

May 1, 2018

## Kintsukuroi and Letting the Light in



*Caldera*

*Mexican Walls*

*Volcano*

A very personal note.

This past winter has been a long difficult one for everyone. The world is a frightening place and getting scarier by the minute. In the quiet of my studio, where I hide away from the world (not very successfully it must be said) I am very conscious of my good fortune. Choice is probably the greatest privilege one can possess, and at this moment in my life, I am able to choose where I work and live.

So after the gloom of a long, cold, dark, sad London winter, I have been to Mexico. My London and French paintings were getting darker and darker and I needed to let the light in. As Leonard Cohen famously advises: “Ring the bells that still can ring. Forget your perfect offering. There is a crack in everything. That’s how the light gets in.”

Usually it takes me a long while to digest a powerful visual experience. I know Mexico very well, but I hadn’t been there in over 25 years, when I was researching and writing my book on Frida (see last blog) and I was apprehensive about my own work as a painter. I did a lot of very bad watercolours. Some abstract, some narrative. Some literal. Some freely associative. Accompanied by my paintbox, I walked around faded colonial towns in central Mexico and sat on street corners painting crumbling red and yellow ochre walls. I sat in a beautiful studio on a mountain in Michoacan and faced a circle of ancient mountains and volcanoes. The world of people and politics seemed a long way away.

The crater of a circle of volcanoes is known as a Caldera and this seemed a very good metaphor for my new paintings. The observation and notation of landscape is what seeds my work. I am interested in how memory alchemises and transforms this direct experience, forged by the fire of thought with Nature as the crucible.

Three paintings have emerged since my return. The greys and blacks of my winter work have left for the moment. I have never worked as intensely as I am working now. I have just completed some big paintings that will be the core of my show *Caldera* to be held at the Hotel de Ville, Saint-Yrieix, here in France this coming July and August.

There is an art in Japan called Kintsukuroi, in which a broken ceramic pot is mended by gold or silver lacquer. The result is considered even more beautiful for its flaws.

My own imperfect offering.

Robin Richmond