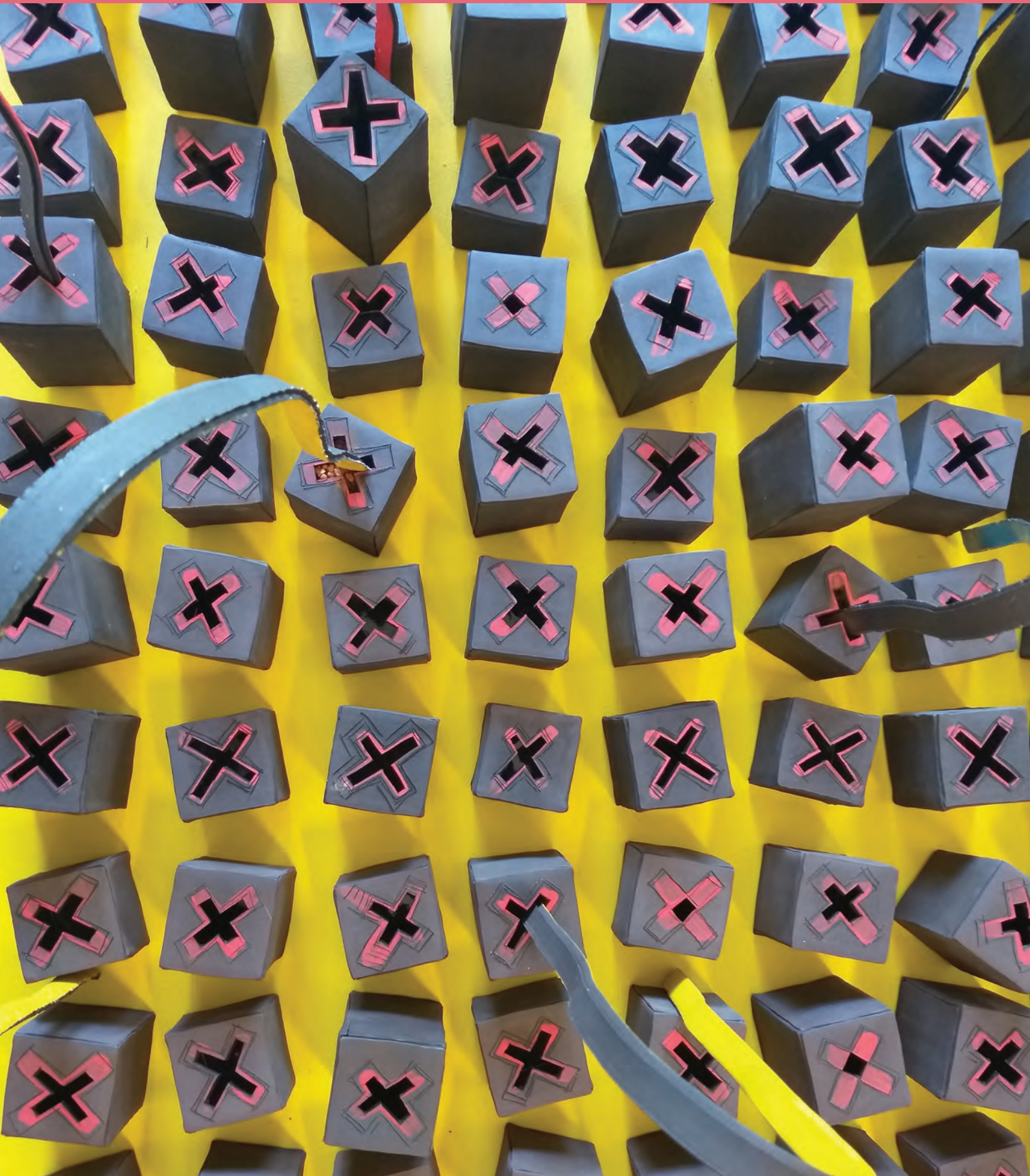


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Back Cover: (from the top right) Catherina Pagani, Minette Schuling, Runette Kruger, Alida Croudace

Content page: pg: 11 Debra Sloan; 21 Hennie Meyer; 25 Colleen Lehmkuhl; 31 Kyra Cane; 35 - Madeleine Henning

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FROM THE EDITOR

Contributions to the Ceramics Magazine Editorial requirements

This information is intended as a guide for contributors. Please do not hesitate to contact the editor should you require any further information.

Articles may include profiles on ceramists (self or others), reviews of ceramic exhibitions and books, upcoming events, critical reports and commentary, research papers and technical innovations. In fact, we welcome any subject of interest to ceramists, potters and sculptors, galleries and collectors, educational institutions and their students.

The average length of articles is 500-2200 words. Longer articles are welcome, they might be broken up over two issues if space is not available, or stand over to the next issue.

Please submit by email to ceramicssa.magazine@gmail.com or lydia@rgholmes.co.za in an attached Word document, NOT Pdf format, nor within the body of an email.

Your own writing style is a preference and minimal editing will take place, mostly in cases of spelling and grammar. At times, articles may be edited to meet layout requirements. Where possible, the author will be contacted prior to going to print should the Editor deem it necessary.

A two or three sentence statement about the writer must be included. Please include the name of the photographer/s.

Guidelines for Images

The files must be high resolution JPG (300dpi) or in the region of 600kb to 3 mgb. Digital files may be sent in small batches (under 3 meg) to ceramicssa.magazine@gmail.com, lydia@rgholmes.co.za or via [Dropbox.com](https://www.dropbox.com) (invite: lydia@rgholmes.co.za) or a similar transfer method.

All images must be accompanied by a text document which lists the following for each image: name of the artist, title of the piece, date, materials and techniques, dimensions and the photographer's name. All images must also be labelled with the name of the article or person concerned, i.e. Peter Black.jpeg.

Please note: The quality of your images is of high importance and may determine whether or not your article is published.

If possible, seek the help of a professional photographer.

Guidelines for Images (if taking your own images):

A good image is in focus, with proper exposure, a full depth of field and a full range of contrast (light to dark tones). Do not set work against a busy background.

Earth tones, white, grey or black make a good neutral background.

Do not use lighting which will result in hard shadows or will reflect off the vessel.

Do leave a generous space around the object if at all possible.

Tight cropping is not recommended. Make sure the WHOLE subject is in the photograph.

Choose your images carefully. At the most ten images per article. We will ask for more if required.

Please do not send Tiff images.

If you are contributing to the CSA Exposure page, 2 images would suffice. Some of these images will be deep etched (cut out) and need to be against a contrasting background with little or no shadows. Please supply a name, and details regarding the work (new work) or where it is on display. No images without these descriptive details will be published.

The editor retains the right to include or postpone the publication of any contribution.



EDITORIAL

A late night call from John Shirley informed me of the unexpected passing away of our enthusiastic and inspiring chairman and friend, Colleen Lehmkuhl. I had a long discussion with her the weekend before about ceramics, Ceramics Southern Africa, committees, the magazine, family and the usual mundane issues. She was already working on the next CSA National Biennale for 2020, to be held in Johannesburg. This is how we will all remember Colleen, enthusiastic about ceramics and caring about all who shared her world. We will miss her dearly. Trayci Tompkins expresses it well in her tribute to Colleen.

We have some new writers – Eunice Rider has penned an article about Paul de Jongh, our 2019 Corobrik National Ceramic Biennale Premier Award winner. Most of us know Paul and Nina's wood firing jamborees, as well as their collaborations with traditional potters. Ann Marais delves further into the history of our Fellows and this time it is their international pursuits which come under scrutiny. Naturally, it also traces our organisations' history through the exploits of these Fellows.

Another new writer, Andrée Bonthuys, compiled an interesting review of ceramics and other fine art exhibitions at the Stellenbosch Woordfees. The Woordfees always chooses inspiring curators, and this year was no exception. Lynnley Watson visited Ceramic Art London and penned a short article on some inspiring ceramists.

Enjoy reading!

Lydia Holmes

VAN TUYL KILNS has been awarded the South African distribution for COLOROBBIA (Italy, Florence).



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PAUL DE JONGH

ARTICLE BY EUNICE RIDER

PHOTOGRAPHS BY NINA SHAND

The recent 2019 Corobrik National Ceramics Biennale, held at the Rust-En-Vrede Gallery in Durbanville, has rekindled interest in wood-fired ceramics and, more particularly, the work of its Premier Award winner, Paul de Jongh, of Millstone Pottery in McGregor, Western Cape.

Paul won the award with his massive anagama-fired platter, *Koi at Play*. Internationally renowned potter, BBC celebrity and award judge for the event, Kate Malone, said she'd selected "the great plate" because it was "so perfectly made". "I love ceramics where form and surface are combined, and there's a reason for both those things, and they symbiotically come together." She said the thing that had made this particular entry, one of 543, shine out for her, was the just-distinguishable reflection of light, in a splash of milky white glaze, made by one of the koi as it raises its head and tail out of the water: "It was just that final thing... That splash with that glaze made it alive! "And obviously anagama is this great, living beast of a firing that brings everything together," she added.

THE EARLY YEARS

Paul first discovered clay as a young boy, when his perceptive father realised he was somehow restless and couldn't be still; that he was always out riding his bicycle or taking himself on lone fishing excursions to Zoo Lake or Emmarentia Dam in Johannesburg's northern suburbs. Paul's father, who had an engineering works, bought an old kiln and got it into working order at his business premises. "I'll never forget", says Paul, "I walked into the works and the men were cooking a leg of lamb in it!" Paul's father donated this kiln to his son's school, which had one throwing wheel and an enthusiastic teacher for after-school pottery. From then on young Paul and a group of other kids took turns throwing pots. More than finding his focus, an enthralled Paul soon got hooked on clay – and on firing it!

For high school Paul boarded at Kearsney College in Botha's Hill, KZN, matriculating in 1988. Paul had a great art teacher who encouraged him to work hard on producing a strong art portfolio – a move, and a portfolio, Paul says, that got him accepted into the Witwatersrand Technikon. "I couldn't have got into tech without that guidance," he says. After completing his diploma in ceramic design Paul approached potter and gallery owner, Kim Sacks, to take him on as her apprentice, which she did, for four years. He also taught children's classes at her ceramics school in Yeoville and built his first of several wood-firing kilns, a modified bottle kiln made of cob. Alas, it didn't go down well lighting smoky fires in this urban setting.

Paul had by then met Nina and together, in 1996, they set off for McGregor in the Western Cape, where Nina's parents had a guesthouse, The Old Mill Lodge. The couple had a dream of starting their own ceramics studio and gallery underpinned by a wood-firing kiln. There, at the site of the town's old mill, they found several millstones as well as a name for their fledgling enterprise. When they bought and moved to their present home and studio a couple of years later, the Millstone Pottery name moved with them, into an old wagon-maker's barn.

