A CONTEXTUAL HISTORY OF SOUTH AFRICAN CERAMICS OF THE TWENTIETH AND TWENTY-FIRST CENTURIES

by

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DECLARATION

I declare that **A contextual history of South African ceramics of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I submitted the thesis to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher educational institution.

Ronald Watt

August 2020

SUMMARY

Title:

A contextual history of South African ceramics of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries

Summary:

The history of South African ceramics of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries tends to be presented in a compartmentalised manner in that it focuses on the leading exponents within genres and is limited to an investigation of the contexts that have an immediate bearing on their oeuvres. The result is a fragmented (and sometimes biased) view of the role players, circumstances, influences and incentives that have come to define South African ceramics.

The thesis introduces key contributors who have hitherto been considered in relation to crafts and fine art but whose work with ceramic materials places them firmly within the ambit of South African ceramics. It also positions and evaluates the roles of the formal and informal twentieth-century educational and training agencies that, within the constraints of imposed political dogma, produced ceramists who successfully challenged staid Western aesthetics. Particular attention is given to how the black "traditional potters" exercised agency in negotiating a contemporary (as opposed to an ethnographic) presence in which they referenced the forms, meanings and values of "traditional pottery" to meet the expectations of the collector's market.

The thesis posits that the ceramists' quest to claim an identity (or an "indigeneity") in the turbulent political era of the later twentieth century has parallels with the intent and outcomes of African Modernism. African Modernism, which arose in postcolonial countries, sought to challenge Western binaries of art, craft, identity and presence and typically made use of hybridity to that end. The same presence of hybridity is evident in twentieth-century South African ceramics, which must be read as an engagement with a multi-cultural

society within which the ceramists sought to position themselves. The thesis illustrates the progression of hybrid features from an initially crude and superficial referencing of indigenous and African material culture to subjective translations of that culture that are presented in innovative approaches. This theme is further explored in relation to South African ceramics of the twenty-first century, and evidence suggests that some of the ceramists' oeuvres can now be considered transcultural and even transnational.

The thesis, which is by its nature an enquiry that presents new or reassessed evidence, is neither a fully inclusive nor an absolutist revision of the history of ceramics.

List of key terms:

South Africa; Contextual history; Ceramics; Tradition; Identity; Indigeneity; Hybridity; Multi-culturalism; African Modernism; Entangled narratives.

OPSOMMING

Titel:

'n Kontekstuele geskiedenis van Suid-Afrikaanse keramiekkuns van die twintigste en een-en-twintigste eeu

Opsomming:

Die geskiedenis van Suid-Afrikaanse keramiekkuns van die twintigste en een-en-twintigste eeu is geneig om op 'n onderverdeelde wyse voorgehou te word, omdat dit op die hoofeksponente in genres fokus en beperk is tot 'n ondersoek na die kontekste wat 'n direkte uitwerking op hul oeuvres het. Die resultaat is 'n gefragmenteerde (en soms bevooroordeelde) beskouing van die rolspelers, omstandighede, invloede en aansporings wat Suid-Afrikaanse keramiekkuns definieer.

Die tesis stel sleutelbydraers bekend wat tot dusver met handwerk en beeldende kuns verbind is, maar wie se werk met keramiekmateriale hulle sonder twyfel binne die sfeer van Suid-Afrikaanse keramiekkuns plaas. Daarbenewens posisioneer en evalueer die tesis die rolle van die formele en informele twintigste-eeuse opvoeding- en opleidingsagentskappe wat, binne die beperkings van voorgeskrewe politieke dogma, keramiste opgelewer het wat oninspirerende Westerse estetika suksesvol betwis het. Aandag word veral geskenk aan hoe die swart "tradisionele pottebakkers" bemiddeling uitgeoefen het in die verwesenliking van 'n kontemporêre (teenoor 'n etnografiese) teenwoordigheid waarin hulle verwys het na die vorme, betekenisse en waardes van "tradisionele pottebakkery" om aan die verwagtinge van die versamelaarsmark te voldoen.

Die tesis voer aan dat daar parallelle bestaan tussen die keramis se soeke om op 'n (inheemse) identiteit te kan aanspraak maak in die onstuimige politieke era van die latere twintigste eeu, en die oogmerke en uitkomste van Afrika-modernisme. Afrika-modernisme het in na-koloniale lande ontstaan en het beoog om Westerse binêre pare van kuns, handwerk, identiteit en teenwoordigheid te betwis; om

hierdie doel te bereik is hibridisme gewoonlik gebruik. Dieselfde teenwoordigheid van hibridisme kan gesien word in Suid-Afrikaanse keramiekkuns van die twintigste eeu, wat beskou moet word as ’n gemoeidheid met ’n multikulturele samelewing waarin die keramiste hulself probeer posisioneer. Die tesis illustreer die vooruitgang van hibriede eienskappe, van ’n aanvanklik onafgewerkte en oppervlakkige verwysing na inheemse en Afrika- materiële kultuur, na subjektiewe interpretasies van daardie kultuur wat in innoverende benaderings voorgehou word. Hierdie tema word verder ondersoek in verband met Suid-Afrikaanse keramiekkuns van die een-en-twintigste eeu, en bewyse dui daarop dat sommige van die keramiste se oeuvres nou as transkultureel en selfs as transnasionaal beskou kan word.

