



Untitled (open stringer bowl), c. 1989  
 glass, wood and leather  
 H 9 × W 25 × D 24 cm  
 Ian Mowbray collection  
 Photo: Russell Winnell

Vicki Torr, c. 1991  
 Photo: Ian Mowbray



© Artworks Estate of Vicki Torr

#### Curator's Acknowledgements

The realisation of *Vicki Torr: A cutting edge* has relied on the assistance of many. My warmest appreciation is extended to the Wagga Wagga Art Gallery, Ausglass and Australian Catholic University, as well as to the public galleries and private collectors who kindly agreed to the loan of works for the exhibition. Individuals for whose enthusiasm and help I am especially grateful to are Rachelle Bramley, Eva Czernis-Ryl, Hilary Ericksen, Rebecca Evans, Lee-Anne Hall, Chee Hong, Gerry King, Ros Lawson, Elaine Miles, Ian Mowbray, Philippa Murdoch, Peter Nolan, Denise Orchard, Michael Scarrone and Declan Somerville and Evan Williams.

Wagga Wagga Art Gallery offers a vibrant and innovative arts culture for all to enjoy. With collecting specialisms in Glass and Printmaking, the Gallery is home to seven exhibition spaces from large open spaces to smaller intimate environments. Each year WWAG presents a range of exhibitions including touring exhibitions through to new media and in-house curated exhibitions. Together, with its engagement with regional and national artists, Wagga Wagga Art Gallery is at the centre of a thriving, creative and innovative community.

WWAG has been collecting and displaying studio glass since 1979. In 1992, the glass collection was formally named the National Art Glass Collection, to recognise and celebrate its national significance. Opened in 1999, the National Art Glass Gallery displays this significant collection of contemporary art glass, featuring approximately 700 pieces. As well as thematic displays from the National Art Glass Collection, the gallery also exhibits a number of curated



Tazza 1988  
 glass  
 H 12.4 × diam. 26.8 cm  
 Art Gallery of South Australia  
 Collection  
 South Australian Government  
 Grant 1988

exhibitions that feature well known Australian and international glass artists throughout the year.

The National Art Glass Collection has a national and international profile. Its historical reference from the early days to current art practice is immensely significant. No other gallery or museum tells the story so comprehensively of Australian studio glass in all its forms.

#### Gallery's Acknowledgements

Wagga Wagga City Council  
 Wagga Wagga Art Gallery is supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW Friends of the Wagga Wagga Art Gallery Ausglass

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 Wagga Wagga Art Gallery is a cultural facility of Wagga Wagga City Council.

WAGGA WAGGA  
 ART GALLERY



# VICKI TORR: A CUTTING EDGE

22 OCTOBER 2022  
 30 JANUARY 2023

WAGGA WAGGA ART GALLERY

A retrospective exhibition  
 proudly supported by Wagga Wagga Art Gallery,  
 Ausglass and Australian Catholic University

# VICKI TORR: A CUTTING EDGE

During her short life, Vicki Torr (1949–1992) developed an innovative and adventurous practice. Her functional yet non-utilitarian forms reveal a classical aesthetic sensibility and express a remarkable rawness and balance combined with finesse and delicacy.

As a mature-age student studying ceramics and glass in the School of Design at the University of South Australia, Torr met self-taught leadlight artist Ian Mowbray in 1978. He encouraged her to pursue her interest in glass, and after he established his workshop at JamFactory she joined him to complete her final-year requirements in glass as independent study. She graduated from university with distinction in 1983, at the age of thirty-four. Around this time, Mowbray and Torr met the founders of the American manufacturing company Bullseye Glass, who introduced them to a new range of handmade coloured compatible glass. Their dynamic studio quickly became a kiln-glass workshop and, despite their isolation from makers elsewhere in the world, they were among prominent pioneers of kiln-working in glass in Australia.<sup>1</sup> In 1987, they moved the studio, Moto Glass, to the Adelaide suburb of Unley.

