

smac



SHAPING THINGS

An exploration of clay and ceramics in contemporary South African art practice

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Text by Malibongwe Tyilo

SMAC Gallery is pleased to present *Shaping Things*, a group exhibition that explores the developing status of clay and ceramics in contemporary South African art.

Unsurprisingly, the relationship between clay and creation is one of the oldest relationships between material and the imagination. With the earliest known examples of the use of clay in ceremonial figurines dating back to 24 000 B.C., various cultures and societies have, over millennia, reached to what is perhaps the most accessible material, at first for functional reasons, and later, added the element of decoration and creative expression. Within the South African context, clay is perhaps most closely associated with traditional pottery, as demonstrated by the variety of vessels across different cultures.

Other than for its functional purposes, the use of clay, especially in pottery, has long been perceived as a merely crafty pastime, far less cerebral than other mediums, like painting for example. However, much of the 20th century's exploration of clay and ceramic art has resulted in steadily changing perceptions of the value of the medium.

While there is no denying that material itself informs the form and content of an artwork, the current exploration of how clay can be used to explore contemporary subject matter is a reminder that long-held views of a material's role in artistic practice may perhaps no longer be as relevant. How the material informs the end result has far more to do with the practitioner's imagination and intention, than the perceived limitation of the material.

A look at some of the work that came out of South Africa in the latter half of the 20th century presents a far more nuanced conversation about the place of clay in art. Be it the delicate and eclectic balance in the work of Fée Halsted's Ardmore studio; the adherence to traditional form of Nesta Nala's pots, or the far more decorative and consumable vessels from Louise Gelderblom's studio. Ardmore studio is an especially remarkable reminder of the way in which ceramic practice can incorporate other disciplines such as sculpture and painting.

In contemporary 21st century exploration of clay, previous ceramic form and context moves further into the background, as artists use clay as another tool in their arsenal to explore subjects relevant to contemporary society. Take for example Ben Orkin's glazed symmetrical silhouettes that explore the intimacy and tensions of queer relationships. At a distance, the unfamiliar shapes might resemble the vessels of old, but a closer look reveal them to stand out on their own, as new shapes.

Jewellery designer Githan Coopo explores clay as adornment. His 2018 Byzantine collection looks to Greek mythology, ancient Egypt, varied religious iconography and found objects to sculpt ceramic earrings, intended for wearing rather than display. Besides the end use, what then separates his contemporary interpretation of the medium from works whose primary intention is to be displayed and contemplated as art pieces?

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Zizipho Poswa's work on the other hand seems to straddle the space between the traditional and the contemporary. The shapes are reminiscent of familiar older vessels. In her work, she pays tribute to the women she grew up around, whose heads literally carried loads, sometimes actual vessels. In her work, their heads and hairstyles as well as the loads they carry are explored anew, in clay, as ceramics artworks themselves.

In Marlene Steyn's work, we see a much more organic approach; although the work is largely directed by the artist's intention, the materiality of clay itself plays a huge role in the final result because of the way she works with it, while it is still wet, allowing for gravity and the instability of clay to inform the final shape.

Beyond the obviously sculptural expression of clay, artists like Simphiwe Buthelezi who bring clay into what would otherwise be more traditional flat surfaces, present a breakaway moment from what we would consider the traditional role of clay in art.

As ceramic art practice continues to take shape in contemporary practice, the diversity of output is a reminder that the story of clay's role in creation, even as old as it is, is far from defined, as contemporary art practitioners add new chapters and appreciation for the very soil that sustains us.

Participating Artists:

Ben Orkin
Belinda Blignaut
Carine Terreblanche
Colijn Strydom
Esias Bosch
Eva Shuman
Frances Goodman
Gabrielle Kruger
Geena Wilkinson
Georgina Gratrix
Githan Coopoo
Gretchen Crots
Hylton Nel
Jeanne Hoffman
Jo Roets
Johann Louw
Kamyar Bineshtarigh

Karlien de Villiers
Karlien van Rooyen
Kathy Robins
Katharien de Villiers
Ledelle Moe
Marlene Steyn, Abraham Kritzman &
Angels Miralda Tena
Martine Jackson
Michael Taylor
Moshe Sello & Mthulisi Ncube (Ardmore)
Pierre le Riche
Simphiwe Buthelezi
Somandla Ntshalintshali &
Siyabonga Mabaso (Ardmore)
Stephané Conradie
Zizipho Poswa

BEN ORKIN

b. 1998, South Africa.

Lives and works in Cape Town,
South Africa.