Die tesis, wat in wese ’n ondersoek is wat nuwe of hersiende bewyse voorhou, is nóg ’n ten volle inklusiewe nóg ’n absolutistiese hersiening van die geskiedenis van keramiekkuns.

Lys van sleutelterme:

Suid-Afrika; Kontekstuele geskiedenis; Keramiekkuns; Tradisie; Identiteit; Inheemse identiteit; Hibridisme; Multikulturalisme; Afrika-moderniteit; Vervlegte narratiewe.

NGAMAFUPHI

Isihloko:

Isizinda somlando weseramiki kwikhulu leminyaka lamashumi amabili kanye namashumi amabili nanye eNingizimu Afrika (*A contextual history of South African ceramics of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries)*

Ngamafuphi:

Umlando weseramiki yaseNingizimu Afrika kwikhulu leminyaka lamashumi amabili namashumi amabili nanye uvamise ukwethulwa ngendlela ehlukaniswe ngezigaba ngokuthi igxile phezu kwezingcweti ezihola phambili ngaphakathi komkhakha wezinhlobo kanti lokhu kugxile kuphela kuphenyo lwezizinda ezinomthintela osheshayo phezu kwemisebenzi yonke yalezo zingcweti. Umphumela ukhombisa umbono owehlukene (kanti ngesinye isikhathi umbono owencike kwingxenye eyodwa) wabadlalindima, wezimo, wemithelela kanye neziphembeleli ezichaza iseramiki eNingizimu Afrika.

Ithesisi yethula abagaleli abasemqoka ukufika manje okudala benakiwe mayelana nemisebenzi yobuciko kanye nemisetshenzana yobuciko obuncane kodwa imisebenzi yayo yomatheriyali weseramiki ibabeka ngaphakathi komkhakha wezeseramiki eNingizimu Afrika. Lokhu kuphinde futhi kuhlole izindima zezinhlaka zemfundo nezoqeqesho ezihlelekile nezingahlelekile, lezo ngaphaklathi kwezihibhe zohlelo olumatasa lwepolitiki, lukhiqize osolwazi bezeseramiki abaphonsele inselele ngempumelelo osolwazi bezobuhle beNtshonalanga. Kugxilwe kakhulu kwindlela ababumbi bendabuko abamnyama "*traditional potters*" abasebenzisa ngayo ubummeli uma bexoxisana ukubonakala emsebenzini wesikhathi samanje (njengoba lokhu kuphambene ne-ethinigrafi) lapho baye bariferensa izindlela, izincazelo kanye nezinga lobugugu bobuciko bendabuko bokubumba ukufeza izinhloso ezilindelwe zemakethe yabaqoqi bomsebenzi wobuciko

Ithesisi iyasho ukuthi impokophelo yosolwazi bezeseramiki yokuzitholela uphawu

oluchaza ubunjalo babo (*or an "indigeneity*") esikhathini esibucayi sezepolitiki sekhulu leminyaka yamashumi amabili inezimpawu ezifanayo ngenhloso kanye nemiphumela yohlelo lwesimanjemanje sase-Afrika *African Modernism*. Uhlelo lwe-*African Modernism*, oluqhamuka kumazwe avele ngemuva kombuso wobukoloni, luphonsela inselele yezinhlelo zobuciko, yesithombe sobuciko kanye nobukhona bobuciko kanti ikakhulukazi bukhandwe ngobuciko bokuhlanganisa izinhlobo (*hybridity*) ezahlukile. Ubukhona bohlelo lokusebenzisa izinhlaka ezahlukile lwe-*hybridity* lubonakala kwimisebenzi yeseramiki yesenshuwari yamashumi amabili yaseNingizimu Afrika, okufanele ifundwe njengomsebenzi ohlanganiswe ndawonye nomphakathi wamasiko amaningi, kanti ngalo msebenzi ababumbi beseramiki bafuna ukuziphakamisa ngawo. Ithesisi ikhombisa intuthuko yezimpawu wumsebenzi oyingxubevange (hybrid) ovela kwindlela yokureferensa eluhlaza neyobuciko bamaqhinga bosiko lwendabuko lomatheriyeli wase-Afrika ukuphawula ngemisebenzi ehunyushiwe yalolo siko eyethulwe ngezindlela ezinamaqhinga amasha. Lesi sihloko siqhubekela phambili nokuhlolwa mayelana nohlelo lweseramiki eNingizimu Afrika kwisenshuwari yamashumi amabili, kanti ubufakazi buyasho ukuthi eminye imisebenzi yosolwazi bobuciko beseramiki ingathathwa njengemisebenzi ekhombisa ukushintsha amasiko kanye nokushintsha kwesizwe.

Ithesisi, ngokwemvelo yayo ingumbuzo owethula ubufakazi obusha noma ubufakazi obubuyekeziwe, le thesis ayiwona umsebenzi oxuba konke futhi ayikona ukubuyekezwa kwangempela komlando weseramiki.