BUILDING AND FIRING THE BEAST

It's an honour to be invited by Paul to sit with him inside his cavernous 120 cubic foot anagama kiln, akin perhaps to being invited into an alluring lair. This anagama kiln, the first he built at their current studio,



is based on a Patrick Sargent design Paul was alerted to in the first issue of the *Ceramics Technical* magazine, published in 1995. As part of an article on Patrick Sargent, it featured plans for the kiln Sargent was building in Heimisbach, Switzerland, and had dubbed *The Mule*. Paul had to have one just like it. Finally, in 2000, Paul sourced a stack of old Cullinan firebricks with which to build his own version of Sargent's *Mule*. These bricks came from lime-smelting works outside Robertson where furnaces were being rebuilt. After painstakingly chipping all the old mortar and lime off his pile of second-hand bricks, he and Nina set to work on their anagama. Paul says right about then, quite fortuitously, KZN pottery legend and master potter Andrew Walford mentioned that a Johannesburg-based industrial kiln builder, Wolf Loob, might be able to offer some advice in this endeavour. "Well, that was as though I'd been handed a set of keys", enthuses Paul, "Wolf's help was incalculable and we have remained friends."



The anagama kiln was later followed by three more wood-firing kilns: a magnificent downdraught salt kiln with two fireboxes, also built with the help of Wolf Loob; a beloved train kiln, The McGregor Express, built by Paul with more of those second-hand Cullinan firebricks and plastered in cob; and a second train kiln, during a weekend workshop with expert UK wood firer, Robert Sanderson, constructed using lightweight, reflective fire bricks.

In the early days Paul and Nina fired alone. Bearing in mind it takes about 72 hours to fire the anagama kiln, each firing was a mammoth task.

Then, about 14 years ago, fellow ceramicist and multiple award-winner, Ian Garrett, suggested they consider running wood-firing workshops – Paul and Nina could pass on their knowledge and harness help with their workload. This proved to be another “set of keys” – the Millstone Wood Firing Jamborees, as we know and love them, were born. Says Paul: “Wood-firing is a great levelling mechanism. It requires humility as well as confidence as part of the practice. It also uses up enormous physical efforts, taken in measures, always with a support system and a crew you can trust.”

PRESENT TIME

As many in the South African pottery community know, Paul has battled with bipolar disorder for most of his adult life and, more recently, as a result of prescribed medication for that disorder, also with tardive dyskinesia and dystonia (TDD). Dystonia, a movement disorder, caused muscles in Paul’s neck, jaw, arms and one

side of his torso to constantly, involuntarily and uncontrollably twist and contract, meaning that for eight months Paul was unable to work. During this time he tried to teach himself to throw with one hand but, failing this, he and a bricklayer concentrated on renovating the house and replastering all the walls. Then, in 2017, Paul underwent deep brain stimulation (DBS) neurosurgery. Nina explains that during this procedure two electrodes were inserted into the basal ganglia of Paul’s brain, the area that, amongst other things, is concerned with fluidity of movement. The electrodes, operated by a battery inserted under his clavicle, can be remotely set and reset by his neurosurgeon. “It’s like a pacemaker for my brain, Paul grins.

But it’s no laughing matter. Though this operation, usually recommended for Parkinson’s disease patients, was pronounced a success, and Paul’s uncontrollable movements ceased, Paul now suffers from debilitating episodes of depression, when once again production stalls. These are deeply challenging periods for him and his family. Once he’s well enough to get back into the studio, though, he almost forgets how long he’s been down and gets right back to work, says Nina: “It’s as if it never happened... And once he gets going, Paul throws like a demon!”

Paul and Nina’s deep affection and mutual admiration is easily observed in their gentle communication and unstinting support of one another. Nina guides Paul as to what studio tasks need his attention, and in what order, and also collaborates with him on almost all his work.

What, to Paul and Nina’s minds, makes a good pot? In the first instance, they agree, the pot must be functional: “It must work”. She says she especially values good workmanship, where Paul’s style is looser. Though he does a lot of planning for his shapes and marks to best capture possible incidental glaze and firing effects, he likes to leave certain elements to chance. “Paul likes to wing it”, she quips. Their work evidences this. Where Paul’s is fluid yet solid, often crusty and heavy, based on venerable Oriental pots, Nina’s vessels are refined, linear, and her finishes far more polished and disciplined. She



builds her pots by hand, inspired by the dressmaking habit of her childhood and youth. She fondly recalls a time when, if you wanted nice clothes, you made them: "You went to the fabric shops, chose your materials and patterns, and then you sewed your clothes." Nowadays Nina designs and cuts her reusable "patterns" out of cereal boxes, using these templates to create her popular range of slab-built mugs, jugs, butter dishes and other kitchenware.

One of the joys of his life, says Paul, is being able to work from home. Having lunch with Nina is a daily high point: "She's my best critic and my kindred spirit", he beams, nodding. Asked about fatherhood, Paul says he loves it, but that it's a great responsibility.

The couple's daughter, Sarah-Lee, 22, is also a potter, though with a very different style. She located to Johannesburg since her recent graduation with a Bachelor of Visual Arts in ceramics, from Nelson Mandela University in Port Elizabeth. She is also a keen tattoo artist, working for a chain of tattoo studios and, like her mum, is a very fine cook and baker – to which workshop attendees can attest. Son Joshua, 13, is more interested in computers, impressively building his own PC from separately sourced components he has tracked down – and bargained down – online. No small feat for a boy not yet in high school.

Although Paul and Nina haven't officially documented their work, they have kept many of the vessels they've been pleased with and even created a purpose-built "retirement" space for old favourites that have been damaged or temporarily swapped out for more recent pieces. Paul also regards this as a special place to hold the work of various other interesting potters for purposes of teaching workshops and possible future apprentices. He adds that he would recognise any of the pots he has ever made and recalls being in Parkhurst, Johannesburg, with Nina many years ago when they spotted one of his early pieces in an antique shop. They went in for a closer look. When the assistant started giving them a fantastical account of this pot's history, Paul interrupted to say: "I made that pot." Unfortunately he and Nina could not afford to buy it back, he says. "It was a nice pot."

Aside from the paper-porcelain clay Nina prefers, and Paul's first choice of durable, utilitarian stoneware, they also produce a popular "bread and butter" line of terracotta planters and bird feeders, some charmingly, quirkily fitted with stone-fruit twigs as perching places for garden birds. As a consequence of having so many different clays in the studio, and the dutiful reclaiming of every scrap of unfired material, Paul states that what he really uses is "a lot of brak (a mixed breed dog) clay – it's a mixture of everything!"

LOOKING AHEAD

As for the future, Paul expresses a deep desire to one day do away with his and Nina's only electric kiln and focus on wood- and raku-firing all work out of Millstone Pottery. Their electric kiln is currently used to bisque wood-fired wares, finish much of Nina's porcelain, as well as single-fire most of the outdoor range.

"But to do that we'll need a bigger audience, more supporters and buyers who can appreciate this way of creating – people who realise that each pot, even the humblest sake cup or tea bowl, commands full attention and engagement. They're made with sweat and tears," says Paul.

NO ONE OR TWO PEOPLE

Paul is keen to acknowledge the many potters, gallery visitors, buyers and workshop participants who have supported him and Nina.

"Each person who buys a pot or shares and exchanges energy with us is very much appreciated. We need more such people."

Returning to his set-of-keys analogy he adds: "No one or two people make this work alone. It's been a team effort." Of CSA's premier award, which included a cash prize of R15 000, Paul and Nina say they especially appreciate that it was made by a judge of Kate Malone's stature: "She's a highly regarded international judge who's had her own technical challenges, and she did not know us at all when she chose the work," says Nina. "Hopefully the prize will shine a light back on wood-fired ceramics in South Africa – put us back on the international map and spark new interest in wood firing here, at home," Paul concludes.

Eunice Rider is a journalist, aspiring potter and enthusiastic clay-workshop junkie.

CONGRATULATIONS (QUOTES)

ANDREW WALFORD

KZN pottery legend, Andrew Walford, believes the award was "a well-deserved win for a very serious potter."

Speaking from his studio in the Shongweni hills, Walford said that to fire pottery with wood, as Paul does, takes a great deal of dedication: "You need a lot of energy and stamina."

He adds that finding a market that still appreciates traditional pottery, and Paul's working methods, has become harder than ever: "The pottery world is very changed. There are so many bright new tricks and innovations – you don't have to prepare your own clays or have technical knowledge about glazes anymore, for example, because anyone can go and buy whatever they need, ready-made. It's a very different way of doing things."

He rings off with a cheery message for Paul: "Keep it up!"

CATHERINA PAGANI

Fellow wood-firer and winner of the Merit Award for her soda-fired stoneware sculpture, Two Waves, Catherina Pagani was "incredibly pleased" when Paul won the main award.

"It proves that perceptions about more challenging processes and ways of working, of firing, are evolving. It's an affirmation that what we do has value, and it's an incredible validation coming from Kate Malone."

"She definitely took note of things that were more process-intensive and technically challenging."

Pagani adds that during wood firings, aside from requiring physical strength, one also needs ongoing mental focus – to not allow too many distractions: "You need to keep observing the changes inside the kiln, and to sustain a rhythm. Because firings can so easily go wrong towards the very end."

HENNIE MEYER

Well-known Cape Town ceramic artist HM, who with Monica Ross, head of the Clay Museum at Rust-En-Vrede Gallery, set up the biennale exhibition, said KM's judging of the competition had "strongly acknowledged the entire history of ceramics".

"I was very, very happy that Paul won, he says, adding that this may have come as a surprise to potters and ceramicists who don't know about wood firing, especially anagama."

"Every ceramic artist in SA should experience at least one of the wood-firing workshops Paul and Nina offer," insists HM.

"The incredible care they take with every step – so much time and effort for perhaps just a few brilliant pieces in a kiln full of work – and their generosity in showing and sharing all this information is fantastic. The workshops are deeply captivating, awe-inspiring, and you cannot fail to be touched by their passion, their pursuit of the elusive qualities that can only be captured in these special firings."

"It's truly wonderful what they've done for ceramics education in South Africa," he says.

Meyer also believes that once potters can read wood-fired ceramics, interest in it will be rekindled: "Each piece carries so much information – about the clay, its forming, the type of wood burnt to fire it and the direction in which flames and ash passed over and around it."

KIM SACKS

Popular Johannesburg potter, gallery owner and collector, Kim Sacks, first met Paul about 30 years ago when he approached her to apprentice under her at her Yeoville ceramics school.

Describing hers as a commercial gallery specialising in non-commercial work, for which she seeks out extraordinary pieces, KS says she stocks both Paul and Nina's pottery.

"I have huge respect for his integrity with clay; he's a beautiful human being and a very gifted person – a dancing-clay man who lives, eats and breathes wood stacks. His wood stacks stand like sculptures, and he resides in the epicentre of wood firing."

"He makes from the heart, not to sell."

HOWARD MINNE

A regular participant in Paul's anagama firings is Cape Town ceramic sculptor, Howard Minne: "I've been completely corrupted by wood firing and Paul's impressive kilns. Once you've fired that way – particularly in the anagama, which is a monster – it's very difficult to go back to anything else. It's addictive."

"Wood firing is not appreciated enough in South Africa, we work in a bit of a vacuum here, but it's hugely appreciated in the east and in Australia, New Zealand and the US."

The last anagama firing HM says he participated in, the one in which Paul's winning platter was fired, took four days of stoking: "It's onerous, and it's not just about chucking wood into the kilns."

"Magical effects are created in the very slow firing up of these kilns and even more happens, crystallisation of glazes for instance, in their very long cooling."

Minne also praises both Paul and Nina's intimate understanding of the traditional glazes they use, saying, "Things like chuns and shinos are difficult to understand because consistent testing in such large kilns is hard, and firings are relatively infrequent."

