

**Gerry King**  
**&**  
**Retief van Wyk**



### **Contemporary glass: Gerry King and Retief van Wyk**

*Glass eats light (Gerry King).*

Contemporary glass refers to art or design works made by an individual artist working alone (or in a small team), making unique pieces in that most translucent and glowing of mediums. This approach only developed in the 1960s in Europe and America. At that time glass was a complex and expensive process done only in a mass-produced, factory situation. The spread of contemporary glass around the world, for example to Australia and later to South Africa, produced an explosion of creativity and the growth of an exciting new form of artmaking, in the contemporary studio glass movement.

Australian glass artist Gerry King was a pioneer of contemporary glass in his country, and he taught and inspired a younger generation of artists, while at the same time he honed and perfected his own art. This developed through many stages during his forty year career, and he has long been at a level of technical expertise where he can focus on the exploration of concepts and ideas, freed from the constraints of this most difficult of crafts. His glass sculptures shimmer



with light and glow with colour. He subscribes to the notion that "Glass eats light", by which he suggests that glass takes in as much light as is available, and then reflects and refracts it out in colourful splendour, so the more light on glass, the better. It is a material of fluid light as much as solid surface.

King's recent works, of which a selection is shown here, focus on landscapes. He travels frequently from his home on the lush and wet coastal plain into the dry Australian interior, and is very alert to the climatic and geographic changes he sees. Travels in Iceland also increased his fascination with landscape, in particular the deep icy thermal pools and huge mountains of that country (very unlike the eroded South Australian landscape), and he translates these impressions into glass. His approach is purist in his focus on colour and his abstraction of any particular scene into bands and strata of glass. One gets from his work, more than anything else, a physical sensation from the joyous saturation of light and colour.

Retief van Wyk is a South African pioneer of a glass movement that began later than Australia's did. He helped establish a glass studio and programme at Tshwane University of Technology and is now, as King did



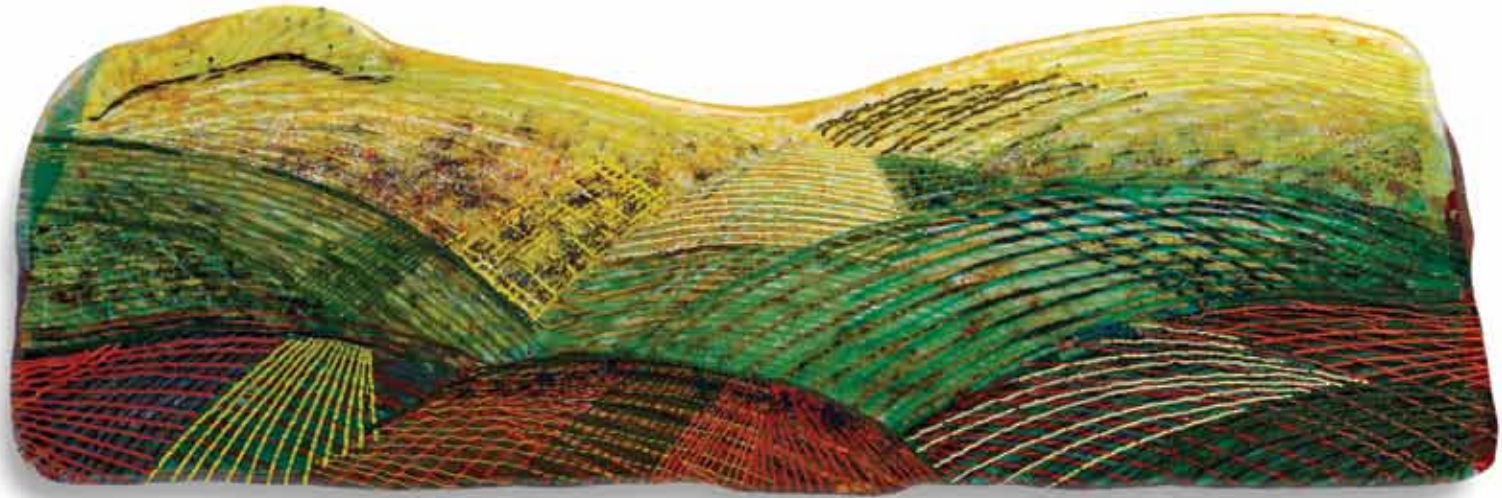
previously, training a younger generation of potential South African glass artists and designers. His work is cerebral and postmodern, as he explores the juxtapositions of flat, intense colour, transparent colourless glass, and photographic images, set into the glass itself. His landscapes are very South African and reflect his own Pretoria environment. He plays off figurative images, in this exhibition photographs from the Anglo-Boer War that resonate with many South Africans and with South African history, against Pierneef-like trees and Mondrianesque blocks of bright red, yellow and blue. Thus van Wyk explores hybridity in the confluence of absolute abstraction with photographic realism; image with flatness; transparency with opacity. He often uses images of war, and he filters these into the layers of glass, suggesting that behind the suggested Utopia of colour, light and landscape lie other realities and histories.

These journeys into contemporary glass and journeys through landscape, memory and history offer us, the viewers, a rare glimpse into a most challenging medium.

Ingrid Stevens















Hey Pablo !

**page 2:** Gerry King • TWO HILLS #1 • 2011 • Kiln-formed glass  
Wall mounted • 260 mm x 380 mm x 30 mm

**page 3:** Retief van Wyk • POST CARD FROM UTOPIA • 2013 • Fused Glass  
120 mm x 150mm

**page 6:** Retief van Wyk • HOTEL MATA HARI • 2013 • Fused Glass  
150 mm x 150 mm

**page 8:** Gerry King • DELORAINE VALLEY #5 • 2011 • Kiln-formed glass  
Wall mounted • 995 mm x 700 mm x 30 mm

**page 10 & 11:** Gerry King • BAROSSA VALLEY #2 • 2011 • Kiln-formed  
glass • Wall mounted • 140 mm x 700 mm x 30 mm

**page 12 & 13:** Retief van Wyk • BOY SOLDIER • 2013 • Fused Glass  
160 mm x 380 mm

**page 14 & 15:** Gerry King • BAROSSA VALLEY #1 • 2011 • Kiln-formed  
glass • Wall mounted • 280 mm x 600 mm x 30 mm

**page 16:** Retief van Wyk • (STUDY FOR UTOPIA) EENDRACHT • 2013  
Fused Glass • 220 mm x 150 mm

**page 17:** Retief van Wyk • (STUDY FOR UTOPIA) UTOPIA • 2013  
Fused Glass • 120 mm x 130 mm

**page 18 & 19:** Gerry King • BAROSSA VALLEY #4 • 2011 • Kiln-formed  
glass • Wall mounted • 260 mm x 300 mm x 30 mm

**page 20 & 21:** Retief van Wyk • HEY PABLO • 2011 • Fused Glass  
130 mm x 340 mm

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