

GLADSTONE GALLERY

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ANDREW LORD

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The British-born ceramist Andrew Lord has been based in New York since the early 1980s, but this was his first show at Gladstone, and he responded to the opportunity with a dazzling expansion of his range. The exhibition was dedicated to Whitworth, the small northern town where he grew up, and the work recalled everything from features of the hilly landscape that surrounds it, as in *road to quarry*, *Facit* (all works 2008-09), and details of

its buildings, as in *bay window*, *Wallbank (I)*, to its locals, with *dancer in Bacup (I)*.

Lord has always been interested in how his craft might be brought into dialogue with the concerns of fine art; in the past, he has pursued this exchange by creating pots and vases inspired by images of ceramics in early modernist paintings. His new work seems to approach the problem from another angle, by confronting kitsch: *tower*, *Blackpool (III)* is reminiscent of many cheap mementos of that popular English landmark, while *arch spanning river*, *Healey Dell (II)* recalls trinkets inspired by countryside scenes. Yet Lord's interest in problems of representation, remembrance and translation leads him to trouble these conventional motifs, isolating emotionally telling but otherwise unprepossessing forms and playing with their scale. His handling often stretches the physical capabilities of the clay and renders the motif ghostly: *passage to Market Street* is a staircase that reaches unsupported into the air before wilting, sadly.

If Lord's subjects no longer come from turn-of-the-last-century still-life paintings, he remains committed to modernism's feeling for fragments—for forms that are alive and unfinished—and, above all, to its belief in truth to materials. He has no desire to make the motif dominate the medium, and the heavy bases of his sculptures are always made of the same material as the sculptures themselves: in *swallows around his neck (IV)* he supports two birds in flight on incongruously thick ceramic columns that rise straight

out of a ceramic base. But Lord's inclinations don't make him seem out of date; on the contrary, while ceramics have been appearing frequently in art galleries of late, sometimes representing little more than a retro fad, Lord grounds his craft in observations about the evolving history of both art and craft, leaving no question of his work's relevance.

—Morgan Falconer



Andrew Lord: *bather in Healey Dell*, 2008-09, ceramic, 28 by 16½ by 10½ inches; at Gladstone.