Uhlu lwamagama asemqoka:

INingizimu Afrika, umlando wesizinda, oseramiki, indabuko, isithombe, izimpawu zendabuko, Ingxubevange/okuhlanganisiwe, uhlelo lwamasiko amaningi, Isimanjemanje sase-Afrika, izingxoxo eziboshiwe/eziguquliwe.

CONTENTS

PREFACE

This thesis does not aspire to present a comprehensive and revisioned history of the South African ceramics of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. It is, rather, intent on establishing that context is integral in theorising about South African ceramics. As a long-time collector of studio pottery and ceramics, it is my firm conviction that ceramic works are inseparable from the influences and circumstances leading up to or prevailing at the time of their creation. I sought to convey this in essays and articles published in the South African magazines *National Ceramics Quarterly* and *Ceramics Southern Africa*. My academic studies at the University of South Africa created opportunities to conduct in-depth research on the development of South African studio pottery and ceramics in the twentieth century with attention to both the maker and the made as narrators and narratives.

The research essay for my honours degree in Classical Studies, "Material Culture Artefacts as Entangled Narratives with Reference to Roman Pottery" (Watt, 2015), was my initial foray into the academic study of ceramics. In that essay, I explored the study of the artefact as material culture and, in particular, that the artefact embodies a narrative of itself, its time and its society. The essay reflected the debate that artefacts, when merely considered as archaeological objects, reveal little more than their cultural origin, typology, dating, materials, method of production, circulation and usage. I applied the alternative meta-methodology as advanced by the British archaeologist, Ian Hodder and his contemporary, Jeroen Poblome, from the University of Leuven, with which the artefact is "read" as having agency to generate and gain reciprocal meanings and values. When approached from that point of view, the artefact presents itself as an entangled narrative. This initial study influenced the research approach for my MA degree, "South African studio pottery of the later twentieth century and its Anglo-Oriental epithet" (Watt, 2016). The MA dissertation investigated twentieth-century South African studio pottery and, in particular, the assumed influence of the Anglo-Oriental tradition of studio pottery on its development. Utilitarian and decorative

wares dominated the output of the pioneer South African studio potters and their earliest successors who learned and borrowed from one another. My findings dismissed the Anglo-Oriental tradition as a pervasive influence and presented evidence that the pioneer and successor generations considered many sources which were assimilated or rejected in the process of shaping individual oeuvres. The dissertation also sought to establish whether a distinctive South African studio pottery identity or "look" developed during the latter half of the twentieth century but I found no evidence of that beyond decorative features that associated the potters with the South African or African environment. The dissertation gave brief recognition to the rise of ceramic art that challenged tradition and convention and considered the role it played in dismissing studio pottery as being captive to the Anglo-Oriental tradition.

In this doctoral thesis, I expand the research to include all the genres of South African ceramics of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. I take into account the broader cultural and socio-political forces that shaped the development of South African ceramics and had a direct bearing on the outcomes of the oeuvres of individual ceramists. The thesis introduces ceramists who have hitherto garnered none or abbreviated attention in academic or authoritative publications. This is not for the purpose of giving them belated recognition but to illustrate some significant omissions and misrepresentations in the recorded history of South African ceramics and that, in considering their more detailed biographies, their oeuvres can be contextually positioned.

One of the challenges in researching this thesis has been the lack of definitive and comprehensive sources on many of the twentieth century ceramists, including those who are prominent in the ceramics fraternity. Though the volume of sources is substantial, much of that relates to praxes ("how to") or the showcasing of ceramic works without the provision of empirical data with biographical notes often being little less than hagiographies. The earlier white ceramists did not bother to note the rationale for their oeuvres and white authors wrote from their own perspectives about black ceramists. It has only been in the twenty-first

century that black South African ceramists have been speaking for themselves and, in doing, so they offer significant and alternative insights into their oeuvres and the positioning thereof in contemporary times. I acknowledge the existence of highly commendable authoritative and academic publications in which the context of the lives and oeuvres of South African ceramists have been presented. Those, however, were not intended to be encyclopaedic and either sampled exponents of ceramic genres or featured prominent ceramists. This thesis is not intended to be encyclopaedic or to "fill the gaps" but is aimed at broadening the scope of who and what ought to be acknowledged in considering context in South Africa's ceramics history. Even so, I acknowledge that I am not addressing all of the contexts or the multiple nuances within any single context in depth. I hope that it will prompt further academic investigation that will expand on contextual considerations.

I am not attempting to shift attention away from the aesthetic values by which we usually measure the success of a ceramic work. My stance is that those values of form, proportion, balance, decoration and purpose do not stand outside of context. The opposite is true: context elucidates and ratifies aesthetics.

