This, I thought, is a good party.

Marit’s vast dishes lean against the walls. You sense the structures hidden within their unsteady surfaces, the grids effaced, erased, abraded, scribbled on, gilded. They are lambent. Two long refectory tables stretch along the gallery holding Alison’s work, runs and eddies of lines and marks breaking on her vessels. Much of the new work is held just above the table, unevenly, by vestigial feet. On others a tube or spout or branch breaks the clearness of a profile as they elide into churns or jugs or trugs. I come in and stand on the edge and listen.

This is not a conversation, a polite give and take exchange between two artists. It is more vivid, more plural. I think of spinning the dial of an old radio catching moments and phrases, snatches of talk and song, opera and jazz, static. There are interstices when you hear, or see, something in common. A shared gesture, the way that Marit turns a corner with a fat black brushstroke, or Alison moves a slab of clay over the lip of a vessel. The energy they both have in starting a line across a dish or up and up the side of apitcher.

Both artists invite imagery and then turn aside. Marit’s calligraphies, the matrices of lines that cover her dishes, hover around writing. They share this invitation to interpret with the small foliate decorations that have been appearing over the last few years on Alison’s pots. They puzzle - as they are meant to. Not quite quotations - a bit of archaic Greekness, an architectural passage - they do still manage to suggest the randomness of decorative impulse. And there are other dishes of Marit’s and vessels of Alison’s that are simply places where a movement has occurred: the carving away and adding on of glaze or clay.

And then as I settle on the edge of this party, I realise that both of them are growing into inclusiveness. They are editing less, allowing more to happen, even accommodating the random. Literally in the case of Alison who has used a piece of wood thrown across a wall into the studio courtyard as a form to create a bulky void for a couple of these new pieces.

We live in a careful moment in our culture, anxious not to offend or transgress, worried about working within our means. But here in this exhibition we feel liberated. We hear the great list of transitive verbs that Richard Serra used to describe the possibilities of sculpture:

to roll

to crease

to fold

to store

to bend

to shorten

to twist
to twine
to dapple
to dapple
to crumble
to shave
to tear
to chip
to split
to cut
to sever
to drop

These are Marit and Alison’s verbs: here making and mark-making are alive. This is the moment when you start. Rilke has it right, watching how a swan jerks and stumbles as it leaves the safety of the bank before being caught by a current and held in movement.

You have to let go, says this exhilarating exhibition, let go.

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