Stating that Nina's role in Paul's work is not to be underestimated, he describes her as "the rock behind Paul".

"He bounces off her a lot, always seeking out and counting on her views."

ALILA HOFMEYR

Fellow McGregor potter, Alila Hofmeyr, is in full agreement about Nina's input.

She completed a year-long apprenticeship under both Paul and Nina in 2017, after graduating from UCT with a BA in drama and psychology, and deciding that her almost lifelong hobby would become her life's work.

Working for them was invaluable, she says.

"I'd attended a wood-firing jamboree there and very specifically wanted to learn from Paul and Nina – to exchange my labour for their expertise."

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INTERLINKED THEMES, MULTIPLE MEANINGS - THE OEUVRE OF THE CANADIAN CERAMIST DEBRA SLOAN

ARTICLE BY RONNIE WATT, VANCOUVER (PH.D STUDENT, UNISA)

PHOTOGRAPHS BY THE ARTIST AND OTHERS

My very first encounter with figurative ceramic art was in 1979 and flowed from a chance meeting with the Austrian ceramist Gundi Dietz. At that time, Dietz was already a leading figure in European ceramics. She had been creating one-off and series of porcelain figurines ranging from the near-realistic to the semi-cartoon but each work with a distinctive individuality. I visited her studio in Mödling outside Vienna where I watched as she added to or subtracted from the mould-cast figurines – mostly female, some full-figure or otherwise heads or torsos – leaving large areas of surface unfinished, other areas defined with gestural scratches and elsewhere adding delicate finishes with the use of dentistry tools. Dietz subsequently garnered international acclaim.

Another chance meeting in Vancouver in 2018 with the Canadian ceramist Debra Sloan prompted me to revisit figurative ceramic art which falls outside of my primary interest of studio pottery. Sloan is a BFA graduate of the Emily Carr University of Art and Design in Vancouver, a recipient of multiple awards and grants, a researcher and author of the ceramics of British Columbia. In recent times she has been an artist-in-residence at the Leach Pottery and Museum at St. Ives, the International Ceramics Studio in Kecskemét in Hungary, the University of British Columbia's Museum of Anthropology (UBCMA) in Vancouver and in Shigaraki, Japan. The residency at St. Ives focused on equestrian finials (roof-ridge tiles) of which Bernard Leach (1887 – 1979) created a few and which in her own versions did not represent allegories but reflected on the characters who had founded the Leach Pottery. One such figurine shows a naked Shōji Hamada (1894 – 1978) - the earliest collaborator of Leach - astride a horse coming to the pottery¹ and another depicts Leach himself (Leach's Backward Glance). The stint at the UBCMA was for the purpose of studying and interpreting the non-figurative decorated Anabaptist ceramics in the museum's Koerner Collection. She also gained references for her work from her exposure to European ceramics, notably of "putti".

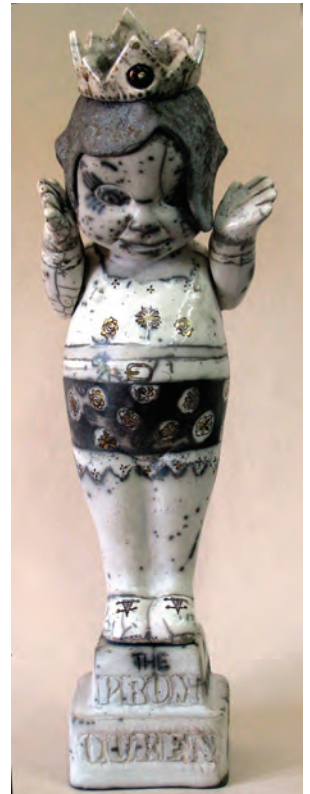
What piques my interest in Sloan's porcelain slip-cast work (as was the case with Dietz's figurines) is that though the figures are created with a persona



Top: Debra Sloan, figurative ceramic artist, Vancouver, Canada
Above: *The pony tale*. Debra Sloan. 2017

(a character or emotion, never cute nor whimsical), the artist also intends for them to evoke responses guided by the viewer's own reference world. Sloan explained that though she creates the pieces in a very resolved (representational) manner and suggests an interpretation via the figurine's gaze or gesture, she nevertheless leaves the door open to interpretation. The figures do not dictate how they should be received but they invite meaning.²

Her oeuvre includes several themes including dogs, horses, truncated female torsos and babies. A theme is never exhausted nor concluded but archived to be revisited later. The baby figures that evolved from the cherubic putti figures later developed into standing figures, then into equestrian figures and later into interlinked multiples resembling Greek caryatids. Putti originally represented sacredness but later came to serve as popularized symbols of love. Though Sloan's baby figures adopt the forms and poses of putti, their gestures and expressions suggest an engagement with the issues of contemporary times, simultaneously recording and reflecting what they witness and share. For Sloan, contemporary times equate with worry and anxiety. Babies lack in the control of emotions and hence Sloan's baby figures communicate direct, undisguised and unmitigated. (By comparison, Dietz's figures, often in languid repose, typically have an inward gaze.³) Traditionally the horse finials would be displayed on an elevated position.



Sloan came to interpret this as the horses having agency 'to project commentary on our tumultuous world' and 'for good or ill ... act as an instrument of change'.⁴ The fusion of the horse and putto themes is not a forced marriage of forms and meanings for the sake of novelty but rather the confluence of embedded meanings and an extension of the original narratives.

There is some semblance both in form and meaning in Sloan's standing baby figures with that of Rae Goosen's Kewpie Dolls which Goosen created as repetitive and altered components of installations. In Goosen's artist's statement she explains that 'the space of childhood is marked by open-endedness, a freedom of discovery with unfixed meaning'.⁵ She further acknowledges that separated from the installation, the individual figures 'disregard the initial story that I tell in order to celebrate and find a new "use"'. On the other hand, the ceramic babies in Wilma Cruise's Cradle installation (1 000 slip-cast figurines, all armless, eyeless and no ears and individually altered) that denotes a 'nihilistic implosion of life on earth',⁶ would have no validity as individual figurines. It is their collective mutilation rather than their individual deformities that makes for maximum impact.

There is a twofold purpose to this discussion. Firstly, to encourage collectors to familiarise themselves with both the practice and theory of the ceramic artist whose work is being collected... figuratively speaking, to scratch the surface... to not just own the object, but to possess the meaning thereof. Secondly, to urge South African ceramists to write artist statements for their websites, or blog entries or articles for the CSA Magazine in which they position their oeuvres and themes, supported with explanatory notes beyond technical details and vague mutterings. Fail to do so and you risk your work being taken at face value.

Ronnie Watt is based in Vancouver, Canada. He is a Ph.D student at Unisa and the focus of his thesis research is the contextualised history of 20th and 21st century South African pottery and ceramics. He is a recipient of a 2019 research grant of the S.A. Arts and Culture Trust.

TOP LEFT:

Leach's Backward Glance. Debra Sloan. 2015

TOP RIGHT: *The Prom Queen. Rae Goosen. Raku. H: 48.5 cm X W: 14.6 cm. (Photo: William Humphreys Art Gallery)*

ABOVE: *Twin Binary Road Warriors. Debra Sloan. 2015*



TOP: Cradle. Wilma Cruise. Installation. (As in CSA Magazine No 11, p 21)

MIDDLE: Caryatid trio. Debra Sloan. 2017

ABOVE: Girl with red socks. Gundi Dietz. 2016. Porcelain. L 80 cm.

Photo: Tina Dietz)

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image: Ann Marais, WS1 s/w casting slip



Top: 12% gold trim on earth bowls in Matte White glaze
 Above: 12% gold fill on bowl with Ostrich Egg glaze
 Below: Foot and Dove Walter Battiss limited edition bowl. Printed and produced for the Walter Battiss Foundation



POTTER TO POTTER

MERVYN GERS CERAMICS SELLING RAW MATERIALS

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THE FELLOWS OF ceramics southern africa

INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIONS



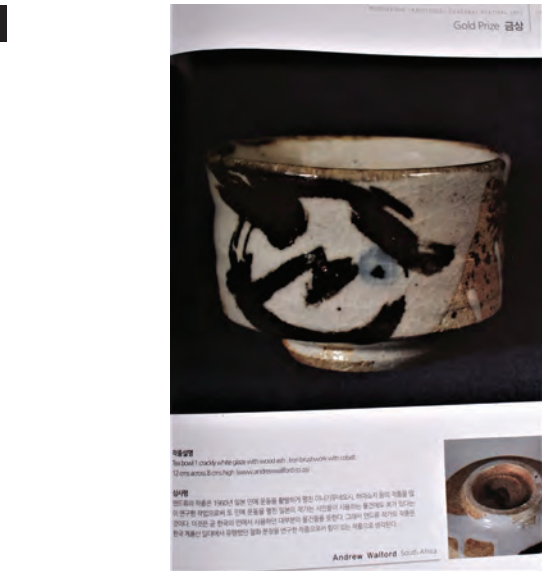
PART 3

Article by Ann Marais
Photographs by various contributors

"Great Inspiration from Nature"
Riding on the verdant breeze of Summer
The longed-for pottery from South Africa
Comes to Japan
The taste of Andrew Walford's works are
Simple and very familiar to the Japanese
The warmth of the Clay
Moulded from Nature
Is rich in Originality and
Spreads itself into man's
Heart
Slowly and Deeply.
The Earth and Fire from South Africa are
Blowing through the wind to Japan ¹

Thus spoke a Japanese poet on the opening of Fellow Andrew Walford's second exhibition in Tokyo. It sums up the affinity Japanese hearts have for his work". ² He has deep connections with the ceramic world of the East, stretching back decades – he was fortunate to meet Shoji Hamada 50 years ago. He is the only South African potter to have been awarded a gold medal for his work in the Far East, having been invited by the South Korean Arts Council (after he had submitted photographs of his tea bowls) to exhibit at the Mungyeong Chasabal Festival in 2018. His winning work is a tea bowl; reduction fired to 1380° and is covered with a high feldspathic glaze and cobalt and iron brushwork. ³

The ceramic reach of Fellows spreads across the world, besides Japan and Korea, they have connections with Australia, Britain, Canada, China,



Estonia, France, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Slovenia and counting... These connections cover a broad range of activities and interaction with a wide spectrum of potters, ceramic artists, sculptors, academics, writers, people in industry and in related art fields. They have been and are involved in exhibitions, residencies, workshops, tours, conferences and trade fairs, as well as having their works included in museums and public collections, undertaken commissions and received awards. They have written articles and have had articles written about them in books, journals and papers. Contact through visits to international conferences, individual studios and homes as well as potteries forms a dense matrix of friendships and exchanges of ideas, techniques and philosophies.

They have also studied abroad. Both Lindsay Scott's and Hennie Meyer's ceramic careers had their genesis far from African shores and came about almost by accident. Whilst a student in experimental psychology at Portland State University, Oregon, in the hippie era, Lindsay was exposed to Japanese-style tea bowls at a party. They grabbed his soul in connecting him with an unknown world of aesthetics and, as he puts it, he was "magically connected to history, suddenly part of something much bigger than myself"⁴. He enrolled for night classes in the ceramic department and thus began a lifelong commitment to clay. He left college to help set up Oregon Stoneware Pottery and became "an accomplished production thrower and learnt to build gas-fired kilns"⁵ – practices that have had an influence on his consequent career with his reduction, high-fired, wheel thrown and manipulated forms for which he is much admired.

