



Stare, Contemplate, and Wonder

Maira Vincentelli encounters the work of
Adam Buick, one of five selected artists
for Jerwood Makers 2013.




1 *Veneration Bell* at Ogof Porth Lleuog, thrown porcelain, rope, 2013, H50cm
2 Adam Buick with *Veneration Bell* on Porth Lleuog, 2013



Now in its third year, *Jerwood Makers Open* commissions new work from five 'rising stars' in the applied arts, offering a show at Jerwood Space in London followed by a tour in the UK. Almost by definition the new work in the field has a strong urban feel and, not surprisingly, many of the winners are London based and/or recent graduates of the Royal College of Art. It is heartening therefore to find that an artist living in rural West Wales is one of this year's winners. In one sense Adam Buick conforms to the ultimate stereotype of the country potter. His workshop is reached down a winding road through fields and past a farmhouse until you arrive at some rambling outbuildings with stacks of wood and

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handsome jars balanced casually on tree trunks. He is best known for his moon jars, beautiful globular forms, each one glazed individually and wood-fired to render subtle markings, which are often derived from materials he wrests from the local area. On the face of it his work appears to have taken much from the philosophies of the Anglo-Oriental tradition and the studio pot inspired by eastern forms – but it is not that simple.



3 *Miniature Moon Jars*, mixed ceramic media with landscape inclusions, 2013, H9cm
Photography Adam Buick

Kiln Opening 28 September 2013, 6:30-7pm, at Adam's studio near St David's in Pembrokeshire (details on website)
Exhibitions *Jerwood Makers Open 2013*, Jerwood Space, London, until 25 August 2013, then touring the UK (www.jerwoodvisualarts.org); Corvi Mora Gallery, London, until 27 July 2013; *Moon Jar*:

Contemporary Translations in Britain Korean Cultural Centre, London, until 17 August 2013

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Buick embraces the contemporary practice of landscape art and video making

VIDEO & LANDSCAPE Buick is a ceramist who has embraced the contemporary practice of landscape art and video making, using the distinctive local geography to striking effect. His first film used time-lapse photography to follow the life and destruction of a vessel of unfired clay being acted upon by the elements atop a hillside overlooking the sea. For this new project he is filming a ceramic bell hung inside a cave. Adam Buick's work has a special relationship to his particular environment. The topography around St David's in Pembrokeshire, Wales, is an ancient landscape, even a mysterious one, where rocky outcrops jut out from the green land as it sweeps down to the Atlantic.

PAST EXPERIENCES Before he took up ceramics Adam Buick trained in archaeology, a discipline in which pottery plays a central role in understanding and interpreting the past. A shard of clay can indicate the form of the original vessel, or the feel of it can reveal how and where it was made. Buick enjoys such connections and trails of meaning, and his current project is rich with historical associations. Bells have a special significance in West Wales, where the myth of



Cantre'r Gwaelod is well known, a story that tells of an ancient kingdom under the sea in Cardigan Bay only known by the sound of bells from the sunken church. The tale is commemorated in the popular song *The Bells of Aberdovey*. Another story concerns the tiny St Govan's chapel on a coastal cliff in Pembrokeshire and the nearby Bell Rock that supposedly encases the hermit saint's bell. Nearer to the present, bells have always had an important role for seafarers, as the ship's bell was rung every half-hour in a four-hour watch.

THE BELLS The ceramic bells are thrown in porcelain in two parts, biscuit fired, and then glazed in the wood-fired kiln. He has tried out various shapes, both the classic flaring bell of western type with internal clapper and also the other more eastern form curving inwards, normally struck from the outside like a gong. The bells stand over eighteen inches high and have a loop at the top, also made of clay, from which they can be suspended.

There is a delightful element of adventure in this project. A bell is packed into a 4x4 vehicle along with a wheel-barrow to trundle it down to the beach and across the sands. Then the bell has to be

carried up and over a rocky headland, down slippery rocks, and on to the next little bay with the cave. Using a piece of wood wedged into the roof of the cave the bell is suspended on a piece of strong rope – more challenges. Once in place it creates a dramatic effect silhouetted against the horizon as you look out to sea or, looking in, the white bell gleams against the gloomy darkness of the cave. Then the work has to be photographed and filmed over the next few days in different weather conditions, tidal moments, and times of day, sometimes filming standing in the rising tide. The only disappointment, and it is a surprising one, is that in the cave the sound of the bell is muffled or covered by other sounds. It does not resound or echo as you might expect.

Unashamedly romantic and evocative, the project brings together elements of the handmade, precious, or vulnerable object with the powers of nature, of waves, wind, sun, and rain. The human and the environment coincide in one significant moment, leaving the viewer to stare, to contemplate, and to wonder. ■