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Philip Noakes

By Ted Snell

Philip Noakes is a master silversmith whose new body of work consolidates his reputation as an artist and artisan constantly pushing at the boundaries of his practice to create works of profound beauty and sublime technical accomplishment.



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L-R: Waves I, 2022, two-sided disc, 29 x 29 cm, mounted on black granite plinth; Waves II, 2022, two-sided disc, 29 x 29 cm, mounted on black granite plinth, photographed by Robert Frith, Acorn Photo

Noakes captures light with his hammer. He raises extraordinary three-dimensional objects from flat sheets of metal, and the shifting patterns of marks left by his hammer trap and direct the flow of light around his completed forms. The seductive material and its exquisite shapes are revealed by this flow of light, which our eyes eagerly follow. "Flow" could well be the subtitle of this exhibition, for so many of the works respond to movement in nature, whether it be the shifting patterns of sunlight as it maps the day or the choreographed flow of water. The set of "waterfall beakers" is a supreme example of the art of silversmithing, miraculously creating forms that do literally seem to surge up and flow into life. Wrought from Britannia silver, in a grouping or proudly independent, the beakers rise up elegantly from their tapered bases to create a magical landscape of shimmering light that dances across each meticulously worked surface to merge into an image of cascading water.

Philip Noakes is a consummate craftsman and a highly original and innovative artist who continuously responds to the changing physical, creative, and mercantile environments he encounters. As a student, he undertook the technically demanding four-year full-time Diploma in the Design and Craftsmanship of Silversmithing at Sir John Cass College of Art, Architecture and Design, London, in 1972. Since then he has taken opportunities as they arose or initiated them when they didn't. Arriving in Australia in 1975, he soon established himself as one of Australia's leading contemporary jewellers, based firstly in Perth, then Sydney, and over the last decades in Perth once again. However, silversmithing has remained a passion, and in 2016 he worked at The Goldsmiths' Centre, London, to learn new techniques and build a skill base around the use of new equipment and technologies. Noakes's dedication to his craft has earned him much-deserved renown, including that most prestigious accolade, Fellow of the Institute of Professional Goldsmiths, United Kingdom, conferred in 2016.

This current exhibition is the result of a period of sustained research and development to fuse these new techniques and approaches into a vehicle for his creative vision. The resulting works speak eloquently of his success. The remarkable objects in this exhibition not only embrace the substantial history of silversmithing, but expand on its possibilities and underscore its

relevance to contemporary creative practice. Like all significant art, it astonishes while providing a unique lens through which to view and understand our shared world.

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EXHIBITION

Philip Noakes: Sculptural Silver

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Australian Galleries, Melbourne