At the opposite end of the globe under totally different circumstances, Hennie Meyer as a Rotary Exchange Student to Australia, found himself unwelcome at the school for which he was destined as a result of coming from apartheid South Africa. Only the art department at Bendigo (TAFE)⁶ College would accept him. He comments "Lucky for me that I took to clay

TOP: Andrew Walford's tea bowl – Gold Medal Award

LEFT: Andrew Walford Gold Medal Winner Korea 2018

BELOW: Ralph Johnson tea set for Cross Channel train service



like a fish to water. Never stopped working with clay since 1984"⁷. He obtained a Certificate of Applied Art (Ceramics) and, as a result of this twist of his educational fate, has gone onto South African and international recognition for his outstanding ceramics.

Criss-crossing the world to Britain, ceramic tuition in various guises has been influential in impacting the oeuvres of two other eminent Fellows, namely Ralph Johnson and Lynnley Watson. Ralph's training for his MA ceramics degree at Staffordshire University, Stoke-on-Trent in 1990 – 92, has left its mark on his work in the sense that his style could be said to follow a path where immaculate quality of form and surface is paramount in setting standards of excellence. He is the go-to-guru for glaze expertise which he shares widely with students and CSA members. During his MA studies, he designed an 'aerodynamic tea set of tableware for the new, fast, Channel train service Dover to Calais'.⁸ This tea set is in the Clay Museum Collection in Durbanville.

Lynnley Watson's considerable range of visual literacy has been enhanced in part as a result of her ceramic activities at a young age in Europe when she worked as a decorator in majolica techniques at the Chelsea Pottery and Brighton Pottery and when she honed her throwing skills at Ceramica Inglese in Italy.⁹ Alongside her practical training, she acquired a love of British ceramic expression through exposure to the pots of Lucie Rie, Alan Caiger-Smith, Ray Finch, Bernard Leach as well as visits to British museums such as the Tate and the National Gallery, where she gained knowledge of the Bloomsbury Group, Art Nouveau, Art Deco, the Pre-Raphaelites, Early Renaissance Art etc.¹⁰ Leach had a hand in shaping the direction of Fellow Elsbeth Burkhalter's career when she visited Lucy Rie in 1978. By good fortune for her, Leach just happened to be a visitor to Rie's home that same afternoon, and during their conversations he encouraged Elsbeth's husband to build her a kiln for reduction firing that she wanted, saying "no self-respecting potter fires in an electric kiln" (in spite of the fact that Rie was sitting right next to him!).¹¹ Elsbeth has since spent a large part of her career firing gas/wood/oil kilns, the magic of which never leaves her. Other Fellows have also had the privilege of meeting Leach, including Andrew Walford way back in 1964 on a visit to Britain when he also met Michael Cardew and Lucy Rie. Andrew stayed on in Europe where he established a studio in Staufen, Germany in 1965 then taught at the Hamburg Academy of Art from 1966 – 68 before returning to South Africa. Wendy Goldblatt met Leach six months before he died in 1979. She was inspired by workshops given by other well-known potters at that time such as Takeshi Yasuda, David Leach, Sven Bayer, Mary Rich and others – all grist to her ceramic mill!¹² In Wales, the annual International Ceramics Festival at Aberystwyth is a world-renowned event in ceramic circles where a considerable amount of knowledge, both practical and theoretical, is exchanged through on-site workshops, demonstrations, firings in different types of kilns, exhibitions, seminars and lectures. A number of Fellows have had the privilege of attending this festival such as Elsbeth Burkhalter, Ralph Johnson, Hennie Meyer, Betsy Nield, Clementina Van der Walt, Wiebke Von Bismarck, myself and Wilma Cruise who read a paper there in 2005 entitled *Sheep, Dogs And The Space Between: Process Explained*¹³

Cross-pollination of ideas and knowledge in Europe have been garnered by other Fellows over the decades such as Minette Schuiling who spent three and a half years travelling in various European countries and returned to South Africa with 40 sketch books filled with drawings.¹⁴ Querardien Van Vliet spent time in England in 1962 on a bursary at the Royal School of London.¹⁵ Lesley-Ann Hoets has been inspired by the potteries she has visited in France. In 2006 Charmaine Haines moved with her family to France¹⁶ for a year, where she established a working studio in the south at Espéchede. Further east, Donvé Branch has visited pottery studios in Cypress, Greece, Egypt, Croatia, Turkey where she, too, has gained much inspiration for her work. She has also visited potteries in the USA.¹⁷

In 1981 Maarten Zaalberg conducted a Pottery Study Tour to Japan on which some lucky Fellows-to-be (Wendy Goldblatt, Minette Schuiling, Elza Sullivan, Martha Zettler and myself), amongst others, travelled. It was an extraordinary, life-changing experience not just in terms of exposure to the traditions, history, aesthetics and practices of Japanese ceramics, but also to Japanese lifestyles and environments. We visited famous pottery towns such as Seto, Shigaraki, Bizen, Nagoya and Mashiko – the home of Shoji Hamada. Whilst in Mashiko we visited the famous potter, Mr. Tatsuzo Shimaoka, who kindly gave each of us one of his tea bowls. In Nagoya, we visited the famous potter Mr. Shuntei Kato where we were treated to a tea ceremony and we also happened upon his assistants who were having a Raku firing in an electric kiln. The pots were glazed black and as soon as they came out of the kiln, the assistants dunked them in water! We travelled to Arita where we saw streets and streets of fine porcelain. We met Mr. Kakiemon Sakaidi who had been designated "Important Cultural Property" by the Government and from whom he received a monthly stipend. The same applied to a National Living Treasure, Mr. Takashi Nakazato whose beautiful mountain retreat we visited – a huge Koi pond marked the entrance. We visited the old city of Kyoto and saw the famous shrines and gardens, one of which had Geishas visiting at the same time. We were lucky enough to be there in the Cherry Blossom Season where we saw clouds of blossoms in the Nikko National Park – cherry blossom being an iconic Japanese motif on pots and paintings.

Contacts across the world have been made by Fellows at international conferences such as at the 1999 International Ceramics Millennium Conference in Amsterdam. Information to hand lists Fellows Drury Brand, Ralph Johnson, Betsy Nield, Querardien Van Vliet, Andrew Walford, Martha Zettler and Wilma Cruise who was a member of the World Advisory Council for this Ceramic Millennium Conference. It was at this conference where Drury Brand met the well-known Dutch ceramicist, Jeroen Bertoldt who gave an impressive opening address for the conference and who Drury subsequently invited to be the international award judge and

guest artist for the Altech Ceramics Biennale in Johannesburg in 2000. Drury cemented his friendship with the famous British potter, Sandy Brown, whom he spent time with later in England.¹⁸ South African connection with the International Academy of Ceramics was strengthened in 2009 when Clementina Van der Walt became a member of the Academy. Other conferences attended by Fellows included Mike Guassardo who presented a paper on ceramics in Southern Africa at the 2004 Editors' Conference in Fuping, China. Wendy Goldblatt was invited to attend the 34th International conference *Muestra Internacional de Artesanía Tradicional* in Santiago, Chile, in 2007. Across the Atlantic, Eugene Hön attended a conference *Doctoral Education in Design* in Ohio in 1998 through a TWR¹⁹ Research Travel Grant. He also formed ties in 1996 in Helsinki at an Art & Design Conference as well as No Gum No Method Conference in Paris. In India in 2003, he established links with NIFT,²⁰ NISTADS,²¹ and NID²². In 2000, Michelle Legg attended a conference in Jingdezhen, China when the famous American potter, Wayne Higby delivered a paper. Michelle was reading for her Masters degree at the time and the trip was organised by the ceramics department. During the tour they visited Master Yixing potters.²³

Fellows have made their mark internationally through their participation in exhibitions in many countries. A full list of these exhibitions is impressive but too long to be included in the text so any reader who wishes to have the list is welcome to contact me through the editor of the CSA magazine and I will forward it to them. Additionally, I will be happy to forward the details of Fellows' work held in international collections, their residencies, articles, papers, books in which they have published, as well as those international publications in which they themselves have been featured. Countries in which Fellows have exhibited are as follows: Australia, Belgium, Britain, China, Croatia, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Dubai, Estonia, France, Hong Kong, Germany, Italy, Ireland, Japan, Korea, Lebanon, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, Taiwan, USA. Herewith a random sample of the diversity of Fellows participation in international exhibitions. Both Clementina Van der Walt and Hennie Meyer have participated in one of the ceramic world's most recognised exhibitions, *Ceramic Art London*, since its inception in 2005 until 2012. Clementina participated in it again in 2018.

In 2002 Elsbeth Burkhalter was chosen as the only representative from Africa to participate (as one of only 25 finalists) in an international exhibition in Switzerland. The brief was for an architectural sculpture to be placed on the banks



Hennie Meyer, Magdalene Odundo, Clementina Van der Walt at *Ceramic Art London*

of a canal that could be viewed from passing boats on the canal. It had to contain information about her adopted country as well as being site-specific. Her mask-like sculpture was 4 meters high and was constructed from huge, reduction-fired, clay panels supported by a stainless, steel frame. The multi-faceted work weighed 2 tons.²⁴

Across the world, at the 7th Gyeonggi International Ceramics Biennale in 2013 in Korea, Wilma Cruise, as only one of two Africans, and one of 27 finalists from 18 countries, was invited to exhibit her large installation, occupying 40 square



Elsbeth Burkhalter Mask sculpture Swiss Exhibition 2002

meters of gallery space. The work, entitled Cradle, was a composition of over a thousand figures of armless, doll-like forms. "Cradle refers to the vast community of babies born into the world virtually by the minute. The figures' muteness and armlessness suggests lack of agency. They have no control over their own proliferation and the ensuing despair".²⁵

In 2014 Eugene Hön exhibited at the Taiwan Ceramics Biennale, Yingge Ceramics Museum, New Taipei City. His entry, entitled ...and the ship sails on, was a cutting-edge ceramic installation with digital projection of ballpoint pen renderings: Digital Materialities Section.²⁶



Eugene Hön ...and the ship sails on Taiwan Ceramics Biennale 2014
RIGHT – Charmaine Haines Stand, Sydney Trade Fair 2019

Fellows have received awards on international exhibitions as in the aforementioned gold medal presented to Andrew Walford in Korea in 2013. Hennie Meyer was given two Honourable Mentions in 2005 on the 3rd World Ceramics Biennale in Korea, one for Expression and one for Functional ware, and, again in 2009 on the 5th World Ceramics Biennale in Korea, he was given an Honourable Mention for Expression. In 2001, Martha Zettler received a diploma on the 1st World Ceramic Biennale in Kyonggi Province in Korea. In Europe, Ralph Johnson was awarded Runner-Up Prize for his decanter-based domes at the Bernardaud International Ceramics Competition in Paris in 1992. Wilma Cruise received a Lorenzo il Magnifico Award (4th place) at the Biennale Internazionale Dell 'arte Contemporanea (digital art section) in Florence.

