

Vickie Melanson



Studio bench top installation, 2008 Photograph: Mick Bradley

"New memories are created every moment. Some stay fixed in our minds and some fade. The combination of imagery and the optical qualities of glass, suggest the distortion and fragmentation of memories"

Around 2003 Vickie Melanson's investigations took a number of different directions. Most were connected in some way with the way glass reflects and transmits light. This was explored through a diversity of works such as one involving neon light filtered through a sheet of undulating glass. Other works were composed of lens-like rectangular tile units, clustered and dispersed across panels. The artist makes a vibrant range of production jewellery in which she indulges her love of bright colour and laid back shapes. However clear glass is reserved largely for what she regards as her conceptual work.

Inspiration

While Melanson has continued to be drawn to the optical qualities of glass she has also exploited these qualities to express ideas. Ladders began to appear in her work, fragile constructions symbolic of journeys and aspirations always leading somewhere. But is it up or down? Melanson finds it hard to fully explain why this motif emerged in her work but when raindrop and cloud forms emerged around the same time, she knew instinctively that they were linked to her fascination with water. Water she sees as alike to glass in its fluidity and clarity.

Visualisation

Melanson takes many photographs and makes short videos. The subjects are linked to water and light; water trickling, reflections, sunlight, rain and puddles. Other kinds of photographs taken by the artist have provided the imagery for 'memory' fragments embedded within her glass lenses. In developing concepts Melanson often manipulates tiles, orbs or 'tear drops' of clear glass in free-form arrangements over pictorial images to gauge optical effects and explore options for new work. As she comments, "A picture can become a memory to itself, which never ceases to mean." She interprets these mind-images into her work with glass, suggesting the distortion, fragmentation and interchangeability of memories.

Process

What Becomes is derived from an earlier work, *Mapping Memory 11*, 2004. This wall panel work composed of small hot sculpted lens-like units of glass formatted as rectangular tiles rather than the organic free-form shapes of *What Becomes*. The images visible within each tile (distorted by the curvature of the glass) were composed of computer-generated images (based on photographs taken by the artist then enhanced through a Photoshop



What Becomes, 2007, hot formed glass, sublimation on aluminium, steel, magnets, 1750 x 760 Photograph: Grant Hancock

application process), printed onto paper and glued to the rear surface of each tile. In *What Becomes* computer generated images are sublimated on aluminium (applied using heat) then hand-cut to each lens and attached glued to the individual units.

Realisation

The images are sourced from photographs taken by the artist. The artist's hope is that the viewer will look

closely at each image individually through the optical lens as well as experience the work as a whole, in parallel with memories, and an overlaying of a multitude of moments, experiences, feelings, places and memories. The smooth pebble-like add to the symbolism of the work by suggesting that life might be like a flowing river and memories like river rocks polished by time.



Photograph: Vickie Melanson



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