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Vessel with dimple, 2007. H. 36 cm.

Introduction by Sir David Attenborough

Elemental. The dictionary says that means 'of or pertaining to the four elements.' And what are they? According to classical philosophy – earth, water, air and fire. Gabriele Koch's lovely pots speak of all four of those elements as vividly as any I know.

Like all pots, being of clay, they are of the earth. They have the contours produced by water when it smooths a boulder in the bed of a stream; or by sand-blasting winds that over thousands of years chamfer the cliffs of a desert. Fire? No pots show more clearly than hers the caress of the kiln and the lick of flame and smoke.

Why should elemental qualities in pots bring such profound pleasure? Some might suggest that such a response is merely the sentimental reaction of urban aesthetes who have been cut off from the realities of the natural world. I have proof that it is not so. Only the other day, I was admiring another pot with qualities remarkably similar to those that come from Gabriele's hands. It had that same in-turned lip, that same swelling contour – half-egg, half-belly – and smoky clouds swirling over its surface. But it also carried a clear indication that the potter who made it took pleasure in its shape and texture for he – or more probably she – had enhanced both with five incised rings around its mouth. And she had done so, somewhere on the plains around the Mississippi, a thousand years ago.

Another dictionary provides another definition of that word – elemental. 'Motivated by and symbolic of powerful natural forces or passions,' it says. Gabriele Koch's pots are indeed elemental. In every sense.