

My Place

When I was starting out as a woodturner, I wrote that I drew my inspiration from Nature. I made much of my rural background, my childhood on a sheep farm in the Irish midlands, surrounded by bogs and woods, looking across rolling fields to the Slieve Bloom Mountains. I claimed that in my bowls and vessels I was trying to capture the shapes of blossoms and fruits – the trumpet flowers of bindweed and the tight curves of hazelnuts were particular favourites. And that with my colours I was trying to capture the blazing yellow of gorse, the mottled purples of heathers, the iridescent green on the heads of mallard drakes...

This works wonderfully for many people, but in my case it was mostly marketing bunkum. I wasn't really trying to do any of it – not *consciously*. I didn't have a bindweed flower in a vase in front of my lathe as I turned one of my flaring conical vessels, nor did I carry a colour card of pressed flowers and birds' feathers.

I spend my working day in a small tidy studio at the end of our city garden. There are no great dramas being enacted outside the window. Just robins and blackbirds going pertly about their business, clothes flapping or drooping on the line, sunlight and cloudlight playing on the red brick of the house, the year's cycle measured by cherry tree and apple tree. My bowls and vessels and jewellery are small, very carefully shaped and finished, quietly dramatic in their colouring and their patterning of silver inlay. I don't have the physical space to create monumental flamboyant work. The restraint suits me: I am quiet and careful.

And whenever bindweed trumpets and mallard green and clear night skies *do* enter my work, they come unconsciously from my memory bank: they too are part of what I am.

Roger Bennett