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Maximum Height 39"

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| 1. #050503 | 6. #130503 |
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| | 11. #080503 |



Fire, with its dichotomous potential for creation and destruction (and ultimately regeneration) has provided the explosive theme for glass artist Nick Mount's latest series of scent bottles. Integral to the glass-making process, *fire* has a more ominous resonance within the Australian

context, for throughout the long, dry days of summer, the Australian public holds its collective breath in a superstitious reluctance to give voice to the emotive word 'bushfire.'

Begun in 1997, the continually evolving Scent Bottle series has now consumed Mount's attention for a greater period than any other single body of work. The sculptural pieces for *Fire* mark a shift from the soaring, fluid and brilliantly-coloured scent bottles of recent years, with their risky, vertiginous, punctuation mark-like flourishes.

...to take risks, to push the boundaries, to literally play with fire.

Out of both necessity and desire, Mount has from the outset frequently fashioned his own tools of trade and in his latest series, he intensifies his experimentation with the crayons he has developed specifically to draw on glass.

Each colour is applied separately by hand and then fired in order to render the markings permanent. Flames appear to scale and spiral around the stylised, conical stoppers of *Fire*'s scent bottles, which plunge elegantly to tapering metal spikes of an abraded earthiness.

Mount's overscaled stopper forms are derived from the shape of the plumb-bob, a traditional measuring tool of the mason's trade.

With its confluence of symmetry, beauty and usefulness it represents for Mount not only a touchstone to centuries of hand crafting tradition, but also most closely encapsulates Mount's own creative imperative.

Assembling the scent bottle components in a striking conjunction of the experimental and the historical, Mount offsets the expressive hand markings of his conical forms with the more traditional élan of the vessel components, which reveal the dazzling extent of his (battuto, inciso et al) technical vocabulary. Concomitant with the warmer palette of the *Fire* series, the sleekly polished aluminium sections of recent scent bottle groupings have been superseded by the rich reddish-brown tones of weathered and rusted steel – the colour of the Australian desert. The glowing red, tangerine and golden hues are redolent not only of the Australian landscape and the spectacular colours of autumn, but with the pencilled swirls and curlicues of flames, they conjure the dramatic striations of a blazing sunset.

At the forefront of the studio glass movement in Australia since the 1970s, Mount has said in reference to his chosen medium. "I love its glassiness, its fluidity, the way that you can work it, but it always stays at arm's length ... You can work with its clarity, with the colour, with its reflectivity, with the shininess of it ... I like making it sensuous. I like making it dangerous."

Fire is dangerous on several levels, since with his gestural markings on glass, Mount has effectively dispensed with the customary arm's length detachment of the glass blower, thereby stepping outside the usual terms of engagement. Both the volatility of the medium itself and the frisson of danger associated with *fire* – in contrast with the other three elements, earth, air and water – are paralleled by Mount's willingness to take risks, to push the boundaries, to literally play with *fire*.

Wendy Walker © May 2003

NICK MOUNT

