



Bowl

Gordon Baldwin

Not on display

Title/Description: Bowl

Artist/Maker: Gordon Baldwin

Born: 1979 - 1986

Object Type: Bowl

Materials: Ceramic, Earthenware

Measurements: h. 180 x di. 325 mm

Accession Number: 50530

Historic Period: 20th century

Production Place: Britain, England, Europe

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Credit Line: Donated by a private donor

Gordon Baldwin initially trained as a painter before studying ceramics at the Central School of Art, London, from 1951 to 1954. Baldwin's work developed in the opposite direction to many of his contemporaries, gradually moving away from purely sculptural abstract forms to an exploration of the vessel.

Creating a rich variety of forms in series, from bowls to less obvious containers with openings, Baldwin never 'decorates' his work, the marks and colours he applies are integral to the form. [1] The design of this bowl looks like an abstract painting, although unlike a painting, we can only view the whole composition if we move around the bowl (as one would a sculpture), and follow the design by looking inside the form too.

The abstract composition is dispersed further by the different viewing planes it features on as part of the bowl's form. There is a sense of movement in the energetic painterly design of the static clay form, but that design is part of the clay form itself, not additional decoration painted on top.

Around the mid-1970s Baldwin's work turned from predominantly black to predominantly white and he began concentrating more on earthenware. He developed a slip which gave a dry white surface which he applied very thinly in many layers. The figurative elements and letters disappeared in favour of drawing or painting on the white surface.

Often pieces were reworked and refired several times. While Baldwin's work gives the impression of random events - edges that look like torn cardboard, painted works that defy explanation - it is highly controlled. [2] The jagged edges emphasize the thinness of the clay body. This, together with the wide form and rounded base of the vessel, convey a lightness of form, so that the vessel appears to almost float upon the surface it rests on.

Katharine Malcolm, June 2021

[1] <https://www.yorkartgallery.org.uk/exhibition/objects-for-a-landscape/>

[2] Paul Rice and Christopher Gowing, *British Studio Ceramics in the 20th Century* (London: Barrie and Jenkins Ltd., 1989), pp. 140-141.

Further Reading

Jeffrey Jones, *Studio Pottery in Britain 1900 - 2005* (London: A&C Black Publishers Ltd., 2007), pp. 144, 145, 147, 166.

Paul Rice and Christopher Gowing, *British Studio Ceramics in the 20th Century* (London: Barrie and Jenkins Ltd., 1989), pp. 140-141.

Oliver Watson, *British Studio Pottery* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1990), pp. 30, 35, 40.
