

The day before tomorrow

Nicholas Folland is fond of the found. He prizes those things that have had a life, that wear a patina, or might harbour a secret. In this body of work, found leadlight windows and domestic glassware find new form.

Here, leadlight panels – the type featured in kitchen cabinets found in homes a century ago – are freed from their classification as furniture. These often jaunty glass compositions, bordered with lead, jostle with found domestic glassware. Drinking vessels and vases that would have once been ‘homed’ in the leadlight fronted cabinets are upturned, conjoined, repositioned and suspended to form unhomely arrangements.

Placed high on shelves, these sculptural arrangements write in light and colour on the gallery walls in a manner akin to colour field paintings. (It’s no coincidence that Folland is currently revisiting *The Field* exhibition catalogue.) Improvisational, these colourful compositions also resemble musical scores in space, striking a chord with the early modernists and their association of colour with sound. Through their titles, a new mnemonic unfolds for the days of the week: honey Monday rolls into blue Tuesday, before a red Wednesday beckons a green Thursday, ahead of a blue Friday. The week culminates in a clear weekend and like the very best of them, it is expansive and gentle. Found glass panes sporting familiar geometries are placed above a stanza of suspended vessels – on a clear day (you can see forever).

Folland lives in Adelaide – a city that has endured rising house prices more than most Australian capitals in the last decade. Renovation-zeal has finally gripped the once sleepy salvage city and fruitful foraging is now a challenge. Folland forged his now signature practice more than two decades ago, reclaiming the lead crystal ware that slumbered unloved in the corners of charity shops, re-awakening the discarded wedding and anniversary gifts that in his hands become space devouring vitreous installations. Exhibited at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, the Art Gallery of South Australia and Samstag Museum of Art, these glass archipelagos beckoned readings that include Antarctic explorations and the legends of a lost Atlantis.

Always prizing the vernacular, Folland also knows that the everyday can be revered. (Adelaide is the city of churches after all). Leadlight began its life in cathedrals as ‘the bible of the poor’ and fittingly, Folland’s new glass narratives are positioned high on the wall like household shrines or altars for a new religion. Studying interior architecture as an undergraduate student before moving into sculpture and installation, he remains a student of space (his other reading matter of the moment is Peter Zumthor’s *Atmosphere*).

Time and its indeterminacy is an abiding theme in Folland’s new work. While each vessel has its own time ‘signature’ – often replicated in the case of the contemporary glassware made to deliberately mimic mid-century ware – when combined each composition is impossible to confine to a single, specific time period. Art Deco meets modernism on the day before tomorrow.

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