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OUTthere



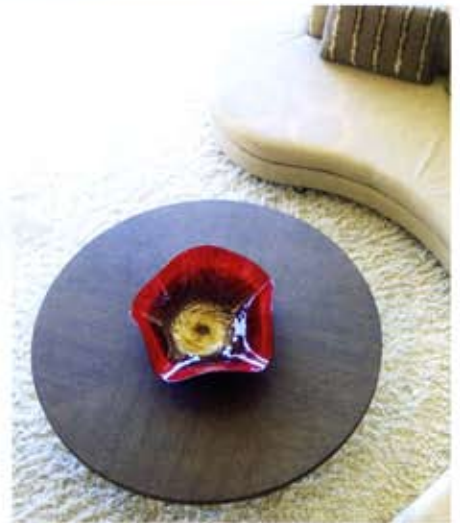
Kate Miller-Heidke

Australian songstress on the rise

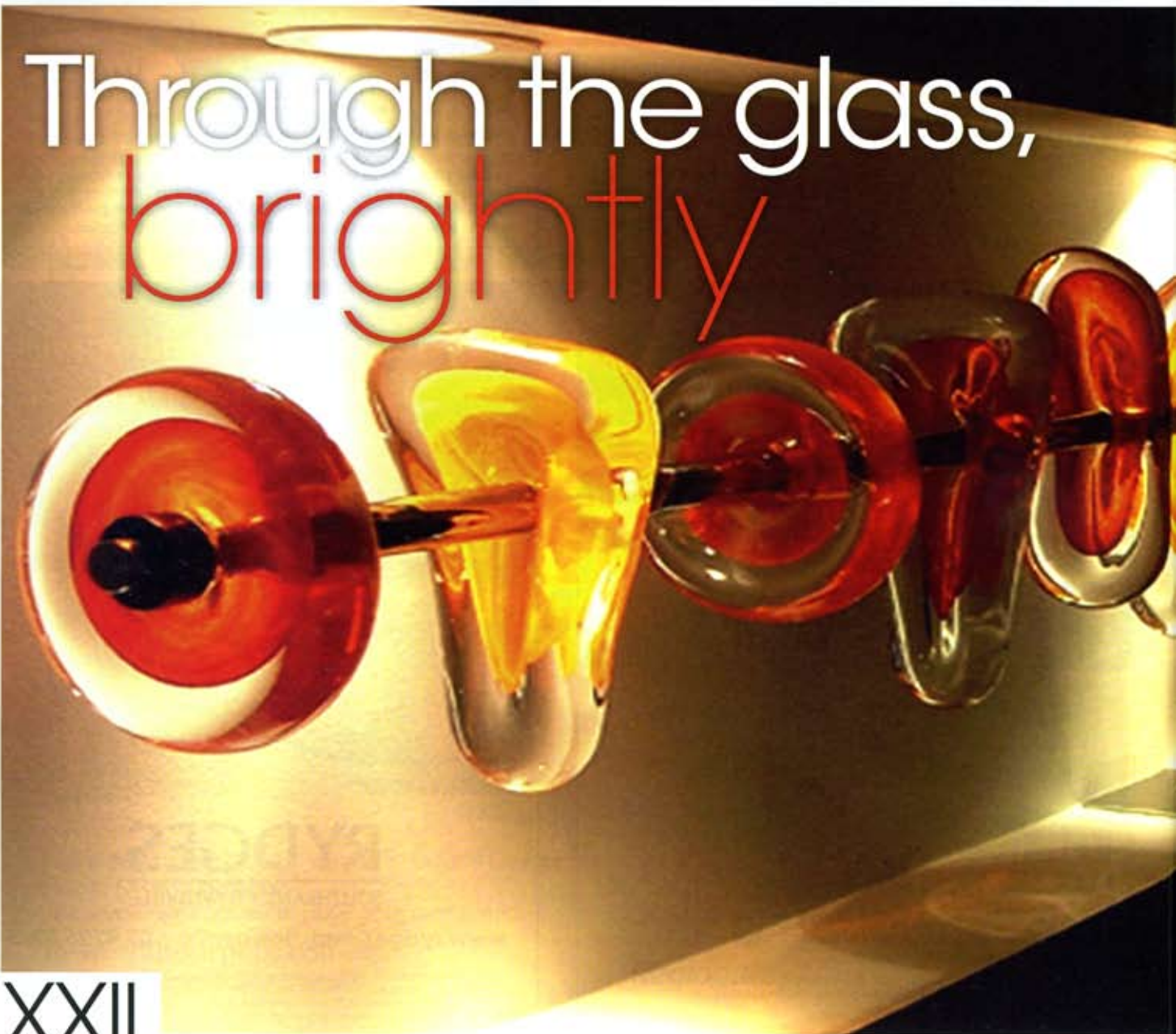
**Soaking up
Sydney**
with kids in tow

Queensland capers
Let loose up north

+CountryBIZ



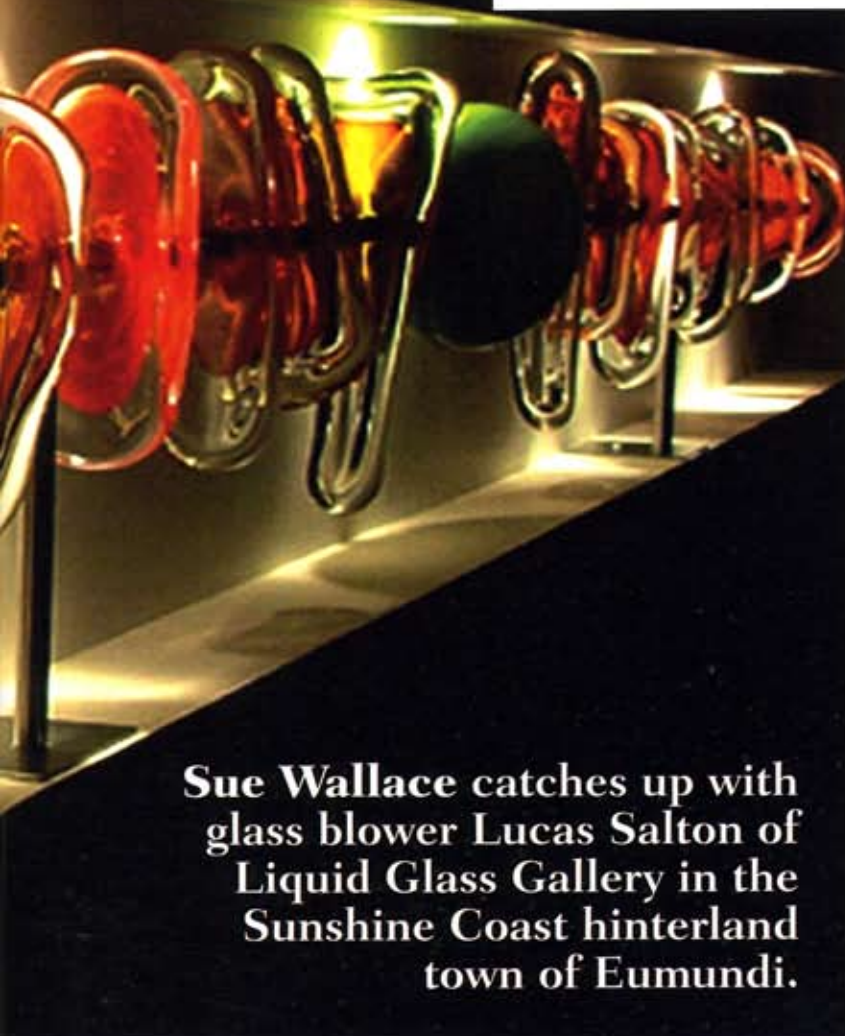
Through the glass,
brightly





Main image: Made to order - a striking cherry, lemon and lime horizontal totem.

Top, from left to right: A colourful red triffid captures attention; a cherry and Zulu totem; Jaffa Platter; Lucas Salton creating magical shapes in a riot of colour.



Sue Wallace catches up with glass blower Lucas Salton of Liquid Glass Gallery in the Sunshine Coast hinterland town of Eumundi.

Australian glass blower Lucas Salton loves the fact that all his work starts out as a tiny bubble the size of a squash ball then grows. "It is amazing when you are holding a molten ball of sizzling glass at 1,100 degrees Celsius and mix raw ingredients and convert it into a thing of beauty that can last forever," he says. Magical shapes in a riot of colours that tease and intrigue are the trademarks of this talented artist.

It's 20 years since Salton, 39, made an on-the-spot decision to pursue a career creating beautiful glass objects and in doing so, declined a job as a crew member sailing around the world on a luxurious yacht.

"It's a decision I have never regretted," says Salton from his Liquid Glass Gallery and Studio in the picturesque market town of Eumundi, a well-known hub for skilled artists.

"I knew I had this wonderful opportunity to learn the ancient art of glass blowing, something I had always wanted to do, so I didn't think twice about it."

Today his stunning sensual glass sculptures grace the boardrooms of corporate businesses such as Apple and BHP and take centre stage in embassies, museums, private homes and hotels around the world including a 320-piece installation at Sydney's Westin Hotel and a 26-piece installation in Dubai's Sofitel Hotel. He has also created glass sculptures for Warner Bros films, *Ghost Ship* and *Peter Pan*.

Why glass?

Salton takes the medium of glass and makes it his own, drawing on inspirations from nature, shapes and colours, to create dramatic signature pieces, commissioned works and decorative platters and decanters.

He uses swirls of colour such as bright orange, lucid yellow, vivid aquas, pinks and azures in his innovative shapes of elongated triffid clusters, totems and glass stones that immediately capture your attention.

