



'Small Bowls', 2014, kiln-formed glass, carved and ground, diam. 13 x 9 cm

VISION AND ARTISTRY

With pure dedication in the field of contemporary glassmaking, the work of Anne Sorensen combines clean line and sculptural form embodied with uplifting emotional content. Profile by Donna Cooper.

GLASS artist Anne Sorensen makes beautiful music, although she does not play any musical instrument, nor does she sing or read music. What Anne Sorensen does is to work with glass which she blends with a profusion of heart and soul, to create soaring notes of pure magic. Her glass pieces sing with the clear high notes of a gifted soprano.

Glass is a medium which responds well to being worked in variety of ways. But anyone utilising glass to create art must discover the processes and methods that allow the best flow of truth as an artist. Over years of exploration, hard work and experimentation Anne Sorensen has found her truth in glass. And it is beautiful.

Sorensen's work demonstrates her design aesthetic and her innate artistry, her gift of transforming the medium into objects that truly elevate the spirit of those viewing them. Her practical skills are largely self-taught, another testament to the creativity clearly channelled through her work dedication to her art over many years.

Sorensen first became aware of glass as an art medium, as many do, as a child visiting a church for a wedding. The vivid colours of the beautiful (1852) windows of St John the Baptist Church near Hobart invoked a love of glass, although it would be some years before she found the way to her preferred medium. Her mother was an occasional Sunday School teacher and this provided other opportunities for Anne to be exposed to traditional stained glass and its uplifting qualities.

Usual life events occupied Sorensen's early adult years. She trained as a nurse after leaving school, married Barry and raised their daughter. In 1990 she completed a lead-light course in Perth and for the first time she was able to transform her fascination with glass into tangible form. To strengthen her skill set, she attended night classes at TAFE in drawing and ceramics. This led to the establishment in 1992 of the glass studio Goanna Stained Glass in Mount Hawthorn, Western Australia. A busy studio practice resulted in commissions in many private



'Red Imbalance Bowl', 2012, kiln-formed and ground glass, diam. 37 x 6 cm



'Encompass', 2014, kiln-formed and ground glass, 57 x 20 x 20 cm



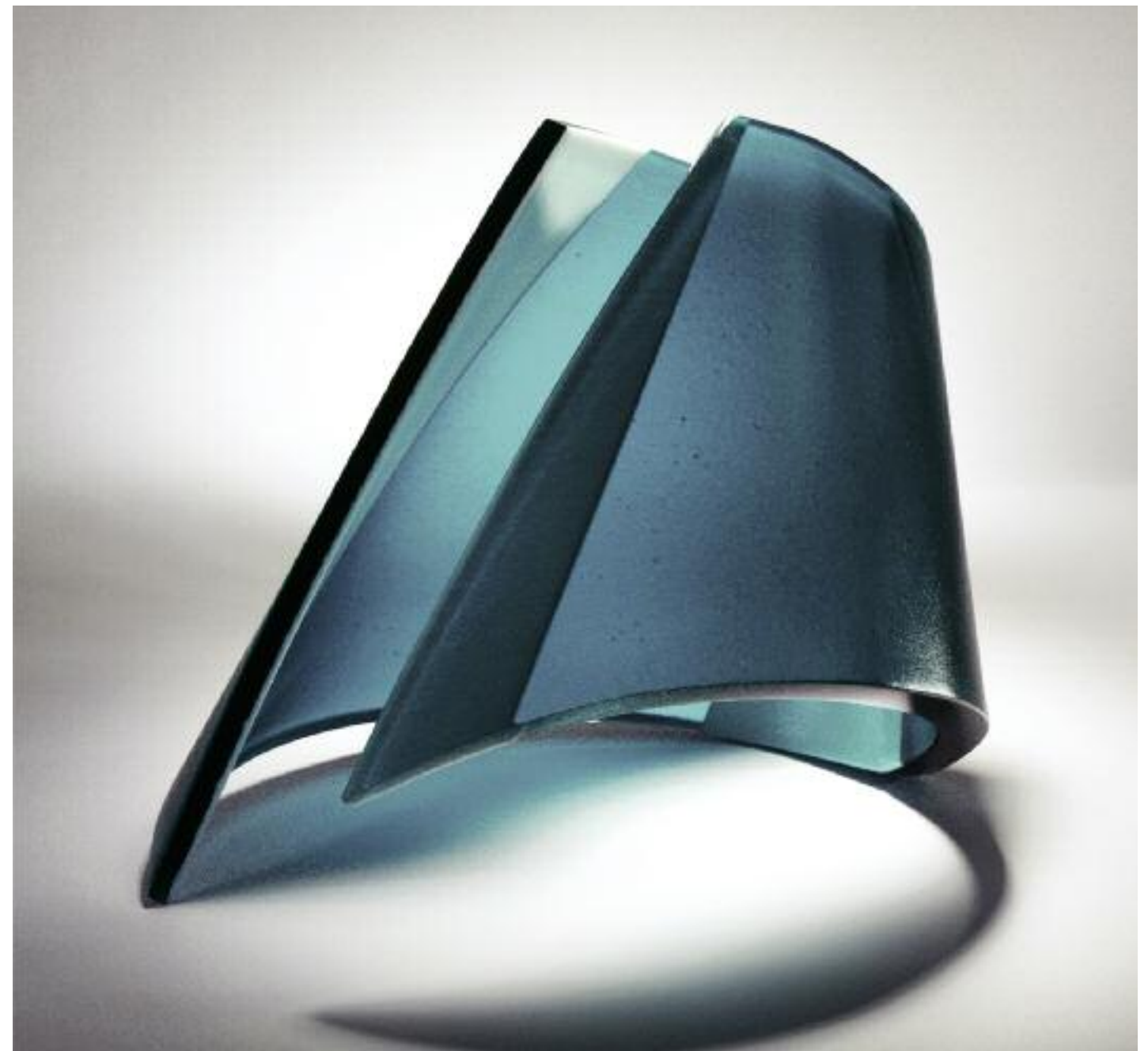
'Comfort', 2013, kiln-formed and ground glass, 47 x 25 x 21 cm