Ben Orkin

*I need a break from love because I keep
seeing how easily it keeps on breaking*
2019

Glazed Ceramic
21 x 65 x 44 cm

BEN ORKIN



Ben Orkin
Don't worry about changing things that can't be changed
2020
Glazed Ceramic
68 x 34 x 34 cm



BELINDA BLIGNAUT

b. 1968, Humansdorp, South Africa.
Lives and works in Cape Town,
South Africa.



Belinda Blignaut
The Call From Things (1 to 8)
2020
Found and Fired Organic Matter and Clay
Dimensions Variable



Belinda Blignaut
The Call From Things (Detail)
2020

CARINE TERREBLANCHE

b. Cape Town, South Africa.
Lives and works in Cape Town,
South Africa.



Carine Terreblanche
Memory Loves Time
2020
Stoneware Clay
14.5 x 23 x 5.2 cm



Carine Terreblanche
A Monument to Memory
2020
Stoneware Clay
22.3 x 14.3 x 8 cm

CARINE TERREBLANCHE



Carine Terreblanche
Love is a Sickness Cured by Time
2019
Stoneware Clay and Enamel Paint
12.5 x 13 x 6 cm



Carine Terreblanche
One Monumental Moment in Time
2020
Stoneware Clay
15 x 10.8 x 5 cm

CARINE TERREBLANCHE



Carine Terreblanche
You Can't Heal Under a Mask I
 2020
 Porcelain, Wood, Resin and Silver
 Brooch
 4.5 x 5.5 x 1.4 cm



Carine Terreblanche
You Can't Heal Under a Mask II
 2020
 Porcelain, Wood, Plastic and Silver
 Brooch
 4.3 x 5.3 x 2 cm



Carine Terreblanche
You Can't Heal Under a Mask III
 2020
 Porcelain, Perspex, Silver and Plastic
 Brooch
 4.2 x 5.2 x 1.8 cm



Carine Terreblanche
You Can't Heal Under a Mask IV
 2020
 Silver and Porcelain
 Brooch
 5.6 x 7.7 x 1 cm



Carine Terreblanche
You Can't Heal Under a Mask V
 2020
 Wood, Resin and Silver
 Brooch
 7 x 4.5 x 2.1 cm



Carine Terreblanche
You Can't Heal Under a Mask VI
 2020
 Porcelain, Silver and Cotton
 Pendant
 4.7 x 4.3 x 1.8 cm



COLIJN STRYDOM

b. 1979, Pretoria, South Africa.
Lives and works in Cape Town,
South Africa.

Colijn Strydom

A history of a breath
2020

Glazed Ceramic Stoneware
Dimensions Variable



COLIJN STRYDOM



Colijn Strydom
A history of a breath
2020
Glazed Ceramic Stoneware
6 x 13 x 6 cm



Colijn Strydom
A history of a breath
2020
Glazed Ceramic Stoneware
Dimensions Variable

ESIAS BOSCH

b. 1923, Winburg, South Africa.

d. 2010, White River, South Africa.



Esias Bosch

Untitled I

n.d.

Hand Painted Ceramic Tile with Luster Glaze

44.5 x 35 cm

ESIAS BOSCH



Esias Bosch
Untitled II
n.d.
Hand Painted Ceramic Tile with Luster Glaze
43 x 43.5 cm



Esias Bosch
Untitled III
n.d.
Hand Painted Ceramic Tile with Luster Glaze
43.5 x 43 cm

EVA SHUMAN

b. 1989, Cape Town, South Africa.
Lives and works in Cape Town,
South Africa.



Eva Shuman
Boomslang Glam
2020
Glazed Earthenware
49 x 22 x 22 cm



Eva Shuman
Lord Sword
2020
Glazed Earthenware
47 x 23 x 25 cm

EVA SHUMAN



Eva Shuman
Jannes' comeback
2020
Glazed Earthenware
45 x 26 x 21 cm



Eva Shuman
My small, small house
2020
Glazed Earthenware
42 x 21 x 17 cm

FRANCES GOODMAN

b. 1975, Johannesburg, South Africa.
Lives and works in Johannesburg,
South Africa.



Frances Goodman
Biting Lips Red I
2019
Glazed Ceramic
40 x 26 x 4 cm

FRANCES GOODMAN



Frances Goodman
Red Tongue
2019
Glazed Ceramic
50 x 37 x 8 cm



Frances Goodman
Icecream Tongue II
2019
Glazed Ceramic
50 x 37 x 8 cm

GABRIELLE KRUGER

b. 1993, Cape Town, South Africa.
Lives and works in Cape Town,
South Africa.



