

Richard Jolly for years and years did voluptuous figures, which he sculptured. See the ones on the wall up there in my room, in the boxes – but there is another one on this side, just a flat piece, like a sand casting. In fact a lot of the works don't use much glass. He has gone through a very hard time because the American collectors have taken a while to accept the change. It would affect him from a monetary point of view, but he felt he had to go with his ideas. For quite a while he did not have a good income compared to what he might have had if he kept working in that way. He feels is important that he makes his own statement. That is what is really good about him.

There are some people that don't do that. Michael Taylor uses the hex style for gluing together of glass block things. How many can you have of those? They are design exercises.

Richard Whitely is strongly influenced by Brychtova and Libensky in the Czech large cast glass tradition. They were working like that starting from the '60s (and actually started working together in the '40s). They had the *Art Centrum*. It wasn't a free country then. They have the best polishers and engravers, best casters, biggest kilns. They would go in there and do the work. They would have everything at their fingertips. What they call their one-off art pieces, are massive pieces with elements cast. (The Corning Museum purchased a big piece.) They had fantastic systems. They could do that, whereas the blown glass movement, or studio glass movement in America, just came from that little tank. It was poor looking ceramic shapes to begin with.

Are we talking about Czech influence on Richard – industrial elements?

Not so much as industrial. They were always known as artists. They had taken it out

of the industry with their own ideas. I really think they were the groundbreakers in that the idea is most important to the work. They were not just doing what the factory wanted.

Brychtova father was a very well known artist and they used to work together. Libensky was teaching. He used to be the drawer and she used to make them up in the slab, or whatever – all the models and the actual moulds. They were a very good partnership. You should try to get the video out. It is them just talking about their ideas. It is in the [SCA] library. Their way of looking at things was far more to do with consultation – about aspects of the aesthetics, comparing against a piece that was going into a window. A lot of the buildings then had big cast pieces, but they were each considered in differently.

I do think a lot of Richard's work is market driven. If you look in that book over there [*Australian Studio Glass*, Norris Ioannou] – the very different work in there with the figure and the tube [*Madonna and Child*, 1993] – that glassy thing – and what his work was when he was a student, which was earlier as part of his MA. That it was really interesting. They went missing from the Powerhouse and were never found. His pieces that he had set up were more native casts, sort of tribal pieces, before when he was a student..

I think Richard was very aware of the American market. I know that when he was lecturing (when I was visiting at the Sydney College of the Arts) you could see he was looking at other work. He would disagree with me about this, but I am sure the market influenced the way his ideas progressed.

I think that he is interested in those things that Brychtova does. He is interested in light and mass, but those things came more easily because he could see that people would want those.

Warren has been jumping around. He first started off in leadlight and then went to the work down here in the gallery [large sculpture]. I have always had a problem with what Warren calls sculptures, the ones down there, because to me a sculpture should be something that you walk right around. Warren's work here can only be viewed from one side. I think they are autonomous reliefs. OK, they are not on the wall as a relief, but you cannot do much with the back of them – you have to put them somewhere that accommodates that.

Is it important whether it is a relief or not?

It is not important, but to me personally it does not achieve a sculptural quality.

That is the work before what he is doing now – now he is using fibre optics and neon and photographing these pieces in original landscapes. He took his work to SOFA. It was these big two-dimensional photographs of what he did. That did not really go down well, because they were sculpture objects at a functional art show. If it was the Chicago Art Fair he could have gone better there.

He is at a really interesting point in his career. He just got very big public artworks – apparently he has just got one recently that will keep him going for a while.

There is 'funkiness' about the work, which he might not take as a compliment, but I quite like it. Go down to the Novotel and have a breakfast there one day, or just have a drink. You will see the piece as you go up and down the escalator – just a really big map. Look at all those cast elements. He also has one in the Hansard, the library in Canberra.

Deb's Cox's work is very clever – clever in ways that it's actually made, clever in the sense of ideas. She works in conjunction with her husband – especially naming the pieces. He fires the pieces for Deb. They had a very successful show here a few years ago. I want to have more. Her works have very strong narrative, often to do with the social conditions of the time.

For some people that is too much – people are saying this to me, the people who have bought things from her overseas. This year hardly anything sold. They said they were far too dark, dark in application, tonally dark because (for health reasons) she does not scratch off as much of the pigment, or black enamel that she used to. That is one thing. The other thing is, it is dark in content. Quite often it has foetal shapes, which people in America can't stand.

But they are very sensitive. There is one called, *We are not amused*, with a chook going around on a spinning top. It is all about genetic engineering. They are clever names on each of the pieces if people have the confidence to buy them.

I'm finding now that we are going to the market in Taipei, they don't want to know about the idea.

They want decorative surface?

