



**glass** : art design architecture

**THEME 1: *SYMBOLISM IN GLASS***  
Tom Moore and Yhonnie Scarce

## Tom MOORE

Works: *Jacob`s Ladder*, 2014 hot joined blown and solid glass, wooden base

*Trick the Trick*, 2013 hot joined blown and solid glass



Many words come to mind when viewing Tom Moore's glass work; whimsical, humorous and at times unfathomable. However it is questions like "how does he do it?" and "what does it mean?" that really hold an audience in front of his art works.

Moore`s highly developed glass crafting skills have placed him at the top of his craft in both Australia and the international glass scene. Some of his techniques originate with Italian Venetian glass artists whose traditions date back to the 16th century while others come from his Japanese mentor. In Moore's work each single line of colour represents a fine cane of glass that has been heated, stretched and intertwined with other canes, thus creating vibrant colours within each section of his fanciful creations. The time and skill required to achieve his pieces has fellow glass workers in awe of Moore`s imagination and skills.

*Jacob's Ladder* is from a larger grouping of glass creatures and connects the audience with two magical ladders from myth. Moore has titled his work after The Bible`s tale of Jacob`s vision of a Stairway to Heaven, although the sprouting ladder could refer to another recognisable magic ladder from the fairy tale of Jack and the Beanstalk. Both ladders lead to imaginary better places.

Moore`s glass ladder sprouts out of a potato head at the base of a bell jar, growing upwards in the skull; is this Jacob`s head? The ladder leads towards a richly coloured fish tail sitting outside on the head like a party hat. The hat is patterned with Moore`s delicate glass cane techniques. A hot flame glows inside the fishtail; interestingly both fish and flames are used as symbols in Christian religious art. Two sets of eyes look out, one set peeking from the potato head, while clear glass embellishments on the bell jar, create a face whose ears double as handles.

*Trick the Trick* is typical of how Tom Moore's glass inventions often appear to be fun loving. *Trick the Trick* is one creature from a large grouping called *Confederacy of Amalgamated Figments*, which reveals Moore's beliefs about the future. In this larger work Moore has morphed human, vegetable and manufactured forms to create his own strange creatures that symbolise the domination and ultimate reclamation by nature of our artificial world, in whatever mutant form.

Here we see two vegetable like figures balancing head to head and clothed only in black gloves and high heeled boots, like circus performers. They balance on a large striped head with impressive horns that warily emerges from the earth. Bright orange carrots in **lampwork** form body parts on both performers, while Moore's characteristic staring eyes and cheeky grins give life to these characters.

### **Artist's statement**

Concerning other works by Moore;

*"One of my favourite themes is the triumph of nature over industry which has been represented by a wrecked car being overgrown by plants or more aggressively by a giant Kookaburra riding on the wrecked car. The tiny explosions that power infernal combustion engines are no match for the awesome destructive force of this 3000kg joy rider. This image fills me with a great hope striving to invigorate the audience experience of glass has led me to embrace new technologies through collaboration with digital photographers and animators. The combination of hand-made glass with digital animation opens the door to all manner of possibilities for expression. I am optimistic that this mixture will allow me to defy gravity and melt the coldest heart."*

<http://mooreismore.com/about.php>

### **Other Perspectives**

The work of South Australian glass artist Tom Moore has been heavily influenced by a mentorship with internationally renowned Japanese glass artist Yoshihiko Takahashi.

Tom realised a consolidation of his own interests and glass making skills while studying under Mr Takahashi. He found that he dramatically reassessed his motives for and methods of making glass, gaining a clearer understanding of what he wants to achieve in his work. Whilst still creating fresh and quirky anamorphic pieces in blown glass that embody a witty spontaneity, Tom also incorporates influences of traditional Japanese culture sourced from ancient myth and manga.

<http://www.beavergalleries.com.au/moore.htm>

Tom Moore's gloriously appealing glass creatures spring from his own fantastical imagination and the rich seabeds of the mythical, imaginary and grotesque. From mediaeval bestiaries with their camel leopards and manticores, to misericord creatures through Lear and Seuss to Moore's reimagining of an Colonial Australian epergne as a verdantly plumed robot bird with resplendent palm tree, his creatures reuse, recycle and recombine in their never ending metamorphoses.

There's an irrepressible joyousness in these creatures constant flux as they burst the boundaries of animal/vegetable/mineral and do away with taxonomies and rationality, reinventing themselves in happy disregard of all humanity's rules....

<http://www.helengory/Tom>

## Yhonnie SCARCE

Work: *Not Willing to Suffocate*, 2012 **blown glass**, painted metal



At first glance Yhonnie Scarce's work of art *Not willing to Suffocate* appears like a strange scientific experiment. Three test tube clamps hold blue glass Bush Bananas, disfigured and bruised by the tight grip squeezing their sides. Generally used to hold test tubes in a laboratory Scarce's clamps grip beautiful organic forms, modeled in brittle glass that usually breaks under pressure. If real desert fruits were placed in such a vice like grip they would be crushed, losing their life form and nourishment.

