



### **Petrus Spronk – Meditations on a Korean Odyssey**

For some, the creative process is a life long occupation, and expands to encompass many journeys. Through the work of Petrus Spronk we are witness to an ongoing process, spanning many continents and numerous aesthetic dimensions. Yet as all things return to their source, we find in this work the recurrent motif of a burnished black bowl. In the confines of this ancient and simplistic form, Petrus has created objects of great stillness, yet they are also symbols of complex universal wholeness. Where and how do such works begin?

The experience of seeing ancient and broken pottery shards, in museums around the world, has led Petrus to reconsider how he constructs his own ceramics. During the manufacturing process a number of bowls are broken into sections and different firing techniques applied. Hence the bowl acquires a new significance. Through the inclusion of the lighter coloured fragment, a window is discretely opened, allowing insight into both the evolution of the work and into the artist's creative process.



Adorning these pieces are landscapes made from fields of traditional Chinese calligraphy characters. In one work a swathe of the character 'sky' or 'heaven' hovers over a field of 'mountain', while in others, the symbol for 'bamboo' is repeated to form the stem and branches of its namesake.





Not surprisingly, Petrus has drawn inspiration from nocturnal and bush fired landscapes, even naming his atelier in rural Victoria 'Black Earth Studios'. While it is from here that he directs the course of his many projects, this current exhibition is the product of the artist's recent trip to South Korea, where, amongst numerous encounters with the landscape, he contemplated the extraordinary refinement of the local ceramics tradition. In the spirit of this oriental experience each piece in the exhibition is titled with two or three evocative lines akin to a traditional 'haiku' poem. For example:

Being / nothing  
Contemplate in the morning  
Pull weed in the afternoon

While the lines conjure many possibilities, through a juxtaposition of the spiritual and the mundane, they also pose questions, pointing to a heightened awareness that may be attained in day to day living.

With their blackened surfaces each work suggests an environment that is at once dreamlike and earthly. Small stars light the way through this landscape and in 'Starry Night' the stellar bodies are delineated in the night sky as rhythmic brush stroked symbols.



Predominantly a potter, Petrus is also known for his writings, and he is now returning to Korea as a writer in residence. He will, in fact, have many residencies as his sojourn will take the form of a pilgrimage across the country. So as one chapter closes we are invited to learn some more about Petrus' peregrinations, as he downloads his diary and reveals his observations at [www.petrusspronk.com](http://www.petrusspronk.com). Given the poetry of this exhibition, those notations should make for much pleasurable and informative reading.

**Damian Smith**

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