

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Lisa Zeiger, "An English Sculptor in England: Five works by Andrew Lord in the Tate,"
Apollo Magazine, June 30, 2014.

An English Sculptor in England: Five works by Andrew Lord in the Tate

LISA ZEIGER



Three Vases. Fist (1985–86), Andrew Lord. Purchased with assistance from the Karpidas Family (Tate Americas Foundation) 2013. Image courtesy of Gladstone Gallery © Andrew Lord

While contemplating Tate's acquisition last year of five major works by British sculptor Andrew Lord, I thought immediately of Pevsner's title, *The Englishness of English Art*. The greatness of English art in the 20th century arose, arguably, not from movements at home or conformity with international movements but from individual artists working resolutely on their own, often against the grain of popular trends. Grand figures such as Francis Bacon, Lucian Freud and David Hockney come to mind, all of them consumed, in different ways, by the human form.

Although a multitude of his works takes the form of ceramic vessels, Lord has in recent years been grappling with faces, bodies, and human physicality – often, like Gauguin, using the vessel as a point of departure. In Lord's hands, clay becomes the medium of metamorphosis, the inanimate transformed into a pulsing evocation of life. Are we not reminded of the majestic words of Genesis: 'And the Lord God fashioned man from the clay of the soil, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being'?

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Lord is restless, peripatetic, not so much travelling as living in foreign lands. And yet he is adamantly grounded in the studio, always a fixed place of making, whilst dividing his time between New York, London, Paris and New Mexico. He draws inspiration from the landscape and artistic culture of each place, returning always, however, to certain experiences and visions in the north of England where he was born. Lord's memories of the English landscape are totems in his work; he has characterised his series 'Whitworth' as a 'catalogue of things lost'. The fugitive membrane of memory, so mysterious, so puzzling, covers these English places in Lord's work 'with beauty as though it were a veil', to paraphrase Freud's seminal essay, 'Screen Memories'.

As Miciah Hussey wrote in an essay following Lord's 2009 exhibition, 'Whitworth', at the Barbara Gladstone Gallery in New York: 'Despite having left Whitworth in what he called "a search for art," the shapes that surrounded him in his youth unconsciously emerged in the forms of his work. Though working an ocean away and in a city whose environs and customs vastly differ from the textures of Whitworth, Lord can speak the language of local forms in terms irreducible and absolute because his work itself continues his intimacy with moorland he left.'

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Of the connection between childhood landmarks in Lancashire and specific works of art, Lord himself recalls, 'a valley I used to spend time in became *Small Valley*, *Doctor's Wood/Whitworth*, and also people, a great-uncle who'd lost his arm at the battle of the Somme, who had a ring of swallows tattooed around his neck, became *Swallows Around His Neck*. Art is a means of retrieving things lost, connecting one life to another, which at first seemed impossible to reconnect.'



The search for art has thus led Andrew Lord home, however far away the actual making occurs. The acquisition by the Tate – funded by the Karpidas Family Trust – creates at last a sovereign space in England for the display and delectation of these quintessentially English works of art.

London constitutes a locus especially important to Lord, who studied at the Central School of Art and Design (now part of Central Saint Martins), visiting, again and again, the magisterial ceramics collections of the V&A, where Kaendler's fauna were a primary influence. Henry Cole, who envisioned the South Kensington Museums as just such a place of instruction and inspiration for fine and decorative artists alike, would be gratified that a native son has utilised its collections with such far-reaching aesthetic results.