
14 OCTOBER TO 12 NOVEMBER 2005
GORDON BALDWIN

Gordon Baldwin's studio is very much 'imagination's chamber', the place to which he goes before many of us are awake (often he is there in the half light) and revisits throughout the day. It is a hybrid room, in the basement of his house – a sketchbook space of mind and ideas, drawings pinned on the wall, drawings on the pots, pots as drawings. His work is, to a great degree, a diary of thought, of his occupations and obsessions, current and recurring. Broodings, flights of fancy, looking into the darker regions. Each vessel is a journey, each vessel the stage of a journey. And like all such journeys, he revisits the familiar, as well as gauging the routes quite new. There is a fluidity about this process, a stream of consciousness, of chance, which is closely bound to his need of music as well as the visual touchstones. His work is generated by sound as well as sight, by the places where the eye and ear coalesce – the haunting coast on the Llên Peninsula where the motion and drag of the rhythmic tide ("...listening to the swell born somewhere in the Atlantic/ rising and falling, rising and falling/ wave on wave on the long shore...", to quote the poet R.S.Thomas) affects him deeply, just as he is affected by the mantra-like cords of, say, John Adams or Steve Reich.

In parallel, each Baldwin sculpture is (for the most part) part of a series, but in the repetition there are variations, different resolutions. Visual and aural sensation can give a structure, a shape, to the nebulosity of thought, of his unidentified ruminations. Or it can open up quite new images and fields of vision. Music enables a kind of bodily as well as mental release in the making, a physical momentum that invokes invention. There is a symbiosis, a creative progress in an unknown direction, but always a sense of moving, of playing, found in the richly resourceful irregularities and unities of form and contour, of the seemingly random markings of surface. These objects are harnessed by their titles, a means of identification, of claiming ownership, before he can move on. His art does not illustrate experience. More, in attempting to define the sounds he hears, the landscapes and spaces he perceives, it deepens that experience. Out of the "silences and darkneses" these vessels, these ships in the night, continue into the searching light, mysterious and beautiful.

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