

Solace comes in ‘wistful and cool’ pottery



“Misty ranges 3,” slip cast porcelain, glaze, photo decal.

*Craft / “Solace – Sandra Black”. At Beaver Galleries, Deakin, until August 27. Reviewed by **MEREDITH HINCHLIFFE**.*

THERE are often times when disruptions to our lives seem to occur in clusters. Add the isolation of lockdowns and life can seem overwhelming.

Sandra Black – who lives and works in Fremantle, WA, has just been through such a period. She took solace in her work during this time. Her studio became a place of refuge and reflection. Black has always taken opportunities to participate in residencies, workshops, and work with mentors around the world. This has resulted in a great deal of accrued knowledge of form, her preferred clay body – porcelain – and glazes. She drew on these experiences for the work in this exhibition. I wrote, in a review of her last exhibition at Beaver Galleries in 2019, that her work “is fully resolved, both in form and decoration from a ceramicist who is in full control of her medium.” This current exhibition repeats that confident, controlled work and she has introduced new forms and glazes.



Sandra Black, “Ripple” green bowls.

I found several works – forming groupings titled “Misty ranges” and “Autumn chill” – wistful and cool, as though they are a memory, distorted through distance and the impact of the pandemic. “Ranges 2” and “Ranges 3” are in slip-cast porcelain with indistinct pale grey hills or mountains, overlaid by bronze trees. The trees, without leaves, are blowing in the same direction. Several have black and white birds wheeling in the background. They fit well with the cold, wet winter Canberra is currently witnessing. Black has for many years shown pierced or carved vessels. Several pieces – in pale and dark porcelain – are being exhibited. “Branching vines vessel” and “7 curved vines vessel” are examples. The first is in a cream, polished porcelain the second in a body that is almost black. The vines curve around the pierced walls of the strong forms that rise from a fairly narrow foot. Another body of work, are several small, thrown bowls. The outer walls are ribbed, or rippled, in a gentle motley glaze. The white interior folds over the rim, and some are finished with a red/pink line – a serendipitous firing event. Three slip-cast vessels with a matt-black glaze are decorated with gold decals, made by the artist. Titled “Crossed Off”, they are decorative road grates she found in the Chinese ceramics town of Jingdezhen known as the “Porcelain Capital”.

Black brings together a well-developed, aesthetic sensibility and superb skills. This exhibition should not be missed.