

Gregor Kregar

b.1972

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Looking at *Large Steel Life With Cars* by Gregor Kregar we are confronted with almost as many questions as there are cars in the traffic jam depicted on the screen. *Large Steel Life With Cars* is made from pieces of glass that have been cast in a mould, then joined together with lead like a stained glass window. Although the image of traffic we view on the 'screen' is two-dimensional, it is obviously not a painting. In fact, the image is not *on* the screen, the image *is* the screen. But, nor is Kregar's television a conventional sculpture. After all, television sets are designed to sit in the corner and be viewed from the fixed position of an armchair, not to be walked around as is usual with a sculpture. What is Kregar up to?

Originally from Slovenia, Kregar is an artist who utilises whatever materials best suit the ideas he is exploring. In the past he has used such diverse materials as discarded consumer items, appliances and leisure equipment, scaffolding, live sheep, glass, metals and ceramics. In the studio Kregar employs demanding production and engineering processes and lavishes labour-intensive craft techniques on his work. Both these approaches give his objects a strong physical and material presence, which is perhaps unusual in work which is predominantly conceptual in content. His glass work in particular is often imposing – especially when combined with steel armatures – chunky and beautifully luminous as only glass can be.

Kregar has said that he is interested in the fact that glass remains permanently in liquid form, although we perceive it as solid when it has cooled. Glass working is also a labour-intensive craft that has an ancient tradition. (Many beautiful glass objects from the time of the Egyptian pyramids have survived and can be seen in museums.) It is intriguing that Kregar should use ancient craft techniques – he also uses raku-fired ceramic – to convey contemporary ideas. Perhaps he is suggesting that, like the imperceptible liquidity of glass, the categories (ancient/contemporary, conceptual art/labour-intensive craft) that we apply to art and life are not as solid or fixed as we often think.

Let's consider what ideas Kregar might be examining by creating a work from glass and steel, that looks like a television and depicts a rather serious-looking traffic jam.

The traffic jam is a big clue. A traffic jam is literally a crowd on wheels encased in steel (steel life). Some of Kregar's work has

been about the disturbing and sometimes frightening nature of crowd behaviour. But *Large Steel Life With Cars* looks at the more prosaic, everyday instance of the traffic jam.

Imagine we are stuck in a traffic jam on a hot day, barely moving (still life): it is likely that we experience frustration and boredom, but we must submit to the momentum (or lack of!) of the crowd. What do traffic jams and television have in common? Television is of course the dominant communication medium in our lives: it's the dominant player in the mass-media, or the media of the crowd. Kregar seems to identify with the growing number of people who find the medium of television as controlling as being stuck in a traffic jam. If the mass media, as we passively experience it via television, is the antithesis of individual expression, Kregar neatly turns the tables in *Large Steel Life With Cars*. By 'recasting' the television set in his witty critique, he undermines its authority and asserts his own individuality.

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Artist website:

www.gregorkregar.com

Galleries and museums:

www.aucklandartgallery.govt.nz

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