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# ON FRAGILITY

by Alana Wilson

Fragility – the quality of being delicate, easily broken or damaged. In my mind it signifies a transition from wholeness to a state of vulnerability. The fragile filaments of being human are an ever-present undercurrent we often strive to conceal behind a veneer of strength and resilience. The most fragility I have ever experienced is in emotion and through human relationships, though fragility is also a common state in the medium I work in – ceramics.

When I envision fragility, I envision some kind of membrane that can be pierced, broken, or damaged at any point. And once it passes this point, there is no going back to the original whole – there is only remediation, repair, and a reconstruction of the whole. Although you may hope it looks like it was never broken, the reconstruction still shows evidence of its fracturing. It is no longer the original, but something entirely new. Something made of parts, of pieces, something that now has weak points and a tendency to fracture or break again. In the Japanese technique of kintsugi, these lines of fracture and repair are not disguised, but dusted with gold or silver. The kintsugi technique honours the history of the fragile object and encompasses philosophical perspectives on non-attachment and acceptance of change.

Throughout our lives we are constantly fragmenting and reassembling – constructing something new and creating a re-imagined whole. I explore this theme in my work – as a cathartic technique as much as a material process inherent to the ceramic medium. Ceramic goes through a multitude of processes which render it more fragile, and simultaneously, more resilient. Similarly, the breadth of human experience goes through moments of fragility and moments of remediation. Wars and revolutions, elections and referendums, ecological crises and revitalisation are all fragile moments in which we are forced to remediate and repair in the aftermath of a break, a shock, or a fracture. In the words of Bob Dylan, *he not busy being born is busy dying*<sup>1</sup>. With this in mind, the reassembling and reconstructing of the new seems like the most momentous place to be. Anything fragile – ceramics, nature, humanity, or fleeting moments of life – hold more power and potency with their sensitivity acknowledged. Being fragile means being exposed to the possibility of fracture but also to the possibility of change.

<sup>1</sup> Bob Dylan, *It's Alright, Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)*, 1965

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