Many individuals and several organisations that include ceramists, collectors, dealers, gallerists, curators, academics and respected authors were generous with their assistance to provide research material. All of the input is valuable and I trust that it will be reflected as such in the text. I have opted to include the illustrations in a separate volume where they can be accommodated as larger format images that better reveal details. Unless stated otherwise, the photographs were taken by me. I am also appreciative of the lecturers at Unisa who steered me through my earlier studies and instilled academic discipline in my work. I am particularly indebted to my promoter, Prof. Bernadette van Haute, for her unstinting support, patient guidance and constructive critique.

I acknowledge with appreciation a professional development grant for the purpose of my postgraduate study awarded by the Arts and Culture Trust (South Africa) in 2019 and postgraduate bursaries awarded by Unisa in 2019 and 2020.

The thesis is dedicated to Barry and Claudia Oliphant in appreciation of their generous friendship and to the ceramist and the ceramics author Ann Marais for sharing my enthusiasm to record and position the history of South African ceramics.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

In some instances, the illustrated ceramic works lack detailed empirical data. The absence of such data must be attributed to the sources from which the images and data were gathered.

CHAPTER 1
Introduction

In this introduction, I state the problem which is that the hitherto recorded history of South African ceramics of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is incomplete in terms of the recognition given to ceramists whom I deem to have made critical contributions. More so, there has been a lack of consideration of the contexts that shaped the development of the ceramics. I address the availability of literature and other research resources. Justification is given for the preference of a postmodernist theoretical framework and for using postcolonial theory as the lens for examining and positioning the history of ceramics. The research methodology is explained and outlines of the chapters are given.

The thesis deals with all genres of South African ceramics excluding industrial production wares. The term "ceramics" in this thesis denotes small enterprise production pottery, "traditional" pottery, studio pottery and ceramic art.

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Some recent academic research and writings related to South African ceramics have established contexts for considering the oeuvres of ceramists but only in so far as they relate to individual, celebrated ceramists and their immediately relevant influences. The body of non-academic writings about South African ceramics is ample but, generally speaking, focuses on the praxes of individual ceramists or gives overviews of genres with scant attention to their contexts. There appears to be a tendency for contemporary South African ceramists to work independently of the formal fraternity of ceramists represented by Ceramics Southern Africa (CSA). The result is that their oeuvres and achievements are not reflected in CSA's publications and marketing material and hence do not feature in authoritative documentation. The overall picture of the scope of South African ceramics and recognition of the contexts that came to define it is therefore selective, fragmentary, lacking in detail and even ignorant of some agencies that made significant contributions towards it. In a few instances, South African

ceramics have been considered in terms of how and under what influences ceramics developed in other countries and cultures.

Moreover, the documented history has the appearance of being compartmentalised. Traditional ceramics, production pottery, studio pottery and ceramic art tend to be addressed as distinctive and stand-alone features within the field of ceramics. The research shows that the different genres are interlinked even if the aesthetic principles associated with form and design are shared.

The focus of the thesis is to relate the development and outcomes of South African ceramics to the historical forces (cultural, ideological, institutional and socio-political) that shaped and continue to shape South Africa as a society with distinctive cultural and socio-political features. The thesis posits that ceramists are consequential participants of the South African system in its various encumbering and beneficent guises. The consideration of South African ceramic works of whatever genre can therefore not stand in ignorance of the context of their making particularly where ceramists seek to convey a South African ethos or identity. As such, the ceramic works present as entangled narratives of the engagement by ceramists with their worlds and also of our reception of their works. It must be understood that contexts do not prescribe the outcomes of ceramists' oeuvres and the thesis demonstrates the manner in which the ceramists exercise their creative (and entrepreneurial) agency to interpret and innovate.

Though writing specifically about African Modernism, the Africanist art historian, John Picton, made a statement that underpins my own substantiation for a broader contextual consideration. What cannot be dismissed "art-historically" in the study of African Modernism, according to Picton (2012:329), is:

> that we document [the] relationship between past and present; as also the manner in which artists do or do not draw upon a sense of tradition, and/or on the forms of particular traditions; and the manner in which artists interpret the past in the context of present concerns; and the facts and circumstances of the demise of traditions of visual practice, and the birth of others; and the complex factors which enable and/or govern these possibilities.

I find further substantiation for contextual consideration in the writings of the South African art historian, Lize van Robbroeck (2013:32), who invokes Jacques Derrida to emphasise "the importance of context in any reading of a text – with con-text being in itself a set of texts that occur in a complex inter-textual relationship to that which is read or interpreted". As Van Robbroeck further points out, in the consideration of context there will be an encounter with "marginal or supplementary aspects [which] may again point towards excluded or suppressed alterities" (Van Robbroeck 2013:37). I therefore accept that other researchers would bring into consideration a different set of contexts or give less or more weight to those which I consider relevant.

The thesis identifies and addresses the omissions of critical role players and agencies with particular attention to the contexts within which they ought to be considered. Some of these personalities have commanded attention in writings about South African fine art and craft but, because they worked with ceramic materials or included ceramics in their mixed-media oeuvres, I consider them within the ambit of ceramics. The study starts with a broad overview of the developmental history in which I identify critical role players and agencies, and introduce the genres within South African ceramics positioned within the socio-political history of twentieth-century South Africa.