Exactly. In a way she is not selling out, but there are different ways she can put forward her ideas. I talked to her about the fact that people at the moment are saying they are too hard to live with.

Her figures do not look unlike her and her partner Andrew. If you have got issue No. 33 (Crafts International) with Klaus on the front, look at those. There is a one called *Under Sail* in there, with a little baby in this tub with things flapping like a sail – they were the nappies hanging on the line. She transforms things. She actually celebrates the ordinary.

I have to say, being person who sells her work, she has the widest disparity between how she creates an idea and how the viewer interprets it. A lot of them go "What is going on in that crazy mind of hers?" They feel quite threatened. They feel what is wrong with her? What is she doing this?" They are disturbed by the work.

I got her invited to this international art event in Stourbridge, (where I was trained). They are paying for her to fly over. What is interesting is that they really warm to her work, because they are not unlike some of the work the English have done in different periods. They are very much like a certain application that was used in ceramics, and the actual figures could fit into a contemporary or a medieval setting.

They can deal with weird images, whereas in America you can see they want to have something pleasing, not confronting. They will say, "We don't want those –

there's a foetus". They do not realise why it's there and they do not want to know.

Jessica Loughlin is a real crowd pleaser. I am not saying this in a mocking way. To me her pieces are too minimal at the moment. I feel that while they are quite beautiful, (members of the Museum of Contemporary Art in New York, MOMA, would love to have one on the wall). She is the Rothko of glass and Rothko did very well, but very different colour pallet compared with her light greys.

They are very popular with people because people can relate to them as work of a contemporary artist. They are not necessarily 'glass-like', but the actual quality of her workmanship is fantastic in the way she cuts that glass. But I feel it is really the strong art collectors who can relate to her work because of that 'Rothko' feeling.

Warren Langley would see himself more as a fine artist now, rather than a glass artist, but that kind of categorisation is boring anyway.

What is the something more that you are hoping that people will see in the glass?

What we are promoting is the breadth of ideas that can come out using glass as a material for the artist. It's the breadth of the ideas. Later this year I am having an exhibition, these 18 women who essentially use lead-light. They meet every year at a different country, and this comes from Ceda Prest. She is an interesting person because she really recognises the landscape in Australia – the light and the colour we use. It is so much brighter.

I remember when I got to England I could not get a coloured overcoat. They had those black duffel coats. The inside was that horrible furry red stuff. I used to wear it inside out, because I had to make a statement about colour. You get on the bus – kids of about the age of five with frown furrows (I thought this is really sad) – you can make it so that it is a happier feeling. When I got off the plane back here, the light blinded me. You have to work to bring the best out of that climate instead of giving in to how dark it all is.

It is the breadth of people who work in glass, the breadth of ideas and the lateral application.

What is lovely about Deb is that people think of her as some quirky, or dark witch-like creature. Something very different to what she is. She is always horrified when I say you must meet these people. Even now she is doing this workshop and feeling very edgy about it because she says, what are they going to expect? It is so sweet the way she thinks of herself. She is very humble. Her work completely contradicts her.

I see Richard as sort of market driven and that is just because he is out there, always assessing the whole thing. Calculating towards success, which is not a criticism, because he knows what way he wants to go. That could be a compliment really, but I don't know if his work of late is that exciting. You went to Powerhouse with the design show? The piece there to me it really was just a big glass casting. I wonder if you would even like that piece.

I used to do 'production' plates and it was shock/horror when Glen Cook, the

curator at Queensland at the time, told me some gallery in Queensland (a year ago) bought one. It was meant to be a commercial plate and it was in their collection as a 'Maureen Cahill'. I cannot get it back off them and they can identify it how they like, saying it is part of their collection. I can't say anything about it, but it is a 'Dazel' production piece. I could say would they please make sure they write that on it.

Warren is an affable character, who I feel is always looking at other ways. He gets out there. He is a savvy person looking for where he can get big commissions. I like and respect that.

The thing is, I feel Warren borders on being the popular public artist. His idea might not be coming from inside. It might be, once again, market driven, which is not wrong – but that is why I keep coming back to Deb. I really feel for her in the sense. The worst thing is now is I had to talk to her. I had to say, did you see the one they picked? That is the kind of work, but there is nothing wrong with those ones. It is awful because you have to tell them, if they want to sell.

There are two worlds operating here. In my head I love those 'twee' things. They hold a contradiction in their name and you really have to get it. I love that about her and Andrew, but her works have not been selling in any gallery at the moment. Yet that was the first piece they bought in the Victoria and Albert Museum – it is interesting, the paradox of commercial demand and the true intrinsic art world and the time lapse between them.

Jessica Loughlin is a very nice person. She has been promoted when she goes over and works with Bullseye. I don't know if you know what Bullseye used to do, but they provide the product. She goes over there so they don't have the shipping problems. She works there. She produces a mass of stuff for them and they go off and sell it from there. They don't have the whole problem that we do and then she turns up at these shows. She was at Collect, I believe.

