

# Review: Citizens of Craft and Grow Your Own at Craft ACT

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Updated 26 September 2016 — 1:20pm first published 19 September 2016 — 10:42am

*Citizens of Craft* – Craft ACT 2016 Members' Show and *Grow Your Own*: an exhibition by Amanda Dziedzic, Danielle Rickaby, Lauren Simeoni and Melinda Young. Craft ACT: Craft and Design Centre Canberra City. Until October 22.

I must confess to a personal bias when writing about the annual Craft ACT members' exhibition. It is an exhibition I really look forward to every year. Although viewing an artist's body of work in depth is very rewarding, there is no denying there is a certain exhilaration to be had by seeing so many artists brought together in one gallery. It is particularly the case in this current exhibition where the high standard of work is really impressive. The participation of 42 artists who are accredited professional and associated members of Craft ACT means that this year there are lots of works to explore in a variety of different media. And the exhibition even spills over into another smaller adjoining gallery watched over by Linda Davy's large ceramic seagulls.

The late Robert Foster's beautifully sensuous teardrop *Midnight Crescendo* – a hanging light pendant in red and black acrylic – draws the eye of the viewer and provides a time of reflection. Sean Booth's three wall panelled lights *Lumo* are also beautifully crafted with their playful linear designs around a central orb of warm light. Ruth Allen's attractive cluster of pendant lights – *Three Shades of Green* – made from reconstituted champagne bottles in a rich iridescent green provide a more dramatic sculptural focus for either an intimate or more public space.

Among the standout textile works is Dianne Firth's refined black panels called *Crosscurrents #3*. Firth's work continues to impress as she seemingly pares back extraneous detail to reveal the structures beneath. It is with appreciation that you note her intuitive eye as the lines of stitching take on an almost imperceptible curve that brings into play a sense of rhythm into what could otherwise have been an austere design. This same sensitivity is found in *Construction*, Barbara Rogers' series of square fabric wall panels. In one particular square, the black lines of the resist dyed design bleed delicately into the dark cream fabric like the delicate edging of black feathers. It is a reminder of the power of surface marks to evoke images and emotions.

*Sarit Cohen's work has had some interesting developments since her last solo exhibition at the Kaori Gallery in March last year. Cohen has been assembling found objects with her own fine porcelain ceramics. In her two works in this exhibition, Past time and Memories Ceramics she has achieved this in a much more integrated way than in previous works by using applied decorative designs that flow seamlessly across the surface of her own porcelain cups and the "found" commercial china plates.*



The nature of vessels is given different expression in Alison Jackson's *Long Drop* – an exquisite little tubular silver container with handle and in Sally Blake's arrangement of her small attractive woven baskets (*Held Mysteries*) made from natural dyed fibres; each supplied with tiny silver frond-like forms growing from its depths.

The sculptural element of objects is paramount in Dan Lorrimer's work *Vertical Rift*, a dark powder coated steel panel with a folded vertical surface. The geometric precision of its construction allies it to Gilbert Riedelbauch's work *Not-O facet v2* black shown as a wall mounted object. On a smaller scale is Rozlyn De Bussey's work *MISO (Miniature Interactive Sculptural Objects)* – a carefully considered and designed collection of tiny glass objects that have the confidence of a much more imposing scale. Elizabeth Kelly's *Red Whorl*, a small sculpture in rich ruby red glass and Judi Elliott's *Across the Wall*, a glass wall panel, both have a strong sense of design. Yet it is the emotive appeal of the way they use the colour and the reflective light of glass that makes both works so warm and visually attractive.

In the second gallery, the exhibition *Grow Your Own* is by four young artists – from Adelaide, Lauren Simeoni and Danielle Rickaby, together with Amanda Dziedzic from Melbourne and Melinda Young from Sydney. It is a joyous affair of kitsch, exuberance, colour and sheer fun underpinned by a serious wish to respond to nature and investigate it as an infinite source of creativity. In the artists' use of colour and form to express exuberance and fecundity, it rather reminded me of the tutti-frutti turban creations of the South American actress Carmen Miranda. The artists draw on nature in a less-than-reverent way making large vegetables in glass (Amanda Dziedzic) and combining glass and metal with plastic vegetation and artificial flowers. This reaches its apogee in Danielle Rickaby's series of wonderfully kitsch and glass lucky horseshoes ornamented with bountiful floral arrangements. Nevertheless, amid this surreal floral and vegetable world there is a feeling that there are four serious artists in careful control.

Among the more exuberant fantasies there are also delicate pieces of jewellery. Melinda Young has made necklaces of sensitively modelled seed pods strung with pearls and assembled brooches of coral, pearls and moonstones. Lauren Simeoni's necklaces based on twigs and branches are beautifully modelled and constructed. The centrepiece of the exhibition, *Leaf Library*, is a collective effort by all four artists. It is a large table strewn like a medieval tapestry with fragments of nature such as leaves and flowers. Among these fragments are tiny

green glass leaves, larger brown and green leaves, silver fern fronds and artificial flowers in tiny tubes to be worn as brooches. It relates delightfully to Dimity Kidston's tapestry *Underfoot* in the nearby member's exhibition with its own woven version of a seemingly random arrangement of flowers and leaves. Indeed both works draw your attention to the small treasures to be found in nature if you take the time to look.