Gabrielle Kruger

Cemented

2019

Paint Cement and Acrylic Paint Strips

52 x 34 x 35 cm

GABRIELLE KRUGER



Gabrielle Kruger

Extruded

2019

Paint Cement and Acrylic Paint Strips

50 x 35 x 20 cm



Shaping Things | 2020 | Installation View

GEORGINA GRATRIX

b. 1982, Mexico City, Mexico.
Lives and works in Cape Town,
South Africa.



Georgina Gratrix
Yellow Dog
2020
Oil on Ceramic
23 x 11.5 x 16 cm



Georgina Gratrix
Red Dog
2020
Oil on Ceramic
17 x 10 x 7.5 cm

GEENA WILKINSON

b. 1994, Cape Town, South Africa.
Lives and works in Cape Town,
South Africa.



Geena Wilkinson
Untitled (Biscuits) IV
2020
Ceramic
58 x 58 cm

GEENA WILKINSON



Geena Wilkinson
Spill
2019
Resin
29 x 32.5 x 3 cm
ED 1/6 + 2AP

GITHAN COOPOO

b. 1994, Cape Town, South Africa.
Lives and works in Cape Town,
South Africa.

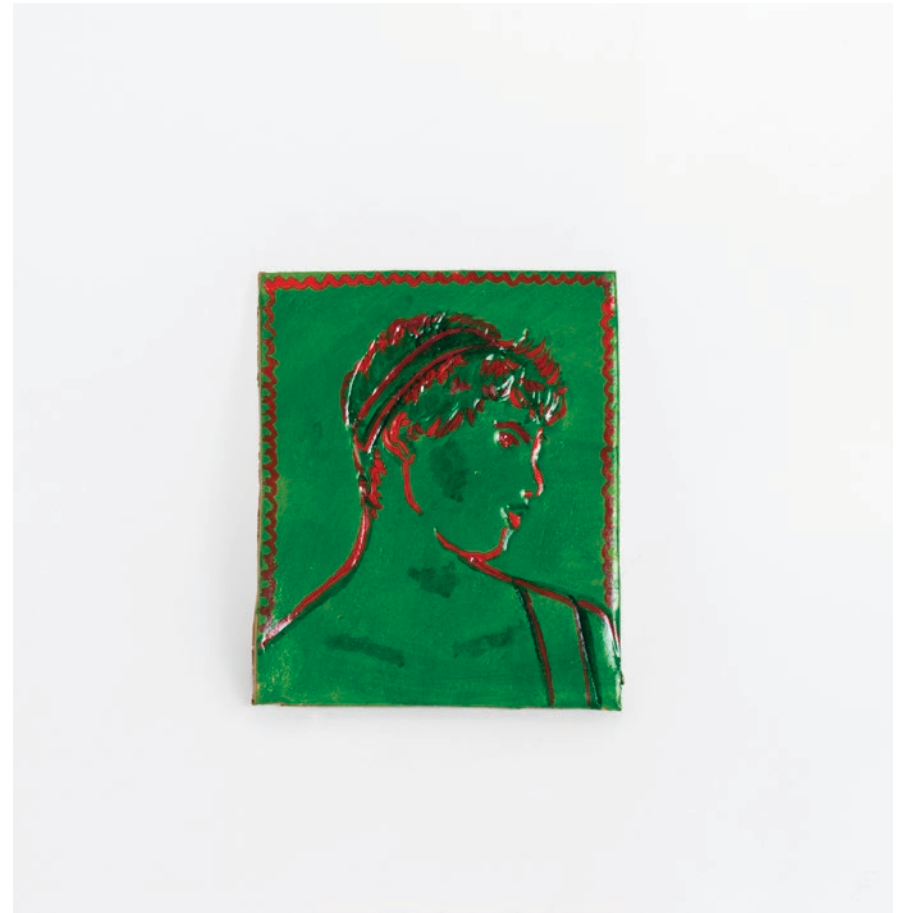


Githan Coopoo
We're all so gay
2020
Clay and Acrylic Paint
36 x 29 cm

GITHAN COOPOO



Githan Coopoo
*Jockstrap Ashtray (my father thinks my work looks
too much like Hyltons)*
2020
Clay and Acrylic Paint
14 x 11 x 5 cm



Githan Coopoo
Coaster (Green Greek Boy)
2020
Clay and Acrylic Paint
9.5 x 8 x 0.5 cm



GRETCHEN CROTS

b. 1995, Kroonstad, South Africa.