While highly regarded for her open-basket forms and wall installations, Torr became renowned for her spiky-edged cast 'double cones' during the late 1980s and early 1990s. These were initially the product of an accidental overfiring, which caused the glass to flow into the base of the mould. This fortuitous mishap lifted the inner mould and allowed an exquisite layering of small sections of coloured glass frit to adhere to the top of the inner and outer moulds. The sophisticated and revolutionary technique she developed rendered a delicate double-cone effect that


always left a hint of the process and which is very difficult to replicate.

Having found an original approach to the ancient process of glass-making, a mischievous Vicki Torr revelled in her explorations and mastered the technique. While her mature works display a balance and harmony, even her more energetic forms and angular decorative elements show a calculated restraint.<sup>2</sup> Leading contemporary glass artist Kirstie Rea has referred to Torr's beautifully crafted vessels as 'funky', adding, 'There was rawness to her work, and she demonstrated a real truth to the process.'<sup>3</sup> The former curator of sculpture and glass at the National Gallery of Victoria, Geoffrey Edwards, described a work from this series as a 'widely flaring, untitled bowl with wafer thin glass walls across which streaks of pastel colour explode with joyous abandon'.<sup>4</sup>

Torr was considered an outstanding designer-maker, receiving, from the Australian Bicentennial Authority, a Women 88 Award. Two years later, four of her fused and kiln-formed bowls were showcased in the ground-breaking exhibition *Australian Kiln-Formed Glass*, held at the Heller Gallery in SoHo, New York. Her popularity was soaring by 1991, and she was one of twelve artists, including Klaus Moje, Richard Morrell and Warren Langley, invited to represent Australia in the triennial exhibition *World Glass Now* at the Hokkaido Museum of Modern Art, in Sapporo, Japan. Torr has made a significant and lasting contribution to the contemporary glass world and is greatly admired by her peers.

When Vicki Torr died at the young age of forty-two there was an outpouring of grief from the glass community. An art prize was proposed in her honour by Declan



  
*Double Cone*, 1991  
glass  
H 17 × diam. 45 cm  
ACU Art Collection  
Donated by Declan Somerville,  
2022  
Photo: Liam Somerville

Somerville, and established with perpetual funding by Ausglass, the Australian Association of Glass Artists. Today, her work is represented in key public collections, including the Art Gallery of South Australia, Queensland Art Gallery & Gallery of Modern Art, Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery (Launceston), Art Gallery of Western Australia, National Gallery of Victoria and the Parliament House Art Collection (Canberra). It is also held in the regional gallery collections of Hamilton, Latrobe (Morwell) and Wagga Wagga, as well as in private collections.

*Vicki Torr: A cutting edge* coincides with the United Nations' International Year of Glass. Tracing her critical and commercial success, the exhibition restates Torr's position as an acclaimed contemporary Australian glass artist.

**Caroline Field**  
Curator

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Ian Mowbray, 25 November 2021.

<sup>2</sup> Gerry King, 'Of Learning and Surprise', *Craft Arts International*, no. 82, 2011, p. 94.


<sup>3</sup> Interview with Kirstie Rea, 22 October 2021.


<sup>4</sup> Geoffrey Edwards, '4th National Studio Glass Exhibition', *Craft Arts*, no. 15, 1989, p. 107.



  
Untitled (yellow bowl with black stripes), 1984  
glass  
H 4 × diam. W 21.5 cm  
Private collection  
Photo: Russell Winnell



  
Untitled (double-cone bowl), 1991  
glass  
H 19.8 × diam. 47 cm  
Wagga Wagga Art Gallery Collection  
Purchased with the generous support of Beaver Galleries, Gift of David and Barbara Thomas  
Photo: Andrew Halyday

  
Untitled (fan-shaped sculpture), 1984  
glass, copper, silver wire thread, paint and black ribbon  
H 40 × W 28 × D 1.5 cm  
Powerhouse collection, purchased 1984  
Photo: Ryan Hernandez