

KATHERINE GLENDAY

B. 1960 (CAPE TOWN, WESTERN CAPE)

PORCELAIN AS PAINTING WITH LIGHT

Katharine Glenday's virtuosic control of the medium gives rise to a paradoxical relinquishing. Her vessels drop out of an ongoing exchange between the hands and the clay and the fire of the kiln. Without being reduced to symbol, the skins and material resonances of porcelain act as entry points into the rest of the world. The vessel becomes a literal echo chamber for light and sound, stillness and movement, the unsaid conversation, and the echoes that locate and outlast it. The artist has alternatively described her use of porcelain as "painting with light" – the lightwaves, the sea in Kalk Bay, and the waves of sound and silence too. Sound is a sensory experience that does not allow us to choose or turn away. At least more than touching and seeing – the world of the auditory moves through us without any concern for illusions of autonomy or separateness within a skin. Reinstating a porousness that was always there, many of Glenday's vessels literally act as gongs for sounding out and filling shared space. Exceeding the borders of their visible "selves", these resonant forms allow us to wonder, without language, what it might mean to find one's own shape or voice, without possibly turning away from the plurality of voices that move through each of us.

"The bowls ring with disparate tones, curling around each other, curiously soft. The relationship between form and sound is a circuit. Glenday's works are inherently sonic, they are the vessels against which the world breaks. Without form – the clashing, rubbing, grazing of weaving, caressing din of form against form – the world is silent. The event of hearing itself requires intricately formed vessels: the delicate ossicles, the veil of the eardrum. Clay bears a particular soundscape: the wet thud of a human hand against the unfired body, the clinking of drying glaze, the roaring of the kiln."¹



FIG. 3. KATHERINE GLENDAY IN HER KALK BAY STUDIO, THE FORGE (2022)