

Ceramics

Art + Perception

2019

#114

USD	\$20
EUR	€18
CAD	\$27
AUD	\$27
GBP	£15



Sandy Lockwood

Unearthed Elements

Written by Jack Troy

Whatever put elegance in language, that's what happening here.

– Rumi ¹

Sandy Lockwood is equally articulate *with and about* clay – one of the rare makers whose writings about her practice are worth reading. She expresses what many of us struggle to say, or pay others to compensate for our failure to do so. Her essays accessible on her website: <https://www.sandylockwood.com.au>. Bear me out.

Her preference for wood fired salt glaze shows she is attempting to stage intention with happenstance, in the theatre of her kiln. She composes clay bodies with material savvy - some so highly textured as to resemble plastic sand, others vitreous as translucent porcelain – all expand her working vocabulary. Much of her functional work features clays with butterscotch tonality alternating with freckling from flame and ash rearranging iron particles in a mad eutectic dance at high heat. So much for what our eye takes in.

Her first solo-US exhibition, *Unearthed Elements* (2019) transcends ‘craft’, by engaging us in wonderment about how the pieces came to be; they seem to have been un-made from something else rather than *constructed*, putting us in mind of Chinese ‘scholars stones’, those visually magnetic geological artifacts pirated from their sources. *Unearthed Elements* rewards long and practiced looking – needing to be touched to be believed. *Meshwork Fragment Wall Piece 1*, could be a study for a work big enough to dwarf a human being. Unearthed 4 reminds us of the Mendocino coast, Vietnamese karst formations, or Druidic stone placements at Dartmoor. *Temporal Melt (Quern Series)* creates with celadon glaze the appearance of ice at ambient temperature. To experience these introspective works, we might be mindful of T. S. Eliot’s advice, “Oh do not ask what is it, let us go and make our visit.”²

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“Oh do not ask what is it, let us go and make our visit.”



Unearthed 2, 2019,
woodfired saltglazed
stoneware, inclusions
and slip, 6.5 x 10 x 2.5 in
(16.5 x 25.5 x 6.5 cm).



Two of Lockwood's signature *Unstan Bowls* contrast pinched, horizon-like rims with plate-like bases, giving the forms just enough lift to cast a shadow where the seen and unseen merge. These bowls contrast with Lockwood's pensive, curiosity-driven approach to "letting clay be clay" so indicative of our time, as seen in the work of Stephen De Staebler, Claudi Casonovas and Tim Rowan – a perspective that subverts chest-thumping *me-ness* to aesthetic outcomes characterized by humility, and respect bordering on reverence, for material and process.

Born in England, Sandy Lockwood harbours a fascination with Neolithic cultures and artifacts whose usefulness outlived their makers. For her, the work weathering does has an allure all its own and is a fit subject for poetry: "...Dumb/as

old medallions to the thumb.... A poem should be equal to;/Not true."³ Her pieces though freshly fired, appear to have lost their current-ness; they have been recovered from psychic sources rather than *made*. Hamada characterized such work like this: "People use the words 'to create' very readily, but I don't like to use them very often. The things that I do, my wares, are not made but born. If you can't give birth to the thing then you can't call it creation."⁴

E. E. Cummings, half a planet away, put it this way – "A world of made is not a world of born."⁵

Sandy Lockwood's current work would have undoubtedly perplexed her twenty years ago, had she been able to glimpse *Unearthed Elements*. Such are the fruits of incremental learning when the conscious and subconscious work in tandem. ■

Endnotes

1. *What was Said to the Rose*, Rumi, <https://www.poetryverse.com/foreign-poets/rumi-poems/said-to-the-rose>
2. "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." T. S. Eliot, *Prufrock and Other Observations*, From Poems. New York: A.A. Knopf, 1920.
3. *Ars Poetica*, Archibald MacLeish, <https://poets.org/poem/ars-poetica>.
4. Susan Peterson. *Shoji Hamada, a Potter's Way & Work*. New York: Wetherhill, 1974: 189-192.
5. "pity this busy monster, man unkind," *E. E. Cummings, Poems 1923-1954*, p. 397. Harcourt, Brace and Company. New York. 1954.

All images courtesy of the Artist.



Unstan Bowl, 2019,
stoneware, inclusions
and slip, 4.5 x 11.5 x 11.5
in (11.5 x 29 x 29 cm).

These bowls contrast with Lockwood's pensive, curiosity-driven approach to "letting clay be clay".



Unearthed I, 2019,
woodfired saltglazed
stoneware, inclusions
and slip, 9.5 x 13 x 3.5
in (24 x 33 x 9 cm).