Scarce uses the Bush Banana as a symbol to represent her people, the Kokatha, Nukunu and Mirning peoples from the Nullarbour Plain and Great Australian Bight regions in the west of South Australia. Her indigenous people have suffered under the grip of European occupation and colonialism of their land and culture. Scarce conveys that her people have survived under pressure rather than cracking, although they are squeezed nearly to breaking point. In place of the fruits' soft and easily damaged flesh she represents her people in a tougher, harder material.

Scarce's scientific settings reflect how Aboriginal people, living on their own lands, were subjected to extensive and humiliating ethnological research in the 1920s and 1930s. Tests were carried out and clinically controlled by scientists and anthropologists, like these bush tucker fruits you see being tested in their clamps.

### Artist's statement

*"To be honest I left full time work to go back to university and I fell in love with glass," says Scarce. "Towards the end of my undergraduate degree I figured out that this was what I wanted to do."*

*"Glass can be very strong and in that way it reflects the resilience of our people, it is a creation that is witness to our journey and one that still continues today."*

*“Some people don’t like my work, they find it too confronting,” says Scarce, “But if you don’t want to engage in this conversation then the solution is simple – don’t look at my art. But that doesn’t mean it will go away.”*

<http://rightnow.org.au/artwork/witness-to-our-journey-interview-with-yhonnie-scarce>

### **Other Perspectives**

Bush bananas and yams are important cultural metaphors and give depth to Scarce’s work in revealing how Aboriginal peoples have been treated over time. This isn’t a work for the fainthearted, it is political and strongly narrative driven.

Yhonnie Scarce is an Australian artist specialising in glass-blowing. Since graduating from the South Australian School of Art in 2004 her work has given a voice to a number of Indigenous issues, including the trauma of displacement and relocation, the effects of genocide, and social and political effects of colonisation on Indigenous people in Australia.

Born in Woomera, Scarce is a descendant of the Kokatha people from the Lake Eyre region and the Nukunu from around Port Lincoln. Having majored in glass making she uses this medium to highlight the treatment of Indigenous Australians in a range of contexts, both historically as well as today.

<http://rightnow.org.au/artwork/witness-to-our-journey-interview-with-yhonnie-scarce>

Not too long ago, in the name of science and nation, Scarce’s relatives were subjected to medical scrutiny in the belief that colour could be bred out and whiteness cultivated. In these works the blown form of the desert fruit, also employed in the precursory work.

*Not willing to suffocate* carries the power and the burden, of the body and the land. The vitreous forms made for scientific use reference the pseudoscience of phrenology and the racial mania that incarcerated Aboriginal people. This hybridising of hand blown ‘native’ glass and introduced glassware alludes to the practices of miscegenation that lead ultimately to today’s “Stolen Generations”. Furthermore, by containing the plant forms within the found scientific glassware, the reality of the containment of Aboriginal people is underscored—a containment experienced in medicine, anthropology, history and museology. Scarce’s work can be seen to perform a caesura or rupture in the broader context of Aboriginal art. Her work is frequently cited as breaking with tradition and her use of glass is seen as a deviation from more widely experienced urban art forms and also from desert painting traditions. Scarce’s work however springs from a lineage—one of dispossession and resistance.

[www.cacsa.org.au/Wordpress/yoo\\_bigeasy.../BS\\_42\\_2\\_sladepdf](http://www.cacsa.org.au/Wordpress/yoo_bigeasy.../BS_42_2_sladepdf)

## THEME 1: SYMBOLISM IN GLASS

### Guiding Questions and Research

- Both artists use their respective media of glass combined with other materials to make us aware of important contemporary issues.
- Through research into our suggested websites, plus analysis of the artworks in the exhibition, explain some of those issues and the artists' viewpoints on them.
- Tom Moore creates artworks that, while having a symbolic meaning, also make people smile, even laugh. Do you think there is a place for humour to convey meaning in the art world?
- Yhonnie Scarce uses symbols to tell about her people`s history. Using examples from the exhibition explain your views on how symbolism can work in art works.
- Inspiration behind the work of both artists comes from their worlds, real and imaginary. Explain which of these artist`s worlds are you most curious about? Support your answer by describing what aspects of the artworks influenced your choice.

### Research:

Tom Moore

- Exhibition review with images; Dr Marcus Bunyan, *'pondlurking' by tom moore*, Art Blart review, Helen Gory Galerie, Prahran, Melbourne, 10 March-3 April 2010
- **mooreismore.com** is Tom Moore's official website with news, information, videos and animation plus a contact for the artist.
- **www.craftaustralia.org.au/forum/2006/Tom\_Moore** - early biographical details, images and further sources
- **www.powerhousemuseum.com/collection/database/?irn=348903** image, description and production notes for glass diorama 'Little Known Facts' designed and made by Tom Moore.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PDTyUAgvqzg> - Tom Moore

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xjIFKQvgiA> - Tom Moore

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S5Qs8E-JDSI> - Tom Moore

Video-Tom Moore- discussion of ideas and techniques (3.51min)

Yhonnie Scarce

<http://www.daa0.org.au/bio/yhonnie-scarce/biography/>

<http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/melbournenow/artists/yhonnie-scarce>

Video- Yhonnie Scarce -talks about impact of Atomic bomb testing in her Ancestral lands in the 1950's (2.25 min)