

The 2018 Craft ACT Members' Exhibition is of a high standard

By Kerry-Anne Cousins

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Place Makers: 2018 Craft ACT Members' Exhibition. Craft ACT: Craft + Design. On until October 20.

This extensive exhibition of work by 75 artists who are members of Craft ACT has even escaped the confines of the Craft ACT gallery. Marilou Chagnaud's installation work *The Wave Machine*, 2017 is being shown to great advantage in the nearby Hindmarsh Project space at CMAG.

Craft ACT members' exhibitions can sometimes be noticeably uneven in quality with artists exhibiting unresolved or experimental works that have needed a lot more thought and refinement. However this is not the case this year as the standard of work is uniformly high. Members of Craft ACT are well-known and highly respected artists not only in Canberra but in Australia and overseas. The works exhibited tend to reflect an artistic retreat inwards, with some artists feeling the need to impose order in their own creative world in the face of external discord. Many of the artists have contributed work that characterises their art practice rather than suggesting new directions for the future. However it appears that, within these known boundaries, they have striven to develop and enhance their sets of skills and the work benefits from it.

Gail Nichols on the other hand, formerly known for her salt-glazed ceramics, has now turned to making large and bold hooked rag rugs. An exhibition of these rugs was shown recently at the ANU Drill Hall Gallery. Another three artists - Fran Romano, Tania Vrancic and Sarit Cohen - have refined and recast past works. Romano has simplified her sometimes too dense complex narratives that informed her earlier work to arrive at a beautiful and eloquent group of objects that resonates with allusions to ancient civilisations (*Stil...Life...*, 2018).

Tania Vrancic has tempered the green slips that tend to overpower her white porcelain forms and allowed a more subtle interplay of colour and pattern to decorate her three beakers (*Fjords Vessels x 3*, 2018). [Sarit Cohen's arrangement of tiny porcelain beakers CFO, 2017 on a found perspex base is a cool and sophisticated version of her earlier and more decorative arrangements of porcelain ceramics and found objects.](#)



Textiles are a large component of the many works in glass, ceramics, metal and wood. Annie Trevillian has turned her considerable graphic talents to designing a delightful baby wrap (*Baby Wrap*, 2018). Jennifer Robertson, another artist who is a weaver of magical designs, has exhibited a stunning wall piece (*Fencelines Paddocks*, 2015). Robertson weaves an inventive interplay of lines and shapes using in a contemporary version some of the geometric structure of traditional woven designs.

Barbara Rogers (*The Square 1&3*, 2018), shares this intuitive ability to orchestrate beautiful designs with Robertson. I am always attracted to Rogers' work because of the deeply satisfying way she arranges geometric shapes, colours and patterns to suggest some elemental universal order. Ruth Hingston on the other hand uses embroidery in connection with a creative reuse of other materials in her work (*Arriving Soon*, 2018) to make wry little comments on contemporary life. I also thought Leonie Andrew's *Fuji*, 2017, a collage of found photographs, stitching and fragments of Japanese textiles, was a very clever evocation of Japanese aesthetic sensibility as well as evoking the iconic view of Mount Fuji.

Valerie Kirk's *Traveller*, 2018 is a small tapestry. Its haunting image of the silhouette of a woman relates to a much larger work in the recent exhibition *So Fine* at the National Portrait Gallery. Sharon Peoples' *Three Magpie Study*, 2018 captures in embroidery a very realistic self-portrait of the artist with three magpie friends. It is a work like Kirk's that is physically on a small scale but has the visual impact and importance of a much larger work.

Lisa Cahill's works in glass have a romantic lyricism. Her three works in blue enamel on glass (*In the distance iv, v, vi*, 2018) are painterly in expression. The artist creates, through the delicate drift of the mountains and clouds, an impression of infinite space. Rose Mary Faulkner's two works *Surface* and *Form 4 & 5*, 2017) share this lyricism of expression. Faulkner's painterly surfaces that decorate her two dimensional roundel-like shaped pieces of glass, display images that could be landscapes as the colours dissolve and reform in the light. And the two works I kept returning to look at again were by Tom Skeehan (in collaboration with Carmen Skeehan) and Richard Whiteley. Skeehan's work *Glass Light*, 2018 is a warm and glowing orb of light held within a glass cradle. Its interior source of light relates to Richard Whiteley's sculptural glass cube *Leaver*, 2016 that has within it a round light filled form. Whiteley's work is displayed sympathetically against a window so that the light plays with the form and reveals all the work's myriad subtleties of colour and shade, solids and voids in a magical way.