



PRESS RELEASE

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Press Contact: Katya Heller
p: 212.414.4014
e: katya@hellergallery.com

MEL DOUGLAS | Defining Space

October 1 – November 14, 2020

New York -- 2020 has been a year of triumph and unprecedented challenge for Australian artist Mel Douglas. With great pride in her many accomplishments, we are privileged to announce *Defining Space*, Heller Gallery's first solo exhibition of Douglas' work.

Douglas is the winner of the 2020 Tom Malone Prize, the prestigious Australian award, through which a work is acquired each year into the collection of the National Gallery of Western Australia. Through her career and research she has pursued work that has been described by the Tom Malone Prize jury praised her work as 'quiet, but strangely energetic and animated' and as evidence of 'her commitment to creative experimentation and evolution with the always challenging medium of glass.'

Douglas' minimalist work explores the potential, versatility and flexibility of glass as a material for drawing. In her words: 'Objects and drawings are often thought of as two separate entities. My pieces explore and interweave the creative possibilities of this liminal space, where the form is not just a support for drawing; but a three-dimensional drawing itself. Using the unique qualities of the material, and the rich potential of mark making on and with glass, I am using line as a way to inform, define and enable three-dimensional space'

Earlier this year Douglas was awarded her PhD by Australian National University, her alma mater, for her practice-led research that investigates how studio glass can be understood through the aesthetics of drawing. Taking as her starting point the theories of leading British anthropologist Tim Ingold's theories on line as well as the work of Lazlo Maholy-Nagy,

Susan Hefuna, Sol LeWitt, and Fred Sandback, her study – and her current work -- aims to use line as a way to inform, define and enable three-dimensional space. She makes objects, in both two and three dimensions which spatially merge surface and drawing, where the form is not a support but a three-dimensional drawing itself.

In her thesis Douglas establishes six categories for her own investigation and practice of line-making. She titles them mapping, inscribing, rendering, highlighting, transcribing and tracing. The *Defining Space* exhibition includes examples of five of these through objects as subtle and as commanding as the *Volume* and *Capacity* triptych (Mapping), *Counteraction* (Inscribing), *Borderline* (Highlighting), *overlap* (Rendering) and the three glass drawings *Third space*, *Transition* and the *Fold series* suite (all Tracing).

Mel Douglas has worked as an independent studio artist since graduating from the Canberra School of Art, Australian National University in 2000, where she has also been a lecturer. Earlier this year (2020), she received her PhD from her alma mater based on research she carried out at the ANU's Glass Workshop and at Bullseye in Portland, OR. In addition to the 2020 Tom Malone Prize, Douglas has received several major awards including the Ranamok Glass Prize in 2002, the International Young Glass Award in 2007 from Ebeltoft. In 2019 her work was the inaugural acquisition for the NGA's Robert and Eugenie Bell Decorative Arts and Design Fund. Douglas' work is held in the private collections and public institutions internationally, including the Corning Museum of Glass, New York, the Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, VA; the Ebeltoft Museum of Glass, Denmark, and National Gallery of Australia, Australia.