

A year of transformation



Ylva Julén reviews Jane Perryman's multimedia exhibition *Containing Time* during its launch at Körsbärggården in Sweden, ahead of its tour of galleries in England, Scotland and Wales

In a white space in southern Gotland, Sweden, overlooking the seemingly infinite Baltic sea, Jane Perryman's exhibition showcases large bowls forming a rhythmic and poetic contemplation of time and life: one was made per week, over the course of a year. The double-walled bowls, in different sizes, patterns and expressions, all share a hemispherical form and round base. There is also week-by-week documentation of Perryman's making process, and in the air, the sounds of the bowls rocking are transformed into music by Kevin Flanagan. Of the total of 52 bowls in this series, 32 were on display; the project will be seen in its entirety for the first time when the show opens at England's National Centre for Craft & Design.

MATERIAL MATTERS

Perryman's project emerged from a desire to expand and make use of all her senses. For one year, she collected materials to mix with her weekly making of a bowl. She never knew what the material would be for the upcoming week, as she tried to openly embrace whatever came her way. When picking a material, she would be looking, touching, smelling and making notes of the moment of finding it, whether on the seashore, a twilight dog walk, or while tidying her garden. It could be hair from the neighbour's horses, cones, dust, rust, catkins or rapeseeds – whatever she collected would be brought back to be photographed in her studio before use. She noticed that her finds were often very beautiful when viewed closely. The next step in the ritual was to make a frottage of the material on paper, using graphite to record a sense of its texture. After that, she would mix the material with porcelain and white stoneware, then handbuild a bowl.

SEALED IN TIME

Some additions such as driftwood and cones have burned away during firing, leaving gouges in the dark space between the walls. Others are visible on the burnished, unglazed surfaces; the rapeseed bowl is dotted, the pine bowl bears long needles. The effects are spontaneous and random. The materials have transformed themselves into part of the bowl – hollows, scars, dots or patterns mark the bowls with texture – but they are also the memories of specific moments from the year, sealed in time. 'I wanted to find the small things you normally walk past and make them significant,' explains Perryman. 'I took something insignificant and came to discover the magic in it.'

If touched, the round-bottomed bowls move with a quiet sound; the accompanying music comes from the observation that each bowl has a different tonal resonance (this soundtrack is included in the publication *Containing Time*, available at exhibition venues and online). Rocking with a lilting movement, they always return to their central seat of gravity. I have to ask their maker – why the round bases? Perryman, who is also a yoga teacher, looks at me kindly. 'Compare them to a cup with a flat bottom. Doesn't the cup seem too fixed?' ■

The tour of Containing Time was supported by the Craft Potters' Charitable Trust. The exhibition is at the National Centre for Craft & Design, Sleaford, England, until 3 Sept; nationalcraftanddesign.org.uk, at Ruthin Craft Centre, Ruthin, Wales, 30 Sept–19 Nov; ruthincraftcentre.org.uk, then finally at Gracefield Arts Centre, Dumfries, Scotland, 25 Nov–6 Jan; dumgalgo.gov.uk/gracefield