

Tony Marsh

Over the past ten years of developing my *Crucible* series my entire approach to working with clay and glaze materials has undergone both a philosophical and methodological realignment. At present, I am moving increasingly further away from the traditional approaches to working with clay that were foundational to my education; namely, the dogmatic tendency of craftsmanship to seek predictability and reproduce results.

Instead, I favor chance and the unknowable result. When I open a kiln, I am seeking something I have never seen. To achieve this outcome, I intentionally steer the process off course so that I am confronted with the need to solve technical and aesthetic problems on a unique case-by-case basis. While this type of decision-making calls on a deep reservoir of experience with ceramic materials and processes, the reward of alchemical discovery generates tremendous energy to work.

As I subject each work to successive firings processes it is pushed to a frontier boundary between material destruction and creative renewal. The assorted mineral concoctions that I layer on the surface of each work, when fired, begin to melt and become unstable as they flow through one another and combine in new unpredictable ways down the surface of a vessel. Thermal adversity becomes a crucially important element.

Working with a material base that so phenomenological and transformational by nature presents challenges that are as satisfying as they are fascinating. In this work there are real and imagined allusions to physical sciences and geographic phenomenon: force, time, pyroclastic surfaces, and landscape.

New topologies take form as odd combinations of materials, under the action of heat and cooling cycles, slip, flow, boil, collide, and stack into new dynamic forms – solid to molten liquid to cooled solid. Not lost on me is the material fact that I am working with new the very stuff of the earth's crust and when subjected to heat each work engenders a rich metaphor about geophysical and artistic creation.

It is very important to me that many works don't survive the process. The possibility to identify a history of adversity as it is indexed through the form and surface of an object 'at rest' compels me.

Relative to the forms with which I choose to work, the elemental has always interested me. Simple straight walled cylinders of differing proportions have been constant in this ongoing body of work and it is the unique application of glaze materials and firing practice that provides the variables that gives life to each work. I delight in the interstitial gaps between intuitive wisdom and scientific knowledge.

At its best, I find myself at the intersection of nature and culture. In this process it is every bit as important that I exercise what I know as well as learn from the process. The process of making my work shapes me too.