

# Visual arts

Andrew Harper

## Precious, not perfect

re/JOY  
Vipoo Srivilasa  
TMAG  
Dunn Place, Hobart  
Until August 24

**V**ipoo Srivilasa is an artist whose work tells tales and shares stories. He's a Thai-born artist who has lived in Melbourne since 1997 – over that time he's developed a truly beautiful art practice that is based around ceramic work but takes in many forms of art making.

This show arose from a process of finding stories that were attached to objects – objects that had been broken, but were still kept by the owner. It's a compelling idea to delve into, because it suggests the value of an object is tied to something deeply personal. Even when it's broken, it can still serve as a connection to a faraway place, a reminder of a friend or relative who is no longer around, or simply carry a sense of being precious – something more than just the object itself.

Srivilasa met and spoke with a number of people for this extended project, seeing their objects and hearing their stories and memories. Using the narratives and objects gathered in those processes, he began to design, and eventually create large ceramic sculptures based around each person who shared their life and precious objects with him.

The results are genuinely lovely – Srivilasa has a very strong aesthetic, and an excellent ability with his medium. There's a certain sense of what we might call cuteness in each work. This is interesting as cuteness is something that we might understand as not being so much a part of art/ or at least being more for art that's aimed at children. Srivilasa doesn't worry about this though – all his objects have the large eyes, that are also stylised flowers, and all are smiling and appear well, friendly. This is an important point at the core of the work. Srivilasa's pieces are undeniably beautiful – covered in gold and delicately painted in strong colours – but they're not created just to look nice. They're about celebrating connections and telling stories. Most of the works here are associated with people who have migrated to Australia. By finding and celebrating the small details and memories of a single



**From Courgettes to Zucchini's, above, and Cornflower Dreams, left, by Vipoo Srivilasa. Pictures: Simon Strong.**

person, and creating a work that really elevates those details, there's an implication that their life and story, who they are, is something of value – value that's much more than monetary.

This is upbeat art that's all about connections and community. It's art that has an innate interest in diversity too – the works in this show, when seen altogether, might be understood as representing a community. All the works are



different, and made up of different elements, but they all stand together, and the show has its strongest impact in that complex set of connections – certain symbols and forms are seen across all the works. This is a delightful show that anyone can relate to – perhaps Srivilasa's greatest achievement is how openly his work shares his ideas and strong emotions. It's funny, sweet, and clever art that exudes genuine beauty, and that beauty is far more than what the work looks like.