One prominent feature of the discriminatory apartheid politics in twentieth-century South Africa was the education and training of blacks. This directly translated into cultural stereotyping in black art and crafts, including ceramics. It is therefore necessary to consider the outcomes of education and training as reflected in the oeuvres of black ceramists. Attention must not only be given to formal education and training but also to the opportunities created by community-based organisations, co-operatives and private enterprise.

The evidence of hybridity in South African ceramics cannot be denied. In its initial appearance, hybridity was the superficial copying of features of indigenous material culture for the sake of novelty. My research tracks the referencing of other cultures which progressively shows not just the borrowing of visual

elements but the cognisance of associated meanings transposed to an own context.

Comparisons can be drawn with African Modernism in the manner that South African ceramists challenged Western conventions and binaries of art/craft and imposed conventions and identities. In African Modernism, this manifested in hybridity with artists liberally, but with due consideration, borrowing from other cultures to meld and present their own identities. That process gave rise to distinctive artistic expressions inclusive of ceramics or mixed-media art that incorporated ceramics. I investigate African Modernism and advance those South African ceramists who can clearly be deemed as modernists within African Modernism art history.

It appears that South African ceramists engaged more purposefully in defining and expressing identity, or at least indigeneity, in the period preceding democratic change in South Africa and the immediate years thereafter. I investigate the rationale that underpinned the ceramists' approach to identity and the manner in which it was expressed. The research demonstrates that meaningful cross-cultural referencing in South African ceramics was and remains a conscious engagement by ceramists dealing with issues of identity (whether that be "indigeneity", "South African-ness", "African-eity" or even universality), values and meanings which are expressed in complex symbolism and metaphor.

As regards twenty-first century South African ceramics, I pose the question whether there has been a shift in form, content, intent and presentation to meet the expectations of a new generation of collectors and users. In response, I present the oeuvres of selected ceramists to examine their development of genres and of others who produce works that are shorn of blatant geographic or ethnographic reference yet satisfy the appetite of the collector market for the "African exotic".

There are limitations in the research that I present. The literary resources are constrained and often exclusive in dealing with individuals, small groupings of ceramists or genres. It must be noted that, in much of the twentieth-century documentation of black ceramists and particularly of the earliest black exponents

of ceramics, their own voices are conspicuously silent. The narratives addressing their oeuvres were written from a Eurocentric point of view or, as Ruth Simbao (2011:41) puts it, "framed in terms of anachronistic, regressive traditionalism". It requires that the texts must be stripped of biased perspectives to reveal factual evidence. A different problem arises in dealing with many of the earlier white South African studio potters where the published material is focused on their techniques and range of wares, while neglecting to reflect on the rationale for their aesthetic expressions and treating biographical details as general knowledge. The thesis does not have the scope of being encyclopaedic and I therefore have to be selective in my choice of featured ceramists. This choice is motivated by my aim to present a revision of the history of the South African ceramics of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature that I consulted includes academic and authoritative publications relevant to South African production pottery, studio pottery, traditional pottery and ceramics as well as the themes of postcolonialism, African Modernism and South African Modernism. Because they are cited for being specific to themes which I address in the various chapters, the publications are introduced and reviewed there. The nature and relevance of the selected literature emerges more adequately when read in conjunction with the evidence and arguments presented in the chapter texts.

I attach special relevance to the publications of the Association of Potters of Southern Africa (APSA) and its successor organisation, CSA. APSA published *Sgraffiti* and *National Ceramics Quarterly* in quarterly editions. *Sgraffiti* was published from August 1973 (No 1) to January 1987 (No 47). *National Ceramics Quarterly* commenced publication in 1987 (No 1, Winter 1987) and continued into 2014 (No 108, Winter 2014). Whilst much of the earlier editorial content dealt with praxes, it did feature some critical enquiry. Amongst the latter were writings that questioned the orthodoxy of ethics and aesthetics of studio pottery and ceramics, sought recognition of the full spectrum of South Africa's potters

and ceramists and challenged the positioning of pottery and ceramics in the art canon. The successor to *National Ceramics Quarterly* was *Ceramics Southern Africa Magazine* (No 1, Spring 2015 to current) published by Ceramics Southern Africa. Its editorial policy favours authoritative and semi-academic writing. *Ceramix and Craft South Africa* was a short-lived publication from 1988 to 1990 under the editorship of Sue Meyer and the aegis of the Southern Transvaal Region of the Association of Potters of Southern Africa.