On the opposite side so to speak, as judge rather than recipient, Jerice Doeg was an invited international judge in 1996 at the 1st World Children's Ceramics Exhibition in Imari Japan.²⁷

International Trade Fairs are events where Fellows have been represented. Charmaine Haines was invited by the Department of Trade and Industry to be part of a group of South African artists and makers to participate in the 2019 Sydney Gift Trade Fair. Donvé Branch reports she has exhibited in Dubai. Commercial galleries carry the work of some Fellows. Donvé Branch's work can be seen in galleries in Melbourne, Toronto and Cologne.²⁸ Clementina Van der Walt is represented in The Art Shop, Abergavenny; Petronilla Silver Gallery, London and the Leach Pottery in St. Ives, Cornwall.²⁹



Wilma Cruise Cradle Installation Korea 2013

International commissions are featured in the portfolios of some Fellows. One of Digby Hoets' biggest clients, Peter Marino, the world-famous architect and designer, has used Digby's large pots on many of his projects over the years.³⁰ Digby was commissioned, through gardening guru Keith Kirstens, to make a large container for HRH Prince Charles' private residence, High Grove House, in Gloucestershire. Hennie Meyer's ceramics were put to the most earth-shattering test, literally, in 2018 when an earthquake hit the island of Lombok, Indonesia. He had been commissioned to produce ceramics for the exclusive island resort, Qunci Villas. His work is placed throughout the complex including several, large,



Hennie Meyer 1000 Pypies in Spa Pond, Qunci Villas, Lombok Island

textured pieces in the reception areas, ceramic mandalas in the art corridor, a pond of ceramic '1000 pypies' (pipes)³¹ as a water feature in the Spa, 9 wall panels in the seafood restaurant and box-like forms used at the entrance to rooms to identify them, which also act as vases for daily fresh flowers. It is a spectacular commission made even more so by the fact that every single piece survived intact in the 7.6 Richter Scale earthquake. One needs to look no further for the validation of one's work!

An important and very interesting component in the careers of some Fellows is that of residencies either to teach others or to be a participant in a sponsored programme where one is able to learn new skills and knowledge from one's colleagues through the exchange of ideas, and, working collaboratively for a period of time in which one is free to explore new ways of creating works without the daily pressures of life in the course of one's normal working day. Herewith a sample of some residencies undertaken by Fellows which will give the reader insight into the diversity of experiences that have been gained. In 2018, John Shirley undertook a teaching residency, at the well-known arts centre, La Meridiana, in Tuscany. He conducted 2 one-week workshops: the first on technical processes (mould making, casting and bisque firing of bone china forms). The second week was devoted to exploring aspects of firings with salt, wax resist and multiple firings on certain pieces. He loved every minute of his time in this beautiful part of the world and says he will always treasure the warmth and great hospitality shown to him.³²

In 2017, Hennie Meyer had a very stimulating, creative residency in Estonia at The International Wood Fired Symposium in Kohlia village. Over 17 years, 178 prominent and emerging artists from 29 countries have been hosted. "Every year 8 – 12 artists come together for a 3-week period to create new work, collaborate, fire kilns (anagama and bourry-box) and share knowledge beyond our individual practices. During this time artists also give presentations, take trips to sites of interest around Estonia and participate in a wide cultural experience. The symposium culminates with an outdoor exhibition open to the public. As part of the tradition, each artist donates a work to the symposium's collection which becomes part of the expanded resource of local ceramics history."³³

In 2018, Clementina Van der Walt completed a 3-week residency at the Leach Pottery in St. Ives, Cornwall, culminating in two exhibitions – one at the Leach Pottery South Africa to South West (October to December 2018) and the other in Cape Town Cornwall to Cape Town (December 2018). Exhibition information for the Leach show includes "The Leach Pottery marks a change in stylistic and material approaches as Clementina introduces more colour to her pots, taking inspiration from the St. Ives Artist Colony to make a small collection of painterly earthenware domestic and decorative pots".³⁴

Residencies of a different kind were undertaken by Eugene Hön for three months in 1991 and myself for two months in 2005 at La Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris, where one is able to stay in the SANAVA³⁵ atelier. Here one immerses oneself in world art at the great museums such as Le Pompidou, La Musée D'Orsay, Les Invalides, Musée Rodin and Le Louvre where there is a large collection of world ceramics of every era and style of expression and function. One is exposed to current exhibitions, art markets, artists' studios and art centres, as well as making contacts and exchanging ideas with artists from many different parts of the world. Again, there is none of the pressures of a quotidian day so there is time for reflection and absorption that is not always possible in a busy, creative life.

But to end, one cannot but report on what must surely be a workshop that can only be described as an 'Irish Experience' by Drury Brand. It took place at the Tallaght Community Arts Centre on the outskirts of Dublin. Tallaght is described as an 'economically challenged area'. "Arriving at the centre, which is housed in a farmhouse, built in 1837, all the studios having been created out of pigsties, Drury found a room with a kiln, a cupboard and a sink and nothing else. This was on a Wednesday and his first classes were due to start on the Saturday. He had, with limited funds, to source all the equipment and tools required. Some of the materials he found lying about in a nearby abandoned field and, being a very versatile man, he was able to make a lot of the tools himself including trestle tables and helped with the erection of shelves. He also had to source suitable clay together with glazes and colours that were compatible. On the Saturday the first seven adults arrived for classes, none of them having ever touched clay. Twelve children aged between 9 and 12 followed. Not only had they also not touched clay, they had a language problem as they could not understand Drury. Four more classes followed the next week and eventually fifty people enrolled for the programme and sixty-eight classes were held. They worked with abstract slabs, pinched and coiled.



Clementina Van der Walt Cornwall to Cape Town Exhibition Cape Town 2018

Using Picasso's paintings and drawings as inspiration, they made cut outs and created wonderful sculptures. He also built a Raku kiln using normal construction bricks to support the ceramic fibre insulation blanket, which was very successful. Numerous firings were undertaken. The programme ended with an exhibition at the end of November".³⁶

The life of a Fellow is never boring – extremely hard work in every possible way, but never boring! The final part of this journey into the lives of the Fellows of CSA will be published in the next issue of CSA magazine and this will feature their very diverse philosophies and involvement with clay.

Ann Marais has been a full time ceramist, sculptor and artist since 1977. She has exhibited with much success, both locally and abroad. She is highly respected for her writings in local as well as overseas publications.

Her work is held in private as well as public collections all over the world. She is a Fellow of Ceramics Southern Africa.



The packed kiln at La Meridiana, Tuscany 2018

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Ceramics and other visual arts at the Stellenbosch Woordfees, 1 - 9 March 2019

Article by Andrée Bonthuys

Photographs by Andrée Bonthuys and Hennie Meyer

This was my first visit to the Stellenbosch Woordfees and I was mightily impressed by the Visual Arts Section, imaginatively curated by Theo Kleyhans. This twentieth festival (where have I been all these years?), with the theme Young, had an alluring ceramic thread running through the many and individual exhibitions, from the young festival artist, Penny George's sensitive dishes, to Hennie Meyer's ceramic installation, 'X'.

The art was young and fresh and challenging throughout. But more importantly, it was aesthetically and conceptually exciting, and I congratulate curator Theo Kleyhans, who also led our lively walk-about.

'My African Wild Dogs - my journey into my inner turmoil', by Jean Theron Louw, struck a real chord. She says ... 'The work is a web of ideas that engage myself and the seriously endangered African wild dog. I fuse with and become part of ...' No ceramics here, but her wax sculptures, with related pen and ink drawings, dealing with the disastrous effects of over population, xenophobia, farm murders, female vulnerability and her own angst, really spoke to me.

Festival Artist, Penny George, celebrated the fact that she was the first female in her family to go to university, thanks to the support and sponsorship of the humble cleaners in her family. She titled her exhibition Tergeo, from the Latin verb tangere, meaning to rub or clean off (and a cleaning spell in Harry Potter), and of course, referencing her family of cleaners. Penny takes her inspiration from recycling and re-imagining cleaning instruments to comment on the traditional role of women and their place in society. Beside the huge sculptural circular bushes and mops behind finely etched glass, Penny also created delicate white ceramic dishes decorated with sketches of cleaning tools.

Another artist who works in multimedia and touched on ceramics, was Marlise Keith with her exhibition titled 'A Fragile Corridor'. Marlise suffers from serious migraines and her painful hours in isolation are spent in contemplation of the human condition and what it means for both herself and other beings. Her works have a surreal quality as she works her way through the messiness of being human. Her delightful ceramic vessels are in collaboration with Antoinette du Plessis and Marlise explains: 'I've always loved the idea of working with clay. It makes me feel as if I have my hands in the bowels of the earth, so intimate and very sensual. For some reason the theme of Eden reared its head and I had to comply'.

Alessandro Pappada's ceramic exhibition, 'Babbel', deals with language in this country - its colour, descriptiveness and complexity. His multi-coloured,





talking ceramic heads spout those familiar South African words and phrases that define and unite us. Alessandro also created 'Head Hunter', a really fun and inclusive treasure hunt, with clues on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. The treasure? To find his variously coloured ceramic heads, which have been purposefully hidden all over the Western Cape, in a bid to win his specially crafted golden heads.

In these dry times we all know about saving water in buckets and Theresa Jo Wessels' exhibition, 'The Obsession – The Bucket', was most evocative. Theresa Jo expressed herself in many media, including her bucket printed dress, but it was her beautifully executed, life-size, precious ceramic bucket titled 'Water is Gold' that stole the show. This perfectly executed life-size ceramic bucket, with a tiny half-inch of glowing water at the bottom, was very powerful.

I loved the whole idea and execution of 'Ambidextrous', an exhibition curated by Hennie Meyer and consisting of four artists working both 2 and 3 dimensionally. The artists, Hannes van Zyl, Jeanne Hoffman, Susan Grunlingh and Ceramic Matters (Gerhard Swart and Anthony Harris) were tasked firstly with creating 3 paintings each, and then to respond in ceramic



Opposite: *My African Wild Dogs*, Jean Theron Louw

'Tergeo' Penny George

'Babbal', Alessandro Pappada

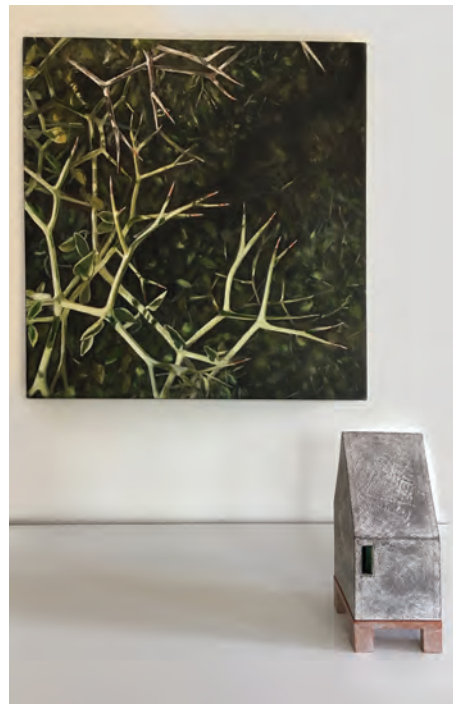
This page clockwise from the top:

'X', Hennie Meyer

'Ambidextrous'

'A Fragile Corridor', Marlise Keith & Antoinette du Plessis

'The Obsession - the Bucket' Theresa Jo Wessels





sculpture to each of the other artist's paintings. The results were very telling and I particularly enjoyed Hannes van Zyl's guarded, closed houses as response. Reminded me of that thing guys say at bachelor parties, 'What happens in the house, stays in the house'.