Lives and works in Parys, South Africa.



Gretchen Crots

Jan se blues

2020

Electric Fired Earthenware and Found Object

18 x 35 x 16 cm



Gretchen Crots

Die Boerpot

2020

Electric Fired Earthenware and Wire

23 x 24 x 9 cm

GRETCHEN CROTS



Gretchen Crots

Bloubok Ode
2020

Electric Fired Earthenware
7 x 25 x 21 cm



Gretchen Crots

Jan & Maria by the bedside
2020

Electric Fired Earthenware, Ceramic Tiles and Wooden Frame
24 x 20 x 1 cm

HYLTON NEL

b. 1941, Zambia.

Lives and works in Calitzdorp,
South Africa.



Hylton Nel
Dog on stump
2019
Glazed Ceramic Stoneware
45 x 20 cm

JEANNE HOFFMAN

b. 1978, Cape Town, South Africa.
Lives and works in Cape Town,
South Africa.



Jeanne Hoffman
Resisting change
2020
Stoneware
31 x 27 x 26 cm

JEANNE HOFFMAN



Jeanne Hoffman
Shipwrecked cargoes 1
2020
Stoneware and Porcelain
30 x 23 x 24 cm



Jeanne Hoffman
Shipwrecked cargoes 2
2020
Stoneware & Porcelain
27 x 27 x 22 cm

JEANNE HOFFMAN



Jeanne Hoffman
Shipwrecked cargoes 3
2020
Stoneware and Porcelain
35 x 15 x 12 cm



Jeanne Hoffman
Calypso
2020
Terra-cotta and Porcelain
27 x 28 x 23 cm



JO ROETS

b. 1979, Cape Town, South Africa.
Lives and works in Cape Town,
South Africa.



Jo Roets
Acolchoado
2020
Air-Drying Clay
35.5 x 41 x 3.5 cm



Jo Roets
Variação
2020
Air-Drying Clay
35.5 x 41 x 3.5 cm

JO ROETS



Jo Roets
Transição #1
2020
Air-Drying Clay
46.5 x 35 x 3.5 cm



Jo Roets
Transição #2
2020
Air-Drying Clay
46.5 x 35 x 3.5 cm

JOHANN LOUW

b. 1965, Belville, South Africa.
Lives and works in Cape Town,
South Africa.



Johann Louw
Tannie Sarie op Vanzijlsplaas
2019
Kiln Fired Clay & Ash
80 x 40 x 31 cm

KAMYAR BINESHTARIGH

b. 1996, Semnan, Iran.

Lives and works in Cape Town,
South Africa.



Kamyar Bineshtarigh

Tasbih (Homage to Zarina)

2020

Low Fired Red Earthenware Clay and Cotton

120 x 10 x 6 cm

KARLIEN DE VILLIERS

b. 1975, Cape Town, South Africa.
Lives and works in Cape Town,
South Africa.



Karlien de Villiers

Rainbow Flops

2020

Ceramic Clay, Underglaze and Glaze
12.5 x 25.5 x 8.5 cm and 9 x 26 x 13 cm

KARLIEN VAN ROOYEN

b. 1991, Cape Town, South Africa.
Lives and works in Cape Town,
South Africa.



Karlien van Rooyen
aITAR Father
2020
Buff Stoneware and Manganese Glaze
67 x 11 x 11 cm



Karlien van Rooyen
Chappie Shark
2020
Buff Stoneware and Manganese
68.5 x 17 x 15 cm



Karlien van Rooyen
Petrol Whistle
2020
Nude Manganese Stoneware
64.5 x 10 x 10 cm

KARLIEN VAN ROOYEN



Karlién van Rooyen
Chappie Spear
2020
Buff Stoneware and Manganese
67.5 x 17 x 15 cm



Karlién van Rooyen
altAR Mother
2020
Buff Stoneware and Manganese Glaze
62 x 18 x 13.5 cm



Karlién van Rooyen
Cobra Pyre
2020
Buff Stoneware
63 x 16 x 11 cm



Karlien van Rooyen
Chappie Spear (Detail)
2020

KARLIEN VAN ROOYEN



Karlién van Rooyen
Centipede Pyre
2020
Buff Stoneware and Manganese
71 x 13 x 13 cm



Karlién van Rooyen
Chappie Um
2020
Buff Stoneware and Manganese
25 x 18 x 18 cm



Karlién van Rooyen
alTAR With Child
2020
Buff Stoneware and Manganese Glaze
64 x 13 x 13 cm



Karlién van Rooyen
Petrol Trumpet
2020
Nude Manganese Stoneware
66.6 x 15 x 15 cm

KATHARIEN DE VILLIERS

b. 1991, Cape Town, South Africa.
Lives and works in Cape Town,
South Africa.



