

Place of Clay (ii)

I want a clay city
I want one that our hands make
with what they've lifted from the ground itself
the gleaming raw material, heavy as a planetary body
brown with oxides, smells like the river dreaming of spring
I don't want the one they tell us is the given city
stone-faced inheritance, hewn from straight thoughts
playing do-I-know-you like a fool's game
people are sleeping outside in it
I want the city whose wet surfaces we write our lives on
in the languages of every place the water goes
all wares are earthenware
all vessels riddled with our fingerprints
histories are sediments we shelter
until they fissure our skin
I want a city that relinquishes its chisels
squelches its slogan
everything of value is defenseless
I want a city elemental as a kitchen
where the potatoes sprout with sight
one we raise to our mouths and drink from
praising the backwater stopover corner
where trumpets are migrating swans
I only want the walls that will come down again
and fold in kind surrender, allow mistakes
to soak inside a bucket, starting over
clay world where anyone's small gesture might
make a shape that lasts
leave a breathing imprint of ourselves

Italicized line is from Lucebert's poem 'The Very Old One Sings'