I like the work, but once again I feel that you can only do so many of them. A good example is Mel Douglas. Karen O'Cleary, sister of Martin Beaver from Beaver Galleries exhibits her and went to Collect. She has Narek Galleries. She bought a church and gallery in Tanja, right near Klaus in Tathra. She went over there and she did not sell one thing. So she would be down \$40,000.

I did not sell one thing last year at SOFA, but everyone was raving on about the Aboriginal work. Everyone was saying how good it was, but you have to wait for it to build up.

I have a problem that Jessica has been recognised too early by a market. Bullseye keep her with that idea, because they know they can sell. I don't know. She is not challenging ideas in her work. As a maker, I don't know if she can. It is always minimalist and that is why I was getting to with Karen. She picked about eight of Mel's and three of Brian Hirst's. Brian has not changed since 1987. Brian does not change.

Mel's is so minimal. You do not put eight pieces into a space when they look like each other except for a slight difference in the form. Why would people buy one at \$7,000? It is a mistake, but you don't know that until afterwards. She sold Mel really

well last time, but that was exhibited with wood, not glass.

Another thing. I was talking to Brian. He never generally relates his little failures, but I think he had to face up because he knows I would have known. He said Karen would have been more successful with more of his pieces because his pieces sell better if there are more. It is one way at looking at things. The thing is, in all fairness, last year my stand looked good, but nobody bought anything.

You can't say that an artist is not successful if the work doesn't sell. Look at Deb's work. It did not sell, but it is fantastic work. She has put some upstairs now which I don't think are successful. I have told her that.

I like Dana Jakova's work. She is the Czech artist that paints and draws on glass and they are superimposed. I like her work a lot. It is vigorous. It is out there. It makes a lot of social comments. I love the work. It is really only flat glass sheets, but she puts together narrative.

One thing I could say is, I am starting to appreciate and have other people appreciate Rod Coleman's 'cage-blown' work. I appreciate them for the skill and I love the way makers appreciate him for the skill (not just the curators). But to me the one from the Ranamok is too decorative. It could be wallpaper on glass, but when you see his very latest. Technically, but the ideas have strengthened as well.

You still have a high respect for the craft?

Yes, definitely. I don't divide it up.

It was interesting because when Hamish's show was called 'conceptual craft' Peter Travis came in and gave him a good hard riding. Hamish did not know who he was. Peter came in later and said he is a strong person. Because he was saying things like conceptual craft, he gave him a whole lot of questions about it. Hamish gave a bit back. Neither would agree. Luckily his pieces have sold. The work is a dichotomy. The fact is, if people love the craft or skill, they do not really have to care about the concept. Someone might love that jacket he made. He would be telling everyone it took 12,000 knots, but on the other hand with something conceptual you don't really give a damn how it is made. The bottom line to me is the strength of the idea.

Calling something conceptual craft is going to get someone like Peter Travis questioning, because it is trying to take up the two in one work. Peter's great. I generally ring him up and say come on go down and give a crit. session, but he had already visited.

I had a seminal moment. I remember once when I did that piece *Ascension*, the one that Aldo Duga saw five years before Parliament House was built, the one that flies towards the corner. Some pieces stand and some go up. At the time there was a woman who was at the Power House. I got her to come in as my crit. person.

When she saw it she said, Maureen your piece is all about ascension, but all the pieces formed to go up into a corner. She said, there were three massive windows there (I knew the space from the very beginning – a very big space before they cut

up the spaces out at the Rocks Old Sailors Home). Why didn't you have it so it gives the feeling that it is still ascending? Where is it ascending? If you give it a name like ascension, you have really contradicted the name by shoving them into a wall.

It was true, but I was too close. Aldo saw that work five years before. It was a competition for Parliament House, but I was given this space because he knew the kind of thing he wanted in this tall space.

As I was finishing the work (I was turning them out at three pieces a day in different firings), I stood back to set up. I was not looking. It was a domino effect and one fell into the other into the other. I didn't have any extras. That was the day before so then I literally had to go back up to the old hired space where we had the studio in Rozelle. I did another three. When I took the last one it was still warm.

I was trying to keep calm – so I had a massage, had a facial and got my hair done. Every firing I did something ridiculous, very female. I have to make sure that my mind does not think this is impossible.

I always say you learn just as much by your mistakes as you do by what works.

Do you think the four artists belong to a specific location or school, or group?

No. I really cannot stand when you have got a very strong person in theory, who writes an article about someone and then says how their ideas were formed on the basis of modernism. The most you could say is that the people who come out of Bullseye become predictable. They do that same thing a lot because it is market driven.