I also called on unpublished South African master's degree dissertations and doctoral theses[1] that address themes in ceramics such as oeuvres, influences, narratives, commentary and collections. Of particular relevance are those by Kim Bagley ("Africa and the West: A contested dialogue in modern and contemporary ceramics*"*, 2014), Vanessa Bauer ("The inception of cross-cultural dimensions in the ceramics of the late 1970s as reflected in the work of Maggie Mikula and her adherents", 2004), Alexa Farina ("Cross cultural influences in the work of Ian Garrett and Magdalene Odundo", 2001), Ian Garret ("Nesta Nala: Ceramics 1985-1995", 1997), Sarah Hosking ("Tradition and innovation: Rorke's Drift ceramics in the collection of the Durban Art Gallery, KwaZulu-Natal", 2005), Mathodi Motsamayi ("The Bernstein collection of Rorke's Drift ceramics at the University of KwaZulu-Natal: A catalogue raisonné", 2001), Elizabeth Perrill ("Contemporary Zulu ceramics, 1960s-present", 2008a), Rika Stockenström ("The South African contemporary ceramic collection at the William Humphreys Art Gallery, 1984-2009", 2014), Candice Vurovecz ("Hilda Ditchburn: A teacher and pioneer of stoneware ceramics in Southern Africa", 2008), Sharon Weaving ("Ceramic narrative: Storytelling and Ardmore Ceramic Studio", 2011) and Wilma Cruise ("Thinking with animals: An exploration of the animal turn through art making and metaphor", 2016a).

[1] There are some disparities in the manner in which South African universities designate dissertations and theses. I follow the prescription of the University of South Africa in assigning a dissertation to a master's degree and a thesis to a doctoral degree.

1.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework that I advance calls on postmodernism that "challenge[s] the notion that there are universal certainties or truths ... embrac[ing] complex and often contradictory layers of meaning" (www.tate.org.uk). Gary Aylesworth (2005) expands on that by stating that postmodernism

> can be described as a set of critical, strategic and rhetorical practices employing concepts such as difference, repetition, the trace, the simulacrum, and hyperreality to destabilize other concepts such as presence, identity, historical progress, epistemic certainty, and the univocity of meaning.

The thesis therefore explains that the history of twentieth and twenty-first century South African ceramics cannot be written in absolute terms but must allow for multiple alterities and contextual considerations.

The lens through which I consider postmodernism is postcolonial theory as expounded by Edward W. Said (1978, 1994) and Homi K. Bhabha (1994) that challenges Western precepts of art and culture. Of particular relevance is how African art historians have drawn on postcolonial theory to interrogate Western-imposed binaries of craft-art, traditional-modern, local-global, authentic-original and "the other". These authors emphasise that African art must be interpreted from inside the culture that gave it birth rather than from outside. In addressing African Modernism, I have drawn on the writings of Ziauddin Sardar, Rasheed Araeen and Sean Cubitt (2002), Chika Okeke-Agulu (2015), Sidney Littlefield Kasfir (1999), N'Gone Fall and Jean-Loup Pivin (2002), Olu Oguibe (2004) and Okwui Enzewor with Oguibe (1999).

I have taken particular note of writings on the theme of indigeneity and identity by the art historians Anitra Nettleton (2010, 2018), Elizabeth Harney and Ruth B. Philips (2018) and Juliette Leeb-du Toit (2012a). Nettleton (2018:336) questions the validity of the use of biographies to establish the authenticity (which I propose could also be read as "indigeneity") of the African artists rather than of their

works whilst Harney and Philips (2018:15) point out that the use of "indigenous" can and has been claimed by "internally colonized peoples within the settler nations … as a preferred denominator of identity".

The thesis also takes into consideration the contextual repositioning of twentieth and twenty-first century South African art as promoted by Gavin Jantjes and Mario Pissara (2011). Their publication presents "a topographical approach, which deals with the particular concerns and themes pertinent to each historical period" in which "local contexts would, as far as possible, themselves be contextualised within the broader African and international framework" (Van Robbroeck 2012:32–33). The theories and critiques advanced in the publication are relevant even in the absence of any reference to South African ceramics. The contextual approach, as promoted by Van Robbroeck (2013:37), is central to my theoretical framework. This presents a particular challenge as, within twentieth and twenty-first century South African ceramics, multiple cultures are represented and hence multiple culturally-informed expressions have to be considered.

1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design is qualitative and entails a combined literature study, field research and interviews. Primary, secondary and tertiary data have been collected and analysed.

The primary sources include published South African and international academic research in the form of scholarly essays as well as selected authoritative books, magazines and journals. Data were sourced in the PELMAMA Foundation's online archive. Exhibition catalogues and online artists' statements provided additional insights. I have also drawn on my personal interviews and correspondence with South African ceramists, art historians and curators of ceramics collections. I found examples of ceramic works that illustrate contextual influences in public and private collections of ceramic works. Those public collections include the national Corobrik Collection and the collections of Iziko Museums of South Africa, William Humphreys Art Gallery, the Clay Museum at

Rust-en-Vrede and the Tatham Art Gallery. Additional examples were identified in the private collections of William Raats and the Bosch Family as well as in my personal collection. The secondary sources include unpublished academic research in the form of dissertations and theses, published exhibition reviews and the inventories of public and private ceramics collections. The tertiary sources include encyclopaedias, dictionaries, bibliographies and indexes.

1.5 OUTLINE OF THE CONTENTS

Chapter 2: An overview of the history of twentieth and twenty-first century South African ceramics

I situate the earlier development of South African ceramics within an ideology-driven and discriminatory socio-political milieu before introducing the various ceramics genres that developed in this era. The genres are described and my preferred terminology is explained. The chapter tracks the development of South African production potteries, studio pottery and ceramic art with recognition of some of the exponents who worked outside of the mainstream movement. The chapter highlights the role played by APSA as a driving force in the development of studio pottery and by the tertiary institutions in promoting ceramic art.

