
JORDAN GOWER
DOES THE MOON
KNOW THE WELL?



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DOES THE MOON KNOW THE WELL?

UNSW Galleries



DIARY OF AN EXHIBITION

KIRSTEN COELHO

A cold morning in April.

I am standing in a small room filled with spark and industry: Jordan Gower's Piccadilly studio. There is a long window that frames a verdant view of the Adelaide Hills and floods the room with pale winter sun. This light gives Jordan's new works, which I am seeing for the first time, an intensely compelling patina. Austere forms and shimmering metallic surfaces coalesce in a dramatic and resonant quietude.

How can I describe these works? Like wet bitumen glinting in the sun, lunar rock, gold dust, fool's gold, marcasite, a starlit sky, an astral plane. There are small and epic stories contained within each piece. They encapsulate a merging of the organic and the inorganic, the natural and the unnatural, the industrial and the handmade.

Jordan and I talk about what it means to make pots, where ideas come from, and the process of repetition in the act of wheel-throwing. Later, driving home through wet, misty roads, I am struck by how his work makes me reconsider the world through a new material lens. I think of how Jordan's glaze palette becomes metaphoric for what exists around us.

American art historian Norman Bryson discusses the distinction between rhopography (the small, trivial, and unregistered) and megalography (the grand, dramatic, and heroic) in still life painting.[1] These ideas can be seen here, too, distilled in each of Jordan's objects. The everyday vessel becomes a carrier of both the ordinary and the profound.

Underpinning these works are the hands that create—the journey of the maker, the storyteller. Here is Jordan's experience writ in clay, his years engaged in the act of making, often through repeated or iterative forms. The word 'repeating' suggests something identical, yet nothing could be further from the truth. This is a crucial aspect of object-making and is distinctly articulated in Jordan's practice. He asks us to look and look again, to recognise that nothing is the same. Each thought, gesture, and movement is different—similar, perhaps, but not the same.

In the words of Korean artist Lee Ufan, a pioneer of the Japanese and Korean movement Mono-ha (School of Things):

> The universe
> began in a point,
> Continued as a line.
> Wondrous happening,
> returning to a point.[2]

A Friday afternoon in June.

I am standing in the JamFactory ceramics studio, a place alive with the legacy, history, and future of making and makers. Jordan and I are looking at the works for his exhibition, talking about the many ideas they evoke and the possibilities of their presentation. There is a frisson of excitement seeing these works again and considering how viewers will engage with them—what will they see, what will they miss, and what may only become apparent later. I am drawn once again to the vast and the minute, and to the affecting presence these works have in relation to light, space, and one another.

> to open
> to pair
> to rotate
> of tension
> of grouping
> to arrange
> to distill
> to fire
> to wait
> of time
> to continue

I am reminded of Richard Serra's *Verb List* (1967–68), which he described as "actions to relate to oneself, material, place, and process",[3] and how these verbs echo the process of pot-making. In both Serra's sculptural work and Jordan's ceramics, surfaces become arresting and alchemical, prompting us to reconsider how we encounter the material world.

Pottery construction is multilayered; it is not simply one thought or action. As a maker of pots, Jordan is part of a long historical lineage that extends beyond the contemporary studio, across centuries and cultures. Through observation, repetition, and experimentation, he continually builds a deep understanding of and relationship with his materials. The idea of creating from nothing gives way to something more elemental: the transformation of earth.

These works are then placed in a box of fire—a Hephaestian final act that renders all preceding actions into stasis. The process is defined by the dichotomy of disaster and success, where outcomes are never entirely within your control. Opening the kiln is a giddy rollercoaster moment, ending in either heartache or euphoria, or both. Firing marks a transition from creation in real time to permanence—a fixed moment that will outlive us all.

Jordan has built a new lexicon with these materials of the earth, reimagining them to convey a poetry that speaks of the minuscule, the infinitesimal, and the endless, mutable space of the sky.

1. Norman Bryson, *Looking at the overlooked: Four essays on still life painting*, Reaktion Books, London, 1990, pp 60–61.
2. Lee Ufan, *Breath of Infinitude*, Editions Dilecta, France, 2016, p 4.
3. Richard Serra, *Verb List*, 1967–68, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, https://www.moma.org/collection/works/152793 (accessed 7 July 2026).





HERE, THE LIGHT WORK OF SHADOWS

NADÈGE DESGENÉTEZ

> The morning is bright and chilly, as I make my way to Jordan's Piccadilly studio. Autumn scents, tangles of leaves, and wet grasses bounce off the hills and trail the winding road. Thirty minutes from Adelaide's gridded heart, a barn perches on the edge of a green valley. Here, the past year's explorations gather. As I step inside, Jordan greets me with an unassuming smile. He wonders where we should begin. Then two hours vanish, marked only by the cold of the concrete slab now wicking up my legs.