Hennie Meyer is conceptually interested in the different roles individuals play in society and he very often explores repetition and multiples in his execution.

This exhibition is no different. 'X', a ceramic installation of hundreds of handmade 'ballot boxes' in naturally graded earthy colours, referencing the land wherein our individual and collective identities are woven, speaks of much. For Hennie, 'X' is the twenty fourth letter of the alphabet, but it is also so much more. 'X' can indicate the unknown, it represents the signature of an illiterate, it could signify a kiss or a point on a map, or even the male chromosome. But in an election year, 'X' signifies so much more...The boxes snake across the table like lines of voters all over this land, with ribbons of different colours looping like rainbows, sometimes linking and sometimes evoking those long ballot sheets of endless parties. Hennie uses the ballot box as metaphor for the individual and also the collective power of the masses, and the connections between us. The walls are hung with sculptured x's, some with eyes (I recognized Helen Zille's and other politicians) and some with faces or symbols or a game of chance.

Altogether, a stimulating and inspiring exhibition. I will certainly visit the Woodfees again next year!

Andrée Bonthuys has returned to ceramics after a break of 22 years. She was well known for her conceptual ceramic sculptures in the Western Cape in the early 90's when she won the Regional Western Cape APSA /Corobrik Awards for Sculpture in both '91 and '95 and was Highly Commended in '94.

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Rhoda and Madeleine Henning's POTTERY TIPS

Signing your work

Signing your work is important when creating your own brand, but hand-signing every piece can be tedious. Use this technique to make your own personalized stamp: Shape a small ball of clay into a 5cm thick rectangle or cylinder. Cut one side straight and smooth the surface. Engrave your signature or logo and trim the block to fit. Bisque fire and then press into wet clay for a relief of your signature. If you prefer an imprint over a relief, you can press the bisqued stamp into a new piece of clay, trim it and bisque fire it.

Using plastic or wood decoration patterns

When pressing plastic, wood or other non-porous decorative items into your clay, first dust the clay surface with cornflower using a soft paintbrush. It will keep the item from sticking to the clay and will be fired away in the kiln.

Reviving dry underglazes

Underglazes can be quite costly and so it is worth the trouble of 'reviving' them. If they are too thick just add some water. If they have completely dried, add a little water (about double the volume of the dried underglaze) and wait until it has seeped into the dry underglaze. Add water to the right consistency and screen through a glaze sieve. (Tip: if you do not have a glaze sieve, use a small tea sieve).

Easy pottery tools

Make useful scraping ribs with old credit cards that you can cut into suitable shapes or lenses removed from the frame of old glasses.

From the kiln...

A lid that has become stuck to its pot during firing can be loosened by hitting it lightly with a wooden hammer.

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Edson Mahlangu has been working in pottery since studying fine arts at Mzilikazi Art Centre in Bulawayo in the 1990s. He specialises in teaching throwing.



Becky Love is a civil engineer by training but has worked in ceramics since graduating from Wits in 2013. She is presently working on decorated vases.

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Tribute to Colleen Lehmkuhl National Chairperson Ceramics Southern Africa

1 June 1959 - 9 April 2019

Larger than life, selfless in her promotion of our craft, passionately colourful and deeply, unashamedly caring for us all at every turn. This is the Colleen I loved from the very moment I met her. This is the Colleen we all loved.

Natural born leadership, overwhelming kindness and generosity, courageousness in the face of fear, and selflessness in promoting others... are all part of the rich tapestry attributed to the late Colleen Margaret Lehmkuhl. Her passing on 9 April 2019 shocked us all and drew tributes from across the country and the world, as we gathered together to remember and celebrate her life.

"She was the glue that held a lot of things together... without her, who knows where most of us would be right now"... Sincere words from her daughter Chavonne, who, just short of her 21st birthday, is now facing life without a mother she considers her 'Florence Nightingale'. Much like the 'lady with the lamp', Colleen shared with us all her gracious benevolence, immense organisational skills and ability to put things into action with the greatest of ease.



Colleen was born in Vereeniging on 1 June 1959 and grew up in Roberstham, Johannesburg where she met and married Mike Lehmkuhl. After completing a National Diploma in Ceramic Art and Design at the Johannesburg Art College, Colleen temporarily set aside her artistic career, taking a job within the financial department of IBM. During those nineteen years Colleen rose effortlessly to the ranks of senior positions whilst fighting her own personal struggle to start a family. After 12 stressful failed attempts at IVF, the couple made a monumental decision and were accepted as adoptive parents ... welcoming new born daughter Chavonne and later, son Matthew into their family. These were the happiest two moments of Colleen's life.

Ironically, it was during her time within the corporate world that Colleen's passion for the Arts was re-ignited... Through IBM, where Mike was also employed, the family relocated to Paris in early 2000, where Mike fulfilled a company assignment for four years, allowing Colleen the freedom to enjoy motherhood at her leisure (as well as organise the ex pat community into action) and explore the world of Art in Europe.

"In Paris I was at leisure to experience first-hand the rich cultural heritage of Europe and spent many happy days visiting galleries and attending part-time pottery workshops"

Returning inspired from her time in Paris, Colleen soon decided the time



had come to follow her life-long dream and creative passion to build and establish a pottery studio of her own.

It is often said that 'You can do anything as long as you have the passion, the drive, the focus and the support' ... and our beloved Colleen, as you know, had that all ... in abundance.

From the moment she threw open the doors, the studio flourished and united skilled teachers with enthusiastic students and passionate promoters of our craft. From the very beginning, teachers Nic Sithole, John Shirley and Michelle Legg joined her in the journey and brought with them an immense knowledge and skill. Alongside Colleen, and within a building that houses her dynamic personality, they inspire, educate, uplift and nurture literally hundreds in the art of clay.

Her spacious Bryanston studio is always a hive of activity and when not used for teaching, it hosts a myriad of ceramic events, including; visiting artists' workshops (local and international), art movie nights, gallery exhibitions, or other ceramic related events - always with the furthering of ceramics in mind.

"Colleen had a rare gift of truly celebrating others' successes. Nothing delighted her more than students selling their work, and friends receiving accolades" Charlotte Middleton

As a mentor, Colleen reached out to so many, providing guidance and nurturing, often serving as a springboard to the successful careers of others.

Photographer Sandra Legg gives credit to her encouragement. "Your belief in me and my work is something that meant so much, in so many ways. Your incredible personality, directness, down to earth practicality and unfailing honesty were gifts to those around you. Thank you for sharing so much of yourself with the world."

"My sister, my mother who found me when I was down and out in the ceramic industry and helped me to better my skills, your benevolence and smile will continue to linger in my mind" Mandla Twala

"She loved people and clay. I doubt I would be making the 'personal' creative pieces that I make today if I had not met her" Richard Pullen

With her bold hand-coiled pots and altered hand thrown ware, Colleen has participated in Ceramics Southern Africa's regional as well as national exhibitions, received two highly commended awards for her work, and is represented in the prestigious Corobrik Collection at the Pretoria Art Museum.

Writing on her artistic style, long time friend and fellow ceramic artist Cathy Brennon wrote "The father of Studio Pottery, Bernard Leach, said 'The pot is the man'. If you have a look at Colleen's pots you will see lively forms, colourful combinations and often lots of dots! Her exuberance and love of life were expressed in her ceramic work"

For our ceramic community, Colleen's involvement was exceptional. Serving as the Gauteng Chairperson of Ceramics Southern Africa for many years until the end of 2018 when she took on the role of National Chair within our organisation.

"Colleen's total commitment to her role within CSA was beyond inspirational" says John Shirley. "She was completely an 'I'll do it' kind of person. We would often be waiting for instructions on what needed doing only to find it had already been done. She was firm and yet always fair. She was responsible for so much of the progress in CSA due to her tireless dedication and her presence was felt in all that she did. Whether it was hosting a workshop at her studio, convening an exhibition or organizing a clay festival or market, Colleen was always on top of things and managed them in a highly professional manner".

With Colleen's passing we have lost too soon an incredible mother, a wife, a sister, a daughter, a teacher, a colleague, an artist and a full bodied friend. In his eulogy, Mike, her husband, reminded us to continue with Colleen's memory in that she would want nothing more than for us to 'go out and inspire others.. become involved with things that can make a difference, be creative, and help others where you can, which sometimes just means calling people to give advice or console them'. Colleen has left a legacy of honesty, integrity and dedication to our world of ceramics. Let us always remember her magic and true spirit of Ubuntu within our creative community. We love you Colleen Lehmkuhl. Thank you for being our 'lighthouse'. Thank you for being our friend.

Tracy Tompkins



OUT AND ABOUT

FINE DINING WITH HENNIE MEYER AT CAFÉ PERLINA, DURBANVILLE

Article by Ann Marais

Photography by Herman Agenbag

Cape Town has become one of the foodie capitals of the world in recent years – think the legendary molecular gastronomy of The Test Kitchen at the Old Biscuit Mill in Woodstock, voted one of the fifty best restaurants in the world in 2014, 2016 and 2018. Interest in food in the Western Cape and indeed in many parts of South Africa, has been propelled along by the proliferation of all kind of festivals - cheese festivals, olive festivals, wine festivals, cherry festivals – even a biltong festival. At the same time, visits to buy artisanal products at town and country fresh produce markets have become very popular on Saturday morning foraging expeditions across the Cape Peninsula and beyond, as it seems everyone wants fresh, locally produced and free-of-toxic-chemicals food items.

Months of experimenting, testing and exploring of shapes, colours, forms, smells, tastes, and touch in a spirit of play and absolute freedom by Adèle and Hennie resulted in this event and three more evenings of similar dinners at Café Perlina. All this collaboration resulted, at least for this writer, in a meal of a lifetime – a mind shift in the art of food practice that is now a “before” and “after” Café Perlina timeline. Of the nine courses presented that evening nothing was ordinary. Each course was introduced in artworks by Hennie that were nothing short of revolutionary in terms of food presentation.

The first course – West Coast Black Mussels with Homemade Bread and Garlic Butter arrived at each table in a large, Roman Coliseum! Adèle’s food philosophy is that food is for sharing together, enjoying together in a communion of friends and family whence all are drawn together and dip into the communal “pot” – which we did, noses twitching and mouths salivating in anticipation of these marine delicacies.

Course 2 – Duck Spring Rolls with Citrus and Sage Dipping Sauce was presented, perched on top of what looked like some vicious, black sea urchin-type form on top of a round, flat-topped cylinder. On top of these long, thick spikes was impaled the most delicious duck spring roll I have ever tasted, accompanied by the seductively matched sauce. The visual appeal was heightened by an amorphous “cloud” of colour – beetroot sprouts and deep-fried shredded pastry threads. The ensemble was reminiscent of an undersea coral garden.

