



MELISSA BARKER CERAMICS 2025



CONTENT

- Artist **Biography**
- Artist **Statement**
- Artwork **Description** and **Photos**
- Artist **Contact details**





ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Melissa Barker is an established ceramics artist, a qualified French chef and Archaeologist, based in Cape Town, South Africa. She has a Master's of Arts degree (Cum Laude) in Archaeology focusing on ancient food and ceramics.

As Olivia Barrel so eloquently puts it: *“Barker pays homage to a collective material past and draws it into dialogue with unknowable future. In hand-marbled porcelain, recreated ancient cooking pots and nest-like vessels, we are reminded that our personal, particular timelines are bound up and convergent in the ancient shared one. Her practice frequently draws two or more of these elements together – with specific emphasis on the archaeological as both method and metaphor for making new ceramic work”* (Clay forms, October 2023)

In November 2024, her vessel Dissilience was chosen for the first ever Clay Awards. This event was organized by the Rust and Vrede Gallery and the International Academy of Ceramics (IAC) and curated by Hennie Meyer.

In February 2024, she participated in a four-week ceramic residency with Polish artist Monica Patuszynska. This residency resulted in conceptualizing a whole new body of work. This residency led to the creation of Dissilience.

In April 2023, she exhibited her first solo exhibition at Eclectica Contemporary (Cape Town) entitled ‘Mud’.

In November 2022, she participated in the annual ASOR Convention (American Society of Overseas Research), where she presented her chapter on experimental archeology, based on her dissertation and experimental work carried out during her residency ‘Nuhutimmu’, from August to September 2020 at Imiso studios of Andile Dyalvane and Zizipo Poswa.





ARTIST STATEMENT

I am an artist and archaeologist by heart and trade. Archaeology inspired my venture into clay, but it took awhile for the two to settle in together, in myself. I excavated many years and the joy of finding pottery artifacts created thousands of years ago in strata of soil, has formed the basis of my work. Layers of thin porcelain coils or thick raw mud glazes reflect this. When we excavate the artifact, it is caked in ancient mud and only after washing the pottery, the real beauty and meaning are revealed. Only then, do you really see the artist beneath all the layers. Archaeology is destruction. But to accumulate new knowledge, you have to dig deeper. Being an artist is the same, we also must “dig” deep within ourselves, to understand that, which is around us.

My conceptual work is deeply embedded in the vessel as a metaphor for home. Be that the external home such as nests or hives but also the body of a person as a vessel of home, inside ourselves. And how this search within us, is also a destruction of sorts, of self, to go deeper and I feel this is reflected to us in the external, as a search for a place to belong. When an artifact is created in ancient times, the use is only known to the maker, this is also true for the place/landscape it was created in. In the event of destruction, the artifact and place/landscape are covered in layers of earth for hundreds of years. The only time that an artifact, and the integrity of the place, and it's true purpose stay intact, is when it remains unexcavated. But after excavation, the artifacts use is now shaped and imagined by the archaeologist. The interior landscape of the scholar interacts with the artifact and the exterior landscape in which it is found. Which in turn, gives new meaning to the object and place. I feel that Art and the Artists role is similar.

ARTWORK
DESCRIPTION and
PHOTOS

Dissilience (noun)/ the emergence of seeds as seed pods burst open when the pods are ripe.

This metaphorical seed pod is reminiscent of how one puts oneself together after a huge break. What was once the perfect mould of your life, is smashed and altered by a traumatic event, and what is left, is just pieces of a beautiful but broken past. Reconstructing these broken pieces, forces you to look at aspects of yourself and carve away at what is no longer needed. This process forces you to emerge anew and, in a sense, explode like a ripe seed pod into your new life.

(H) 26 CM X (W) 30 CM



MELISSA BARKER CERAMICS
MB







EMAIL: melissa.barker.ceramics@gmail.com

www.melissabarkerceramics.com

CELL: 0829481312

ADDRESS:
2A Garden drive,
Bloubergstrand.
Cape Town

