

## David Roberts - Exhibition Galerie de l'Ancienne Poste

### The Meaningful Vessel

In all my work the vessel form is employed to reflect my feelings, response and engagement with landscape. The title refers to the way my thoughts, observations, memories and ideas of landscape are changed, mutated and enhanced by my making processes into the independent and expressive vessel.

I always coil build all my vessels. To my eyes coiled forms are simple in shape and gentle in feel, as much concerned with volume as profile - in effect for me a sympathetic and responsive three dimensional canvas for the Raku surfaces to play on. The vessel form itself is profoundly important but in my work it carries messages and ideas not things.

Introduced to Western Raku in the mid 1970s, during the early 1980s I became increasingly dissatisfied with the glaze surface covering and concealing the clay form. This desire for a surface which fused form and surface was spurred on in the late 1980s by seeing an important exhibition of traditional African ceramics. These stunning pieces were decorated by smoke or firing marks or painted pigments made from slips of coloured earth but no glaze to camouflage their formal qualities. By the early 1990s I abandoned glaze altogether and have spent most of the last two and a half decades, developing, refining and evolving my own idiosyncratic ceramic language of Non-Glazed Raku. This process is usually given the name 'Naked Raku' i.e. the clay surface is bare with no glaze cover. However I dislike this term and prefer to describe my processes as 'Painting With Smoke'. I find this process has more potential as an expressive mark making activity than conventional glazed Raku. Over the years it has proved to be open, on going, developmental, flexible and dynamic. New work is constantly being explored whilst simultaneously previous themes are constantly being revisited and reworked.

This process enables me to engage with, and express ideas and feelings about landscape in particular my local Yorkshire hills which are covered in wonderful dry stone walls, paths and tracks. The contouring and traversing of these phenomena over the landscape being represented by marks generated by my drawing and firing processes. These marks are metaphorical or abstract in manner rather than realistic or topographical. Subsequently the subject changed to about as far away as possible from Yorkshire; Milford Sound in South Island, New Zealand. Whilst visiting I experienced the result of days of torrential rain. It was terrific. Massive rocks and mountains rising straight from the sound to well over a thousand meters being transformed into one gigantic, powerful waterfall. My recent vessels' positive and negative, black and white, linear markings echoing the rhythmical and dramatic flows and ripples of water. The textures representing the erosions and geology of rocks and earth. For me a meaningful and deeply expressive statement.

David Roberts, January 2018