

## Colour Temperatures become Substance

Probably no sculptural medium admits such direct, manual shaping of form as clay. Other techniques make use of tools; in the case of clay, the shape in the artist's mind is developed directly from the hand, with no intermediary. Sculptors who take on a material on its own terms are engaged in a search on the one hand of an ideal form in the shape of basic solid geometry, or, on the other, are at pains to create organic bodies, which appear as if they were products of nature. Both intentions pursue the notion of an ideal form, but each is expressed through a different assimilation of different models of sculptural vocabulary.

Nicola Schrudde's earlier sculptures seemed akin to Mediterranean cultures. She would shape vessels of raw clay, of great fragility. The fragility of her constructions in contrast to the scale of their volume was the content and theme for a whole series of works. In the more recent sculptural pieces, form is much more clearly derived from natural composites; constructed geometry has ceded to a craggy geology.

Schrudde always leaves the clay in its raw, unbaked state; rather than altering its natural colour by firing, she applies pigments or mixes them into the surface of the clay shape so that it appears stained. As the clay is used in its natural state, so the pigment is unaltered; due to this 'staining', the quality of colour, to all appearances emanating from the material itself, produces a temperature of its own as the expression of the material. The physical state of the sculpture has not been altered by ceramic processing, but in visual and sculptural terms in that the clay binds the pigments to its surface. The surface treatment enables the artist to refract the light into earth colour tones which accord to the nature-derived origin both of the pigment and the form.

Forms as the materialisations of nature imply time, and the rock and stone formations that fascinate Nicola Schrudde have been fashioned by the instruments of wind and weather

through time. If the intention is to remake these phenomena as mimetic forms and to articulate such formative processes as arise out of the circumstances of a given material, then it becomes the secret of the activity of artistic making to lend a sculpture the duration of naturalness through endurance in the manual processing. The specific signature of making, that immediate fascination in working with clay, must recede gradually behind the manner of appearance of the form. That is where the secret lies, which makes nature-like form appear so problematic and at the same time simpler than constructional form. A sculpture has to be understood and developed outward from within; under the skin that is its surface, the shape conceals the energy forces of unity of type, shape and colouring. Nicola Schrudde's works thus approach the ideal of having created a form in which time seems relinquished, because her forms have been created as if of their own accord, obeying the dictates of the naturalness of inner forces.

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