homes as well as public spaces, including the Bayswater Swimming Pool; London Court; and Trinity Arcade; as well as in the restoration of the domes of the Supreme Court of Western Australia.

The artist in Sorensen found stained glass wasn't always conducive to the creativity she strived to express, and so from 2006 she immersed herself in a steady stream of classes, from beadmaking to bevelling, to fusing and casting, following a trail of processes and inspiration towards her particular form of glass art. As a primarily self-taught artist these workshops and classes, conducted by some of the world's foremost glass artists, were invaluable in the development of Sorensen's work. Many practitioners work in isolation, and moving to rural Western Australia increased this for Sorensen; she valued the opportunities to take part in workshops at Art Glass Studio, Canberra Glassworks and Perth Art Glass, with leading glass artists such as Patty Gray, Robert Leatherbarrow and others, including Klaus Moje and Kirstie Rea. Techniques were learned, design was inspired and creative energy nourished by the interaction with such teachers, mentors and fellow students. Without any formal training Sorensen knew it was vital to take full advantage of these learning episodes and worked tirelessly, honing the necessary skills and developing her own design aesthetic. In warm glass Sorensen found her music.

Meeting other glass artists at Canberra Glassworks was of pivotal importance in assisting her to progress as an artist; sharing information and energy with the generous people she met and hearing about their lives as full-time artists was an experience she honours and treasures.

In both 2011 and 2012, Sorensen was a finalist in the Ranamok Glass Prize, an annual award which stated that work submitted 'should be innovative, displaying excellence and imagination in quality of idea and execution in contemporary practice.' It is an honour to gain finalist status in this award. In 2013 Sorensen was awarded a Country Arts WA Regional Arts Fund Project Grant that



'Consanguine', 2014, kiln-formed and ground glass, 28 x 28 x 28 cm

allowed her to take up a 12-month mentorship program with Kirstie Rea, one of Australia's leading glass artists. Only 10 such mentorships were available, and Sorensen considers herself fortunate to have been granted one, which has proved to be a life-changing opportunity. To have ongoing interaction, support and advice from Rea is enabling Sorensen to advance her skills and, equally importantly, build belief in herself. Rea's generosity of spirit in sharing her knowledge and offering effective assistance is making a difference to Sorensen's practice and her growth as an artist that will be evident in future years as she makes new works in response to this gift. Sorensen readily acknowledges other people who have supported her along the way, including Ian Dixon of Perth Art Glass who has offered advice and assistance, often in ways that have contributed significantly to her professional development. Her husband Barry, always a supportive spouse, has over time become her technical 'partner in crime', devising techniques and methods that enable Sorensen to create the finishes she envisages for her work. He takes the thought and idea from Anne and finds ways for her to enable the reality; he offers a practical creativity to match and enhance her vision. He is in



'Runic', 2014, kiln-formed and ground glass, 4 x 108 x 20 cm



'Agape', 2014, kiln-formed glass, ground and carved, 80 x 30 x 30 cm



'Glow', 2014, kiln-formed glass, ground and carved, 19 x 26 cm

every way a support to the artist, as partner in life and art. Sorensen imbues her sculptural works with meaning, seeing them as a statement of what is important to her. This is a continuing theme throughout her work – her soaring “sails” are joyous fluid shapes ascending in a sweeping flow of movement. While the sail shape is an obvious point of reference to many viewers, the shapes in fact represent the elevation of two souls when joined together in intent – an expression of the uplifting nature of human relationship. The human spirit soars when at its best.

Her simple beautiful bowl shapes embody the concept of the feminine as nurturing. Sorensen is a caring person and nurtures those in her life, thus it is only natural she would be drawn to replicating the simple bowl shapes that have been identified with the nurturing aspect of women throughout generations. Such work also nurtures Sorensen in return – during difficult periods in recent years with personal challenges involving the health of significant people in her life, she found the work sustained and strength-



'Warmth', 2014, kiln-formed glass, LED lights, 40 x 25 x 20 cm

ened her ability to cope with extremely trying situations. While working a piece of glass Sorensen gets lost in the process, channelling the creative energy which shines from her finished work. She is an intuitive artist who deliberately creates pieces that engender a positive emotional response from the viewer, which impacts and imparts a sense of higher self. A piece is imbued with emotion and, for the maker, the edges of the glass are crucial to facilitating this – looking through edges of different degrees of thickness invokes varying degrees of emotion. She understands the importance of surface treatments and has spent many hours of research and practice to achieve the results seen in her current pieces.

Anne's work is not “fussy” in any way, her lines are clean, her focus pure, and the resultant pieces offer a view of art and design that is lovely in its clarity. This is glass art at its best – uplifting, inspiring, joyful and authentic – a beautiful symphony of clarity, simplicity and elegance.

Donna Cooper

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