Salton says he is just as passionate today about glass blowing as he was when he first started out, aged 18. He links his love affair with glass back to his mother, a school teacher, who encouraged him and his sister, Larissa, to create Christmas presents from shattered windscreen glass.

"I was always fascinated by glass and all things shiny as I was growing up," he says. "I first started making small glass animals by sticking broken windscreen glass together that Larissa and I would collect from the side of the road."

It was at a lively dinner party surrounded by unusual sculptures and creative work that Salton was introduced to a glass blower who told him of an apprenticeship available on the Sunshine Coast. He applied, got the job, and moved immediately.

"The first time I saw glass blowing I knew I had found my path in life and I have loved it ever since," he says.

Why a fascination with glass? is a question he's pondered many times. "It can transmit, reflect and bend light, it is hard yet so fragile and I like the fact that glass blowing is an art that goes back thousands of years. At one time glass was more precious than gold," Salton says. "Glass just has so much clarity to it and is such a pure medium to work with."



But he is quick to say over the years he's had his share of disasters. "Just when you think you have everything under control the glass does its own thing – it is a very unforgiving medium and it is a humbling experience working with it," he says.

"You can't get frustrated and spit the dummy when things go wrong – you have just got to go with it. You can't carry that bad attitude into your next work – it's a bit like life really, you have to let go and move on."

Away from the heat

The award-winning glass master admits "playing with molten lava" may be considered extreme by some, but that's just him. It's an attitude reflected in his other interests such as jumping out of planes, scuba diving and motorbike racing. "I love getting out on the road after a busy day glass blowing – it's a great release," he says.

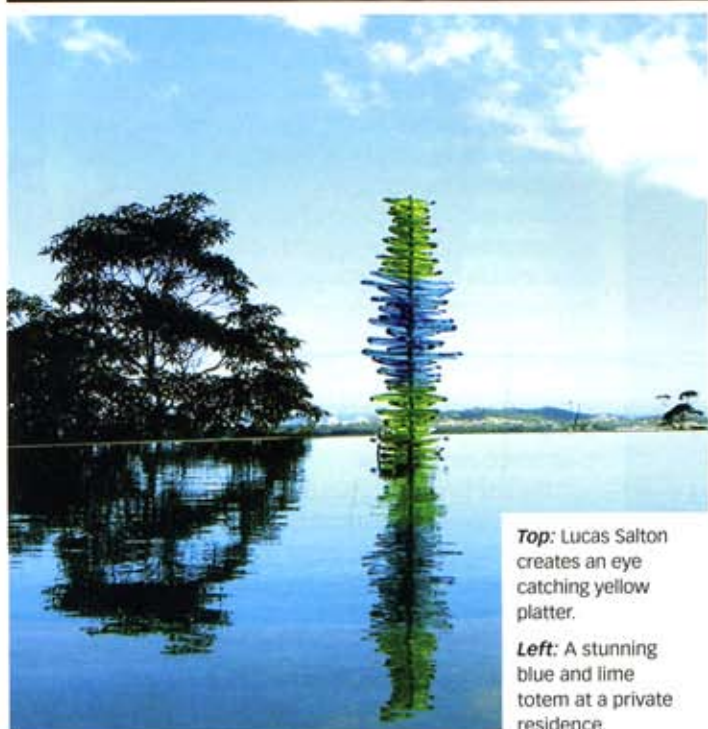
When he's not being creative he also goes scuba diving, which provides a great balance between work and play. "Working with all that heat and fury then disappearing underwater for a while is a fantastic combination so I head to the water as often as I can – I get inspiration from the colours under the water," he says.

Salton also lectures and conducts glass blowing workshops around the world – his last tally was 16 countries including studying and teaching in Japan. His next trip will be to Saudi Arabia for a commission.

His studio at the back of the Imperial Hotel on the main street of Eumundi features two furnaces that consume one tonne of LPG every week. They reach extreme temperatures of up to 1,300 degrees Celsius, which is required for heating the raw materials. It's hot work so he starts early in the day.

Salton says that while he will always encourage others interested in glass blowing, it takes extreme dedication, patience and determination. "I guess I am always striving for the perfect piece but I love it when the glass takes on a life of its own and I just let it lead me," he says.

Another of his pleasures is spending time with his son, Levi, 6, whom he describes as a "little champ". "We draw designs together some of which I use in my work," he says.



Top: Lucas Salton creates an eye catching yellow platter.

Left: A stunning blue and lime totem at a private residence.

Away from home

Over the years he's staged exhibitions in Munich, Florida, San Francisco, Toronto, Sydney, Japan, Canberra, Melbourne, Hobart and Brisbane, where he's developed a dedicated following. However, Eumundi and the coast will always be his home.

"I love the artistic energy of New York and Tokyo but I never want to live where you can hear your neighbour's phone ringing next door – here is just perfect," he says. ■

Liquid Glass Gallery

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