

Garson's ceramics draw on beauty of nature



Wrack XXI-Night Sky , 2023, thrown porcelain, underglaze, glaze, terra sigilata, glaze stain

*Craft / Wrack, ceramics by Shannon Garson. At Beaver Galleries, until February 24. Reviewed by **MEREDITH HINCHLIFFE**.*

Wrack, a natural phenomenon, is the accumulation of organic material that is washed up on to the beach by tides, waves and wind.

Eventually it breaks down, and is recycled back into the sea. The composition and quantity of wrack is a result of what is growing in the near-shore environment, or storm activity in the area.

Shannon Garson is passionate about the environment and draws on the beauty and delicacy of nature. For the work in this exhibition, she travelled to Tasmania to view an ancient rock shelf called the Tessellated Pavement. The pavement was formed about 300 million years ago, by sediments that accumulated on a relatively low-lying area. Local stresses at the earth's surface cause the rock to crack and fracture in certain directions. The cracks criss-cross each other creating a tile-like appearance.

Garson is fascinated with the Tessellated Pavement, and the surrounding landscape, and asked that the exhibition be mounted in a particular way. The plinths – all at the same height – run around the walls of the gallery, and so viewers are immersed in the pots that represent the landscape, and can vicariously experience that landscape.



Shannon Garson's Wrack XXIII, XXIV, XXV – whale migration, set of three.

Garson has drawn on some very specific aspects of the area.

The currents of water, the detritus a little above the tide-mark on the beach, and other seaside debris run horizontally around the pots. You have arrived at the site. We move to the Pans and Loaves. The Pans are slightly depressed tiles, while the Loaves are raised above the surface. This is caused by the constant action of saltwater splashing over the rock, and drying. Salt crystals form and as they grow, they exert pressure on the rocks, forcing them apart.

Garson has captured the night sky – millions of sparkling stars in a matt black surface remind us of the light pollution we experience in large cities.

And we must not forget the whales. They leave bubbles, streams of water falling from their backs, and movement in the water as they move through the ocean.

Garson expresses all these spectacular sights in her work.

Reminiscent of Korean moon-jars, this exhibition consists of spherical forms on a small circular foot which is reflected in the short circular collar. The form is a perfect canvas for Garson's careful imagery. Those who look carefully at these works will see that she has also decorated the interior surface of the pot.

Garson is an experienced ceramist working in porcelain. In this exhibition she has used her knowledge of glazes and other surface decoration treatments to represent the various moments that she experienced.

The exhibition is coherent and evocative. Garson brings the normality of wrack, and the monumentality of the Tessellated Pavement to us in the form of delicate and finely decorated porcelain spheres.