Chapter 3: South African ceramics education and vocational training

The chapter introduces the agencies of formal and informal twentieth-century education and vocational training to illustrate their impact on the development of South African ceramics. The educational and training policies of the Nationalist government sought to entrench black participation in ceramics within the ambit of crafts which resulted in a reception of those works that was skewed towards ethnographic material culture and “tourism” craft. The chapter addresses the role of community art centres and community-based pottery projects that not only facilitated training in ceramics but also promoted those ceramists’ presence in the mainstream art world.

Chapter 4: African Modernism and South African ceramics of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries

There was no direct influence by African Modernism on the development of South African ceramics but the study of the character of the former reveals similarities with the revisioning of ceramic expressions by South African ceramists. Key features of African Modernist ceramics were experimentation with materials, forms and presentations through which those ceramists sought to challenge Western (colonial) precepts and position their works as relative to both tradition and contemporaneity. Those same features are echoed in South African ceramic history. The chapter presents case studies of modernism as practised by black ceramists in the era preceding the rise of studio pottery and ceramic art in South Africa.

Chapter 5: Negotiating a "South African" or "African" identity in ceramics

The chapter traces the expression of identity as an interrogation of the self and "the other" in the history of South African ceramics. It also considers what constitutes a valid identity in the South African context. The earlier attempts by ceramists to claim and convey a link with South Africa or Africa and for which they made liberal use of hybridity without qualification thereof, often attracted fierce criticism. Later expressions that addressed "indigeneity" evolved from a conscious engagement with indigenous South African and African material culture and were presented with greater subtlety and substance. Case studies are presented to illustrate the contexts within which ceramists developed oeuvres and in which their engagement with issues of identity can be read.

Chapter 6: The twenty-first century: liberated identities and new dialogues

New contextual references can be read in the oeuvres of the twenty-first century South African ceramists that range from meeting the demand of changing lifestyles to delivering commentary on social and environmental issues, some of which are universal. The exploration of issues of identity continues but, as I will illustrate, this is now a celebration of heritage rather than the earlier anxiety to

claim a belonging. South Africa's black ceramists have emerged as the leading figures in this melding of cultural heritage (specifically of cultural content) with forms that are often radical translations of both the indigenous traditional and the Western even to the point of those forms being not at all discernable as South African or African.

Chapter 7: Summary and conclusion

I summarise the salient evidence as presented in the various chapters to draw a conclusion that, notwithstanding any aesthetic considerations, an understanding and appreciation of the South African ceramics of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries must factor in recognition of the context of their making and reception. I also argue that this history cannot be approached in terms of linear development but as a history of inter-textualities within changing and challenging circumstance and context.

CHAPTER 2
An overview of the history of South African ceramics of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries

The history of South African ceramics of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries spans eras of colonialism and postcolonialism with distinctive features of socio-political dispensations. Role players and agencies that influenced the development of South African ceramics include the political, social and economic empowerment of the white citizenry; an entrenchment of Western culture and values; transforming the black populace into a labour force and limiting its education and training; and considering black material culture from an anthropological and ethnographic point of view. Of particular relevance is that the development of South African production pottery, studio pottery and ceramic art overlaps with the pre-democratic era during which little recognition was given to the ceramics of the indigenous black cultural groups and the meanings, values and identities associated with them.

2.1 THE SOCIO-POLITICAL SETTING IN TWENTIETH CENTURY SOUTH AFRICA

"South Africa" denotes the Republic of South Africa as a geo-political entity. However, because of intertwined histories and relationships, the thesis includes references to the ceramics of the neighbouring independent kingdoms of Lesotho and eSwatini (formerly Swaziland) and those of the former republics of Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei (now re-integrated into the Republic of South Africa).[1]

The British colonies in South Africa (the Cape Colony, Transvaal Colony, Natal Colony and Orange River Colony) were amalgamated in 1910 as a dominion of the British Empire. The Union of South Africa gained self-governing status within

[1] The literature consulted for this abbreviated socio-political history of South Africa includes: Roger Beck (2000), William Beinart (2001), Iris Berger (2009), Richard Reid (2012), Alistair Sparks (1997), Leonard Thompson (2001) and Nigel Worden (2012).

the British Empire in 1934 and declared its sovereign status in 1961. Successive governments followed a policy and strategy of social engineering aimed at enshrining and protecting the rights, privileges, economic welfare and political status of the minority white population. In the earlier phase of minority white rule, a policy of racial segregation was implemented to regulate relations with the black population.

