

ARTS

Edited by Stephen Bevis



Spectrum-stretching artist who folds light aims for the eye's 'mind'

STEPHEN BEVIS

For Marion Borgelt, light is something that can be bent, folded and curled to provide an intriguing mix of sensory encounters.

Two years after her first visit to Perth for a residency at Turner Galleries, the Sydney-based artist has returned with a new spectrum-stretching exhibition called *Exotic Particles*.

The show takes its name from a physics term referring to how particles interfere with light waves, says Borgelt as her artworks pulsate against white walls free from the distracting mass of bodies at the exhibition's opening the night before.

"That is very much about what is going on here with the work representing motion and light with momentum," she says.

A leading artist with a prodigious three-decade career, Borgelt creates

paintings, sculptures and installations that suggest connections between the man-made world and nature, and the dance between light and dark.

Using a wide range of materials, including wax, eggshells, canvas, felt, pigment, stainless steel, wood and stone, she seems to be engaged in a relentless campaign to impose a sleek, refined restraint on a world of perpetual motion. She attributes this partially to growing up on a farm at Nhill ("I think there really is an 'O' missing from that name because it is as flat as the eye can see.") in western Victoria where life could be a messy and chaotic run of primal experiences.

"I think I really decided I really love aesthetics and I really love design and a kind of harmony," she says. "Maybe I have really been quite reactionary about my background."

A well-known photograph by R. Ian Lloyd (from his book and touring

exhibition *Studio*) shows Borgelt in her notoriously neat, austere white-walled studio in suburban Chippendale.

"I suppose these things are relative but, as far as I am concerned, my studio



In harmony: Marion Borgelt at Turner Galleries.

Picture: Robert Duncan

has always been rather messy," she says. "When I am working on a work that has a white background I really need a certain amount of clarity visually in the space around me."

Borgelt has won many awards since being the most outstanding final year student at the South Australian School of Art in 1977. She lived in Paris for eight years after winning a French Government fellowship in 1989 and was the first Australian artist awarded America's prestigious Pollock-Krasner Art Fellowship in 1997.

She recently spent time in Venice working with the glass masters on the island of Murano and has included in her Turner Galleries show a series of solid glass spheres called *Tsukimi* (Japanese for Moon-viewing).

She speaks of her work having a "lot of restraint, complete restraint away from any embellishment. It is minimalist with a *joie de vivre*, I think, minimalism with luminosity."

Her *Liquid Light* series, which has taken six years to create, inhabits the space between sculpture and painting and comprises a number of painted

canvases sliced and puffed out from the flat plane. Different materials and different scales (she is as well known for her big, corporate commissions) speak in different ways about the same idea, she says. "It is like an orchestration of an overall sound but using different instruments."

On her short visit to Perth, Borgelt admits to being unusually talkative about her work and explains her usual reluctance by saying she prefers to suggest simply that people take a look for themselves.

"I don't really want anything explained about my work because it really does hit you in the core in the mind of your eyes. If your eyes could have a mind, then that is really where I want my work to exist."

Marion Borgelt's *Exotic Particles* is at Turner Galleries, Northbridge, until October 3.