Course 3 – Roasted Butternut Tortellini with Sage Butter, Pine Nuts, Amaretti, Parmesan Crackling and Red Chilli was offered in one of Hennie’s favourite forms. These are small, faceted bowls in black clay where the facets had been spontaneously and randomly cut, whereby



At the same time, there has been an exciting surge in interest in bespoke table ware to match all this fine gastronomy. Think David Walters’ exquisite porcelain dinnerware gracing the tables of Rust-en-Vrede wine estate’s top class restaurant to the grandest tables, none other than that of Madiba in the past. Equally exciting is the unique range of Clementina Van der Walt’s vibrant, colourful table ware that was instantly recognisable going back to the 1980’s which was a potent symbol of an African zeitgeist and which is still a feature at The Africa Café in Cape Town’s Heritage Square. Her latest expression in table ware was shown in Cape Town in December 2018 at a private, solo exhibition as a response to a recent residency at the Leach Pottery in St. Ives, Cornwall. Then there is Mervyn Gers’ dinnerware at De Grendel restaurant on the Graaff estate close to Cape Town. Diana Ferreira, a rapidly rising star on the international tableware scene, has work at that high portal of contemporary fine dining, La Colombe in Constantia and at their sister restaurant in Franschoek.

This survey into bespoke dinner ware became an imperative to find out from whence came, what foundation exists, to account for the revolutionary food theatre thirty lucky diners experienced at Chef Adèle Peloi’s Café Perlina in a quiet street in Durbanville on the night before the opening of the 2018 Corobrik National Ceramics Biennale at Rust-en-Vrede Arts Centre.

no two bowls are alike. The interiors were glazed with a white majolica glaze, stained with different stains from Glazecor – reds, yellows, purple, oranges etc. By now everyone had settled in and the volume of noise had risen substantially. At the same time, one became conscious of an awareness that was drifting subliminally around the room as it dawned on us that we were privy to the most extraordinary dining experience – way beyond our expectations.

Course 4 was cleverly orchestrated to give the diners a quiet note with a gentle, green salad of Sundried Tomatoes, White Asparagus, Avocado, Croutons, Cucumber and Toasted Sunflower Seeds. This salad was served in deep bowls, glazed in muted tones of pale blue, soft white etc., with broad rims in what has become well known (and sometimes emulated) as a particular feature of Hennie’s rims in the last few years. These rims are thin, short, multi-layered, horizontal sheets of clay with ragged edges laid across the broad rim, much like the ragged edges one sees in geological strata such as mica.

Then came what was undoubtedly the ROCK STAR of the evening in terms of dinner ware!

Norwegian Salmon done in 3 ways: Salmon and Avocado Tian, Salmon Fishcake and Home Cured Salmon were placed in 3 separate areas of the

most fascinating, long, black-glazed, rectangular-shaped forms where the middle section was grounded on the table and at either side the ends were raised in the air. They were reminiscent of seesaws that children play on. Childhood memories came flooding back and suddenly diners were rocking their food seesaws with delighted squeals and whoops. It was hilarious! Never has one seen such a scene in a restaurant before. Needless to say, the actual food was as innovative and delicious as the forms that held it. Hennie had a slightly different take on the idea of these forms. For him, they are boat-like so he found it appropriate that the food they contained was fish.

This high note was followed by another sensational dish, completely different, not mobile, but the food the form contained was tasty enough to send the taste buds into culinary heaven. Rack of Lamb (iconic Karoo lamb!) with Pea Purée and Jus, were tucked into what could be called a giant ceramic muffin with a square cut out the top wherein was placed the single rack, purée and jus. The Karoo lamb was so succulent it was positively sensual. Adèle's food magic reduced the conversations to "mmms" and "aahs" and "oohs". The forms were glazed with a matt black glaze (Reinders), wiped and then the top was glazed with Amaco's saturation gold (food safe).

Hennie relates how the making of these muffin-like shapes with square cut-outs in the middle at the top reminded him of dough rising when he made them. The process involved pouring liquid slip into a bowl-shaped plaster mould. When the slip had set to a soft, leather-hard-ish state, he pushed a square block down into the middle of the clay which then rose up the sides of the square block and immediately he thought of dough rising, so again, there is the link between form and food.



4.



2.



3.



5.



6.

1. Course 2 Duck Spring Roll; 2. Forms For Course 2 Duck Spring Roll; 3. Course 3 Roasted Butternut Tortellini; 4. Course 4 Green Salad; 5. Forms for course 5, Rocking Boats. 6. Rack Of Lamb.

On to Course 7 and by now the outside world had ceased to exist in Café Perlina. The myriad of shapes, forms, colours, designs, tastes, smells, textures and marrying of all ingredients - ceramic and organic, had taken hold of the evening. The months of planning, playing, exploring and being open to all ideas bounced off each other, had come to a perfection of fruition by these two, outstanding artists.

The journey then took a startling turn: Seared Beef Fillet with Porcini Jus, Mushroom Éclair and Sautéed Mushroom was served on a normal, recognisable, flat dinner plate. It was a shock! This normality! A sly device to keep us diners from any sense of complacency. But the food was anything but 'ordinary'. The fillet was cooked to a perfection of succulence and the subtle interplay of mushroom flavours concentrated the palate and silenced the tongues, momentarily, as all savoured the subtleties of Adèle's food magic.

I began to wonder what food background informed such superb culinary

7. course 8 creme brulee

8. carved bases for creme brulee

9. Hennie Meyer serving diners

10. The stars of the show at Café Perlina – Zodwa Msengana, Olwethu Salman, Adèle Pelloi, Glenda Craddock, Hennie Meyer, Kholeka Samente



skills in the combination of all the different flavours and textures, as well as the cooking perfection in timing and temperatures of the different ingredients. It became clear when Adèle related that, actually, she began cooking when she was only about eighteen months old! Admittedly, she only cooked with her eyes at that stage. She says she was always hanging around her mother's stove wanting to see what was going on. Eventually the family placed her high chair next to the stove and so she sat and thereafter began her cooking career!

As is Hennie's wont, to take every form to the nth degree, each bowl for Course 8, the Crème Brûlée, was individually made and executed according to a request by Adèle for something different to the normal little ramekins used for this dessert. Hennie created heavy-bottomed, small dishes with individually carved bases – no two designs alike. The carving of each base was a morning's good work – he enjoyed the freedom to carve as he felt like, randomly, as the designs evolved in the moment.

Finally, la pièce de résistance – the cheese "board": a board like no other! The cheese was served, perched on top of the same type of scaffolding as the Coliseum in Course 1 but now it had been reduced to small rectangular blocks that formed supports for morsels of cheese and bread sticks to poke through, accompanied by the odd pansy flower for visual enjoyment. The whole ensemble was a masterpiece of collaborative creativity by these two artists.

A last note – not only did Hennie create each piece (over four hundred of them) individually over a period of 8 – 9 months, he also presented us 30 diners each and every dish throughout the evening himself (with help by some staff) as MC of this food extravaganza.

What a mensch!





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A VISIT TO CERAMIC ART LONDON 2019

Article and photographs by Lynnley Watson



Rebecca Appleby,
Derek Wilson,
and Kiho Kang

This was the fifteenth year that the Craft Potters Association has hosted this event, the ultimate fair to see ceramics made by potters from all over the world. There were ninety participants this year and the event was held at Central St. Martins, The Granary, in Kings Cross, London. I was fortunate to be able to attend two days, courtesy of tickets obtained by ex-South African curator and friend, Wendy Gers, who is always a delight to see!

Apart from the exhibitions there were eleven inspiring lectures by well-known speakers such as Tony Ainsworth, director of the Victoria and Albert Museum: "From Stoke-on-Trent to South Kensington – A journey through clay", and Kate Malone: "The First Indian Triennial" and "The 2019 National Ceramics Biennale" in South Africa. Several artists discussed their work practises and the advantages of collaborating with other artists. These talks took place throughout the weekend. An area set aside for the showing of audio visual material had a constant stream of viewers. On the last day there was a party and kiln firing. Ceramic Review had a stand and nearby a fast food and coffee outlet kept visitors and exhibitors fuelled.

As far as eligibility to show work is concerned, I quote from the entry criteria set out by the organisers: "all ceramic artists are encouraged to apply, even if they are just starting out with their careers, and participants from all countries are welcomed. They are selected by an independent selection panel to ensure that a wide range of original contemporary work of the highest standard is represented".

I was struck firstly by how small many of the stands were. They varied from 1 by 2 metres to 1 by 5 metres, the former costing £870 escalating to £1860 for the latter stand. This, as well as having to make ingenious and aesthetically pleasing display stands that cater for all the things that need to be hidden (like packaging material and invoice books), makes for a significant financial investment. I was impressed by the thought and ingenuity that went into the display stands. Every available space has to be considered, but not to the detriment of the work on display. Many made individual metal wall mounted stands that held only one pot, sometimes colour coded to the individual piece. Lighting as always is of prime importance. On one stand LED lights were secreted into the shelf above the work. Over the two days I noticed that the stands were always well stocked even though exhibitors had sold well. Storage space is set aside in the venue which enabled participants to maintain the display and replenish stock as it became necessary.

A huge variety of work was represented and it was fascinating to see the many ways the craft of ceramics is approached: so many different techniques, firing methods and differing scales of work from miniature to monumental. It was also a treat to speak to the exhibitors about their art: some could not speak English but had translators or had gone to lengths to explain their work in a written format which had been translated into English.

It has been impossible to whittle down the photographs to a manageable amount for this article. Some images have been included to show the way items were displayed and others to show more detail of the actual exhibits. (Text in inverted commas refers to material taken from the artist's page in the catalogue).

Hannah Townsend's large sculptural vessels: Made by combining slip cast bases with a thrown upper section. Hannah stated that she "combines ceramics and printmaking to create collections of sensitively realised vessel forms that explore the layered landscapes and sea-washed, weatherworn surfaces of the British coastline".

Rebecca Appleby's large vessels: Rebecca won the Ceramic Review's Newcomer to Ceramic Art London Award in 2018, making large vessels "examining the ever-present cohabitation and conflict between industry and nature. My work is a continual exploration of organic structure and order".

Derek Wilson's constructivist inspired vessels: Derek states that his "search for simplicity of form draws inspiration through a diverse range of sources from mid-century British Constructivism to the history of the ceramic industry in Europe and Asia".

Kiho Kang's precision-coiled, superbly balanced vessels: These show all the finger marks of application. As Kiho Kang states: "I make ceramics with my hands. They are beautiful and have humanity".

Nicola Theakston's coiled, modelled and slab built constructions of animal sculptures focussing on primates: Nicola believes that "the notion that an individual creature may experience some otherness or spiritual dimension beyond our understanding of its instinctive animal behaviours is the premise behind much of my work".

Anna Lambert's landscape inspired vessels hand built in earthenware clay: Anna combines "drawing with abstract qualities of pots, their spaces, edges and surfaces, exploring narratives relating to moors, woodlands and floodplains".

Seewon Min's slip cast forms: It was fascinating to speak to her about this. She uses a balloon filled with plaster that she manipulates before the plaster sets. These forms are then used in the construction of a piece to be moulded. "My work has always been about the manifestation of aesthetic line. I use the technique of slip casting because the line which the plaster mould employs is more delicate and sophisticated than other techniques".

Henry Pimm's monumental forms: These are built using grids or extruded paper rods which are then assembled. This larger than life character had a never ending audience discussing his work with him.

Ashley Howard: "has always been fascinated by ritual and ritualistic vessels, and has maintained a dialogue between Far-Eastern and homespun ceramic traditions which address his fascination with ceremony".

