

Collective Histories in Blue

Debut solo exhibition for Jessica Murtagh

Located in Canberra, my debut solo exhibition titled 'Collective histories in blue' was held at Grainger Gallery in April of 2023. This exhibition explored themes of the mundane and everyday events of life and was a continuation of ceramic and glass traditions of commemorative wares that offer a sense of belonging through shared experiences. Much of the work drew inspiration not only from classical ancient Athenian amphoras but also Wedgwood blue-and-white jasperware, reinterpreting these historical forms into a contemporary perspective.

The Independent Arts Foundation grant of \$1000 was instrumental in allowing me to create the works that appeared in this first solo exhibition. With the grant I received I was able to purchase the much needed glass colour to create each of the pieces that were on display as well as help cover some of the costs of freighting the work to Canberra.

As a whole, the exhibition was a huge success, beginning with opening night where the gallery was so packed with guests it was at times difficult to move around. I was most fortunate that the gallery owners and curators approached Dr Georgia Pike-Rowney, curator of the Australian National University's Classics Museum to do the opening night speech. Dr Pike-Rowney was also very generous in giving me a behind the scenes tour of the ANU classics collection, a very inspiring viewing of incredible ancient artefacts.

On a technical level, this exhibition allowed me to expand the kind of art I create. Whilst still leaning heavily on illustrated glass, I was able to include other forms in addition to the classic amphora shape. This included creating wall mounted pieces, showcasing my illustrations as framed prints and making work that was purely decorative in nature without a narrative theme.

This exhibition was a huge leap forward in my art practice and in raising my profile as an artist. I was fortunate enough to have many visitors view the exhibition throughout its run but also to have sold the majority of work that was on display. This exhibition has led to a myriad of other opportunities, including exhibitions in Sydney and Melbourne and commissions. I have also been asked by Grainger Gallery to create another solo exhibition for November 2024.

I sincerely appreciate the support the IAF has given me to assist in the creation of this body of work and exhibition.