Katharien de Villiers

Calling All Gods

2020

Polyurethane, Enamel, Found Objects and Clay

150 x 150 cm

KATHY ROBINS

b. 1959, Johannesburg, South Africa.
Lives and works in Cape Town,
South Africa.



Kathy Robins
Elements
2020
Mixed Media
Dimensions Variable

LEDELLE MOE

b. 1971, Durban, South Africa.
Lives and works in Cape Town,
South Africa.



Ledelle Moe
Drift
2020
Clay and Concrete
Dimensions Variable

MARLENE STEYN, ABRAHAM KRITZMAN & ANGELS MIRALDA TENA



**Marlene Steyn, Abraham Kritzman &
Angels Miralda Tena**
Vertigo: where to go (Leo)
2018
Painted Ceramic
170 x 22 x 20 cm

MARLENE STEYN, ABRAHAM KRITZMAN & ANGELS MIRALDA TENA



**Marlene Steyn, Abraham Kritzman &
Angels Miralda Tena**
Vertigo: where to go (ego)
2018
Painted Ceramic
210 x 27 x 26 cm



**Marlene Steyn, Abraham Kritzman &
Angels Miralda Tena**
Vertigo: where to go (falco)
2018
Painted Ceramic
126 x 24 x 25 cm



Shaping Things | 2020 | Installation View

MARTINE JACKSON

b. 1979, Cape Town, South Africa.

Lives and works in Cape Town,
South Africa.



Martine Jackson
Liminal Dance III
2020
Terracotta Clay
75 x 40 x 18 cm

MARTINE JACKSON



Martine Jackson
Liminal Dance II
2020
Terracotta Clay
78 x 38 x 40 cm



Martine Jackson
Liminal Dance I
2020
Terracotta Clay
75 x 40 x 18 cm

MICHAEL TAYLOR

b. 1979, Cape Town, South Africa.
Lives and works in Cape Town,
South Africa.



Michael Taylor
Pals
2016
Ceramic
35 x 35 x 4 cm

MOSHE SELLO & MTHULISI NCUBE



Moshe Sello & Mthulisi Ncube (Ardmore)
Baboon & Aloe Vessel
2018

Earthenware Clay, Underglaze Paints and Glaze
60 x 36 x 24 cm



Moshe Sello & Mthulisi Ncube (Ardmore)
Baboon & Aloe Vessel (Detail)
2018

PIERRE LE RICHE

b. 1986, Port Elizabeth, South Africa.
Lives and works in Cape Town,
South Africa.



Pierre Le Riche
Study for a chain reaction
2020
Porcelain Collage
75 x 120 cm

SIMPHIWE BUTHELEZI

b. 1996, Benoni, South Africa.
Lives and works in Johannesburg,
South Africa.



Simphiwe Buthelezi

The Bewilderment of Time

2020

Earth, Oxide, Wool and Gilded Frame

65 x 53 x 3 cm



SOMANDLA NTSHALINTSHALI & SIYABONGA MABASO



Somandla Ntshalintshali & Siyabonga Mabaso (Ardmore)

Elephant 'Sabie Dance'

2020

Earthenware Clay, Underglaze Paints and Glaze

66 x 40 x 20 cm

STEPHANÉ CONRADIE

b. 1990, Windhoek, Namibia.
Lives and works in Stellenbosch,
South Africa.



Stephané Conradie
Ouma sê jy moet daai swaan brasso
2020
Mixed Media Relief Sculpture with Clay Swan,
Oil and Enamel Painting on Board
88 x 31 x 16 cm



Stephané Conradie
Ouma sê jy moet daai swaan brasso (Detail)
2020

ZIZIPHO POSWA

b. 1979, Umtata, South Africa.
Lives and works in Cape Town,
South Africa.



Zizipho Poswa
Nozibhedlele
2020
Glazed Stoneware Clay
117 x 80 x 80 cm



Zizipo Poswa
Nozibhedlele (Detail)
2020



ZIZIPHO POSWA



Zizipho Poswa
Noxolo
2020
Glazed Stoneware Clay
116 x 80 x 80 cm



Shaping Things | 2020 | Installation View

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please contact SMAC Gallery for more information regarding the availability of the works included in this portfolio, or for any other queries.

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