

# GLADSTONE GALLERY

Saltz, Jerry, Andrew Lord at 65 Thompson, NY, NY. Art in America, February 1993

## Art in America

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### Andrew Lord at 65 Thompson

Question: What does Andrew Lord's sculpture have in common with the Grand Canyon?

Answer: If you look at both long enough, you'll understand how they came to look the way they look—both are records of the forces that formed them. Both are physical autobiographies that tell stories of stresses and strains, earth and fire.

In its own quiet way, Andrew Lord's recent show—his first New York solo since 1986—was one of the best of the season. His show consisted of six five-

part glazed ceramic groupings and one sprawling, encyclopedic ensemble, composed of lopsided, sometimes gnarled, at other times inebriated shapes that resemble cups, bowls, pots and urns. Every shape is built by coiling and manipulating clay while it's still soft (it's like wet-on-wet painting in this way). Lord employs various rudimentary forming techniques in each set—squeezing, pressing, etc.

His poured-on glazes are rich alchemical mixtures that range in different works from light yellow or turquoise to silvery black. In other pieces, tans are highlighted with pearlescent pinks and reds, and a particularly striking group of vessels features a deep green overlaid with gold prints of the artist's hands. These are very humble-looking objects, even awkward, but they are incredibly beautiful. Lord makes clay sing the song of itself.

So how come it's sculpture and not ceramics? Lord is loath to be called a ceramist, and he abstains from calling his work pottery. The gallery was careful not to use these words and they warned against them. Why? Well, none—or almost none—of these objects has any utilitarian function. These weird forms are nonsensically outfitted with wild, undulating, loop-the-loop handles and droopy necks, and they are filled with holes. They're big, too—about waist high, in some cases—like clay pots on steroids. Their surfaces are so

exaggeratedly worked, both inside and out, that you look at them and into them and get lost. They have a strange come-hither feel, like they want you to caress them, to cup your hands exactly where the artist had his hands to feel how they were made. And this is where the work breaks away from ceramics. No mark is gratuitous or decorative. There's a logical veracity to every gouge and lumpen pucker. You forget the terms of pottery and instead come into close contact with an epistemological formalism, a nimble and agile formalism full of savoir-faire that whispers the secrets of creation in muted, elegant tones without trying to teach you a lesson.

Lord embeds thought in material. He brings process and intellect into such electric proximity that a spontaneous esthetic chain reaction is initiated.

When Lord says "This is not a pot," it's similar to Magritte's famous "This is not a pipe." But you keep coming back to the sculpture-vs.-ceramics question in a way that you never do with, say, Picasso's *Absinthe Glass*. Yes, Lord's work is sculpture, but isn't it also ceramics? And can't that be okay? Additionally, the plentifulness of these works makes them feel like ceramics insofar as the numbers conjure production. Whatever it is, Lord's work is so mouthwateringly made that you want it—to have and to hold. —Jerry Saltz



Andrew Lord: 5 Pieces. Pressing and Squeezing. Copper., 1991-92, glazed ceramic with epoxy and gold leaf, varying dimensions; at 65 Thompson.