

Porcelain for the fleeting moment

Our beginnings do not know our endings.¹

Artists have been lured into the world of self-promotion and product marketing. Regrettably, it is considered almost obligatory for a 'serious' artist/ craftsperson to have a website where all the work is done: a press release self-interpreting one's own work, and selling it too. 'Best practice', a term of industry and commerce, is seen as benchmarking professionalism. I wish to concentrate on the art making, the tenuous realm of unabridged, fluid exploration that cannot be spun into neat word bites. I 'know' what I am following, those threads I am pulling myself along daily in the studio, but I could be wrong. The Korean artist maker Lee Ufan is eloquent: 'One might say that artists are a dangerous and greedy species, because they want to somehow, somewhere capture and stop the fleeting poetic moment that appears by chance and then immediately gives way to the everyday world'.²

I have written afterwards of my exhibitions of ceramic works: *Not on any map; true places never are* (1999), *The Other Side of the Line* (2001), *Groundtruthing project* (2003), and I have a thickening backlog of 'artist statements'. They are all there, out there, as are the ceramic vessels and objects taken from studio to gallery, to I wonder where and by whom.

There are a few things I can say. I am interested in the 'symbolic object'; that witness to time and place. I have for a long time been interested in turning 'Landscape' into 'place-settings', local home-places, event-spaces. The lived, long-known, familial and strengthening, in contrast to the stand-apart look-at, photograph, pass-through view. Layers of encounter and learning, temporal as well as spatial, last week as well as last century. Perhaps more than a two dimensional painting, I would contend, a three dimensional vessel or object has more possibility of carrying such layered encounter, allusionary strata, and bodily engagement. Pick up a 'palm cup', turn it over, trace the lines of textural change, remember, forget for a moment, feel. Do again the following day. Watch it from afar with the low May morning sun passing across it, imagine something else, someone else, somewhere else. Too much to ask of an innate object? Perhaps; perhaps not, in the company of one's daily flow.

In this current studio series, I have asked porcelain to meet time, light, loss. Porcelain carries a backpack of history to this continent of contradictions. Long established in the cultures of China and Japan, it also totes its dark, enthralling origin in Europe with Böttger's captive experimentation towards a secret arcanum for 'white gold'. In a relatively brief time, the fickle paste led to factory output for porcelain collecting to ceiling-high excess by European gentry, in turn gently satirised by makers like Meissen's Johann Kaendler. Porcelain does not let me forget this, even here, southern hemisphere, 21C, whether handling imported French Limoges or Les Blakeborough's austral arcanum of 'Ice'.

But what does porcelain make of time, light, loss? Over the past five years, I have become enthralled by the ability of porcelain to catch the transience of light. Daily, seasonal, particular to place. Pushed to material limits of inlay and translucency, subjected to vagaries of kiln heat and atmospheres, it continues to teach me about ongoing loss. This sits alongside my own process of farewelling my father to his realm of forgetting, and my return for a period in 2005 to northern home terrain where long-familiar land places are being carved away under the protection of

‘progress’. On this continent of competing origins and values, the calamity of loss of species and continuity of place escalates inside, in silence.

In the assemblage of vessels and objects underway, encounter and connection find company with inlaid line and pattern, engraved image, private text, and the transience of translucency.

Louise Boscacci 2006

(In association with the exhibition *Return/ Porcelain: Time, Light, Loss*)

¹ Harold Pinter, ‘Truth, Art and Politics’, Nobel speech 2005.

² Lee Ufan 2004, *The Art of Encounter*, Lisson Gallery, London.