Entering the studio of a fellow maker can lead to losing track. My focus flickers as my body is drawn to the rhythms of the works. I approach a group of delicate forms displayed across a trio of shelves, and I am lifted by their ascending gestures. I am a glassblower and my breath hinges towards the vessels' own; words seem to disrupt this communion. I sense a cadence, a gentle expansion of space, animating the starkness of the volumes before me. My gaze wades in the ebb and flow of their exterior skins, and I linger at the disappearing edge of a lip, an ever-slight exhale. A symbiotic awareness of the internal pervades my ribcage, not as void but as presence. A non-edge, a non-wall, a vibrancy that merges the inner and outer of these solid yet diaphanous, still yet shifting objects made of clays and metals: is this an *infrathin* encounter?

> The term 'infrathin' (from the French 'inframince') was coined by conceptual artist Marcel Duchamp to qualify a type of intangible occurrence, like the almost imperceptible interval between things, or the temporal or affective threshold where one state becomes another.[1] For cultural theorist Erin Manning, it is "the potentiation of a relational field that...cannot quite be articulated, but nonetheless can be felt".[2] I ponder the ways in which the touch of a potter's fingers, a memory embodied, underpins the state of possibility these vessels inhabit. Could I see through their geological bodies if I were to shine a strong light into their interior?

As I explore further, a multitude of surfaces slowly reveal their mineral topographies, rippling towards edges that beckon, unfurling in the shifting light. Warmth, softness, and porosity mingle within the stratified hues of browns, bronzes, and blacks. There is a sharpness on my tongue from their minerality. Astral discs mark the edges of the studio space; they are ethereal portals. One is made from moon-coloured clay. This moon holds light for me, bright and soft. My eyes adjust and I bathe in the pale glow. The most minute variations send me wondering and wandering: matters of kinship and difference, intimacy and distance, time past and unfolding.

> I follow Jordan to the window. He is searching, exploring how forms may co-exist within the gallery space. The first grouping I saw today will be displayed across the parcelled landscape of a large square plane: an architectonic symphony of line, light, and shadow, animated by negative space and the movement of the viewer. Jordan seeks encounters. Other smaller vertical forms will gather in clusters, huddled, dynamic, and magnetic. Their scales and tubular volumes assert a utilitarian ancestry, soon transcended by their assemblage. Together they cast nests of shadows: gatherings of matter that radiate vitality, as if atoms were rearranging themselves, affected by the air displaced as we approach.

Jordan tells me this body of work developed through a slow, repetitive, contemplative practice. Hundreds of pots were made from dozens of original combinations of clay bodies and glazes sourced from around the world. Yet he finds that the clay best suited to his pursuit is locally sourced, one that is most responsive to the metallic oxides he uses. Countless firings of layered glazes channel the gritty palimpsest of the city he knows well.

> For hours and weeks and months, Jordan sits at the wheel, his back to the window and the hills beyond. Thinning clay walls rise between his fingers, manifesting the void he encircles. It is as if the opaque clay body is half-made of the light his back is turned to, an internal light he chases. His work ultimately dwells within these intangible spaces: "what is not seen in the seeable… the minor gestures of the More than".[3]

Jordan seeks the hum, the introspective and unfolding possibilities of matter always in becoming, self-knowledge beyond the dichotomies of object-subject. For political theorist Jane Bennett, "all bodies are kin…inextricably enmeshed in a dense network of relations…a knotted world of vibrant matter."[4] In the exhibition, these more-than-human relations emerge through an entanglement of clay, fire, air, space, light, and the viewer.

> 'Does the moon know the well?' invites an experience of time outside of time: geological and intimate, cosmological, bodily, and elemental. It reminds us that *we* are made of matter, that *here* is vast and unfolding, and that all bodies are mineral miracles.

1. Marcel Duchamp, *Notes*, Flammarion, Paris, 1990, pp 21–34.
2. Erin Manning, 'For a Pragmatics of the Useless, or the Value of the Infrathin', *Political Theory*, vol 45, no. 1, 2017, p 99.
3. Ibid, p 98.
4. Jane Bennet, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2010, p 13.





LIST OF WORKS

Modal Change 2026

stoneware, tin white glaze, oxidation fired

27.5 x 27.5 x 3 cm

A Deep Well Spring 2026

13 ceramic vessels across five shelves: stoneware, manganese saturate glaze, oxidation fired

280 x 100 x 25 cm

Night After Rain 2026

25 vessels: stoneware, manganese saturate glaze, oxidation fired

14 x 100 x 25 cm

Tortoiseshell Trio 2024

layered iron and titanium glazes, oxidation fired

20 x 30 x 30 cm

Rest 2026

stoneware, tin white glaze, oxidation fired

26 x 100 x 25 cm

Moving Through Mountains 2026

36 ceramic objects: stoneware, manganese saturate glaze, oxidation fired

136 x 240 x 240 cm

Recollections 2026

wall mounted ceramic discs: stoneware, manganese saturate glaze, oxidation fired

dimensions variable

All works courtesy of the artist, Tarntanya/Adelaide

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UNSW Galleries stands on an important place of learning and exchange first occupied by the Bidjigal and Gadigal peoples.

We recognise the Bidjigal and Gadigal peoples as the Traditional Custodians of this site and acknowledge them as the first artists to inhabit this Land.

We pay our respects to their Elders past and present, and extend this respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from all nations of Australia.

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Government of South Australia

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