It was an intense three days and by Sunday some exhibitors were struggling, not surprisingly, to maintain enthusiasm. On the whole though, I think it is such a stimulating environment that this went a long way to creating a vibrant and inspiring space that made it possible for the ceramic artists to last the distance.

Lynnley Watson is a sculptor and vessel maker working in porcelain. She is a Fellow of Ceramics Southern Africa and works from her studio in Port Elizabeth.



Clockwise from the top:
Nicola Theakson,
Anna Lambert,
Seewon Min,
Henry Pimm, and
Ashley Howard

CERAMIC TILES

- Madeleine Henning

STEP 3 a



STEP 3 b



STEP 4



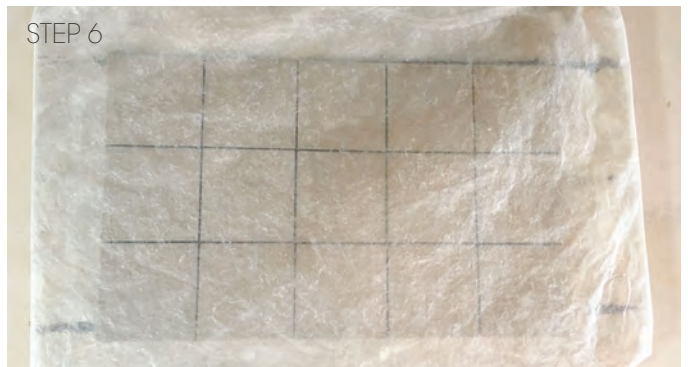
STEP 5



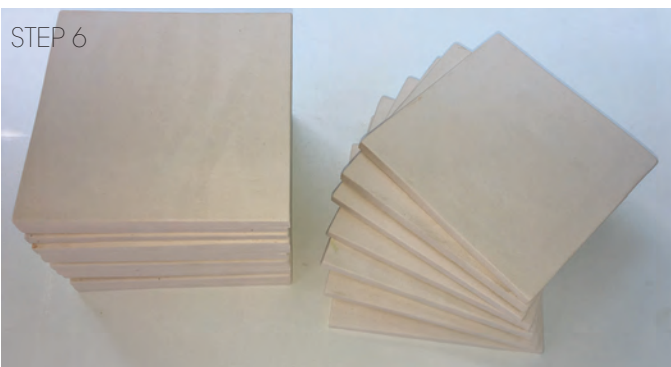
STEP 5



STEP 6



STEP 6





The use of ceramic tiles for building decoration goes back hundreds of years. There is nothing like a beautiful tile panel to personalize your living space. When well-made, your ceramic tiles can be used to decorate walls and backsplashes in kitchens and bathrooms, cornices, garden features or assembled as individual art pieces.

This article aims to teach you how to create perfectly straight, flat and thin tiles by using pottery slabs. Perfect tiles require planning beforehand.

Planning phase:

Step 1: Understand the shrinkage percentage of your clay body

The most important step in creating tiles to fit into a specific space is to know the shrinkage percentage of your clay body. Use these helpful steps to determine shrinkage:

Roll out a 12cm slab. Immediately draw a straight line of exactly 10cm in the wet clay using a scalpel/hobby knife and ruler.

Measure the line to the millimetre after each of the following stages: bone dry, bisque fired and glaze fired.

Example:

- If the line is 9.6cm when bone dry: $10\text{cm} / 9.6\text{cm} = 1.04$ (4% shrinkage from wet clay to bone dry).
- No significant shrinkage between bone dry and bisque.
- If the line is 8.85cm after glaze firing: $10\text{cm} / 8.85\text{cm} = 1.13$ (13% total shrinkage from wet clay to glazed).

We work with 13% shrinkage from wet clay to glaze fired, using PSMO's "m-fine" stoneware clay.

Step 2: Calculate your tile size and amount

- Measure the exact space available for your tiles (example: 100cm x 100cm).
- Decide on your finished tile size and thickness (example: 10cm x 10cm tiles, 1cm thick).
- Calculate the number of tiles needed (example: 10 x 10 tiles – 100 tiles).
- Calculate tile size you will use when cutting tiles during wet clay stage (10cm x 1.13 – 11.3cm x 11.3cm, 1.13cm thick).

Tip: Keep the grout between tiles in mind. Take grout space into account if you want wide spacing.

Action phase

Step 3: Prepare your slabs

• Roll out your slab on a canvas sheet and flip onto a smooth fibre cement board. Do not pick up the slab because the flat clay structure may stretch and lead to your tiles warping in the kiln. (Imprint patterns or texturize at this stage if required.)

• Cover with 4 layers of newspaper, another board and a weight. Stack up to 3 boards on top of each other if necessary.

Tip: If you don't have a fibre cement board, use a wooden board and 6 layers of newspaper.

Step 4: Cut your tiles in wet clay stage

• Test to see if your slab is firm enough by cutting a small cross into the side. If the corners pull downward then the clay is still too soft.

• Once firm measure out tile squares with a ruler and cut with a sharp knife. Cover with dry newspaper, board and a weight.

Tip: If your design allows for it, make a few extra tiles in the same height but smaller widths or vice versa. This offers a solution for when your panel comes out larger or smaller than the space available for it.

Step 5: Finish off in leather-hard stage

• Once the tile is firm enough to pick up without bending, smooth top and sides with a damp sponge. Transfer to dry board, cover with dry newspaper and the weight.

Step 6: Dry out your tiles

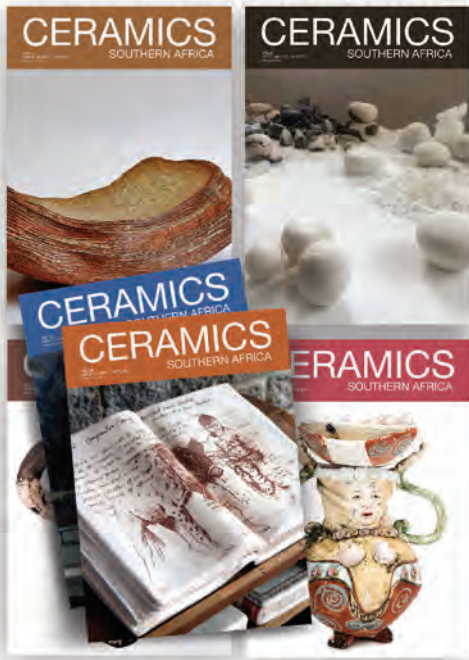
• Check your base board occasionally. If the surface is wet underneath the tiles, transfer to dry board and cover with a plastic sheet.

• When there is relatively little moisture beneath the tiles, remove the sheet.

• Tile edges may still warp during the drying stage. If you notice an edge just starting to turn upwards, turn the tile upside down. The moist clay body is drawn down towards the dry surface of the board and should straighten again if you catch it early.

• Once your tiles are bone dry, you can decorate with underglazes or bisque fire and glaze.

Important: Drying cannot be rushed if you want straight, flat tiles.



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A good friend retires this month from a long serving career as an accountant. I suggested she take a sabbatical in order to draw a line between what was, and what will be the start of something completely new ... I'm fresh from a three-month sabbatical myself, and from experience I can honestly say, that it's something we creatives should be doing as often as practically possible.

In the corporate world, there are many companies that embrace this 'healthy time out'... realising that key leaders within their organisations come back invigorated and recharged to take their business to higher levels. Universities, too, embrace the idea of a sabbatical, and often offer a sabbatical of six months in every 3 years of lecturing. This is not to be confused with simply going on holiday... which a sabbatical isn't... in essence.

As an artist, a sabbatical, in my opinion, should be seen as a time to completely recharge and kick-start a fresh creativity within you. It's a time of gaining a new skill set. A time of reconnecting with your inner voice, educating yourself, stretching possibilities through experimentation without the pressure of producing anything of significant worth. It is really an allowed play time... and boy is it beneficial to your art.

Austrian designer Stefan Sagmeister of Sagmeister & Walsh, a New York based Communication Design Firm has created some of the world's most iconic imagery in branding, graphics and packaging for clients as diverse as the Guggenheim museum and Lou Reed. I recently watched a TED TALK titled 'The Power of Time off' where Sagmeister explains how his company closes down for one year out of every seven! This twelve-month sabbatical allows Sagmeister to think without pressure, get lost in a project, travel to new places and ultimately do more of the things he likes to do and less of the things he does not. It's a concept that has given rise to some of the best work in his industry and freed Sagmeister up to wholeheartedly enjoy his artistic career.

For me, happiness in my chosen career is something I aspire to daily. I want to feel fulfilled after a productive day in the studio. Being a commercial ceramic artist and dependent on the income, I need to find a healthy balance between making work that is authentically true to me with something that someone will pay money to own. So, keeping motivated and inspired is important to me and my work.

After selling part of our Art Business in late 2018, I was faced with a blank canvas of 'starting over' - the gift of being able to step back into the shoes of simply being an artist again. But instead of throwing open the studio doors, I froze! Completely overwhelmed by the prospect of failure and having had disappointing results with changing over to a commercial clay body, I had fallen completely and utterly out of love with clay. My medium of choice. To be honest, I was burnt out, so I panicked! Then I surrendered... and reminded myself that it would be completely OK to take a few months off - to try something new: to retrain myself creatively: to travel: to de-clutter and recreate my studio space. In other words, to rediscover what it is that makes me excited about creating art, to find a 'voice' that felt real to me... and to rekindle the love I had for clay.

Stephen Covey in his 'Seven habits of highly effective people' talks about 'Sharpening the Saw' and it has always stuck with me. To be effective one must occasionally stop what one is doing and replenish: mind, body, spirit.

So it is that I took to sharpening my saw. I started to draw every morning... observing an almost emotive connection between eye and hand with my ink pen scribbles of mark making. I took a free online course in painting and through it learnt how I respond to colour. I've paged slowly through volumes of folio books absorbing perspective in architecture, human anatomy, the Renaissance painters and the brilliance of Leonardo da Vinci, without any guilt. I've indulged in hilarious play time with my cat, Mrs Wallis and researched techniques in lino cut and print making. In these two months of indulgent, necessary 'time out' I've fallen back in love with this gift of being an artist and rekindled an affinity for making in clay. It's been worth every penny I invested in it and a great start to my new chapter. Perhaps reading this, it may inspire you to consider planning a sabbatical of your own and rewarding your years of creative hard work with something really meaningful.

Trayci Tompkins works from her home studio in the KZN Midlands and is passionate about telling stories through the medium of clay, drinking tea in London and travelling to places that make her happy and inspired.

... FROM THE
PONDERING CREATIVE

THE SABBATICAL- GIVING YOURSELF TIME OUT



In '97 she founded the ZULU LULU brand (now sold) and the now iconic 'The Dlamini' range of collectable clay figurines. Connect with Trayci via her website or Instagram pages www.traycitompkins.co.za where she shares her #creativelife.

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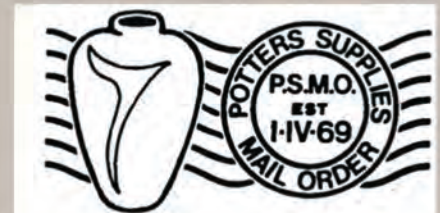
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