The 1948 national election brought the Herstigte Nasionale Party (the Reformed National Party) under prime minister Daniel François ("DF") Malan (1874–1959) to power. Renamed as the National Party, it transformed the segregation policy into a focused racial policy known as apartheid with the total separation of races as a prime objective. From the 1960s onwards, the ruling National Party, under Prime Minister Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd (1901–1966) and his successors John Balthazar Vorster (1915–1983) and Pieter Willem ("PW") Botha (1916–2006), employed social engineering as a discriminatory philosophy and method to create and enforce ethnic division and entrench white supremacy. In the guise of a policy of separate development, the government introduced The Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act in 1959 which grouped blacks, according to tribal ethnicity, into ten "homelands". "Bantu" (black) authorities, under white supervision, were to guide each black "nation" in its development. The homelands were the backwaters of South Africa – fragmented, overcrowded and not economically independent. Separate development came to its conclusion with the granting of independence to the homelands.

Twentieth-century white rule was challenged as early as 1912 with the founding of the South African Native National Congress (SANNC). The leadership strived for an equal franchise within the existing constitution of the Union and it sought to be moderate, preferring patience and persuasion to achieve a reversal of race-based social, economic and political discrimination. Over the next four decades, the SANNC would grow from a minor to a major political force, shifting its policy from non-confrontation to open resistance while accruing a broad-based membership across ethnic and racial borders as well as leftist and liberal political

divides. The SANNC renamed itself as the African National Congress (ANC) in 1925.

World War II created different circumstances and introduced new sentiments from which the ANC would benefit. The urban black labour force grew rapidly as manufacturing industries stepped up their war production. White workers were absorbed into the armed forces and blacks filled their places, in the process progressively becoming urbanised. Another significant influence on black political thought was the pledge of a nation's right to self-rule taken by the Western world in the Atlantic Charter of 1942. At its annual conference in 1943, the ANC adopted a general policy statement that incorporated a bill of rights that demanded full black citizenship, a universal adult franchise, redistribution of the land, the abolition of all discriminatory legislation and absolute equality under the law. The rise of the Congress Youth League (CYL) within the ANC in 1943 introduced a new generation of black leaders who challenged the earlier conciliatory policy of the ANC.

In 1953, the ANC joined with the Congress of Democrats, the South African Indian Congress (SAIC), the South African Coloured People's Organization (SACPO) and the South African Congress of Trade Unions to launch the National Congress of the People. At a mass rally at Kliptown, it adopted the Freedom Charter that proclaimed fundamental principles for an alternative, egalitarian South African state inclusive of equality before the law and a redistribution of land and wealth. The immediate response of the Nationalist government was to suppress opposition through the arrest, imprisonment and the banning of black leadership. Robbed of its leaders and tied up with the treason trials in the late 1950s, the ANC could not ward off a challenge from within its own ranks by a faction of militant Africanists led by Robert Sobukwe (1924–1978) who opted to split away and form the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) in 1959. On 21 March 1960, the PAC organised its pass law protest march in the black urban township of Sharpeville. Sixty-nine protestors were killed by police fire. Sharpeville sparked widespread strikes and stayaways and the government responded by

declaring a state of emergency, the arrest of 18 000 people and the banning of both the ANC and PAC which pushed the struggle underground.

In 1979, in the face of mounting internal resistance and international condemnation, the Botha government sought a reformulation of apartheid and a restructuring of the social and political order. Empowered to do so through an all-white referendum held in 1984, the government created a tricameral parliament that extended political participation to the coloured and Indian population groups in separate chambers of parliament. Botha was named as State President and presided over a multi-racial cabinet. White supremacy remained entrenched through dominance in joint cameral sittings, the cabinet and the President's Council which comprised the executives of the three chambers.

The campaign of terrorism and guerrilla warfare waged by Umkhonto weSizwe (MK), the armed wing of the ANC, from 1961 to 1990, was vigorously countered by the South African state but it could not stifle the swell of opposition to repressive apartheid policies. Tension came to a head with the Soweto student uprising in 1976 that triggered draconian measures of arrests and suppression by the government. The ANC indirectly garnered further popular support in the 1980s via its front organisation, the United Democratic Front (UDF) that, as an umbrella organisation of some 600 diverse structures and interest groups, created a mass political base for an activist, politicised society. Adding to the mass mobilisation was the rise of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in 1985 and its stance that the struggle for labour rights was part of the broader political struggle.

Botha's successor, FW de Klerk, announced the government's willingness to negotiate with the ANC which led to talks in Cape Town in May 1990. From that flowed the Groote Schuur Minute in which the government made important concessions that included a cancellation of the state of emergency, the repeal of the last of the apartheid laws and the release of most of the political prisoners. The government refrained, however, from granting immunity from prosecution for individual members of the ANC. In August 1990, the ANC and government had a

second formal meeting in Pretoria where Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela (1918–2013) announced the suspension of the ANC's armed struggle. In November 1991, the leaders of 20 political organisations laid down ground rules for formal talks for an interim constitution and the election of a constituent assembly, to be known as the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA). To muster greater support for a mandate to negotiate power sharing, De Klerk called for a whites-only referendum in March 1992. Nearly 69 per cent of the votes were in favour of continued negotiations for a new constitution. A formal agreement on an interim constitution was reached in November 1992 to provide for a universal adult franchise and an inclusive bill of rights. Decades of political turmoil ended when South Africans streamed to polling booths on 27 April 1994 where the ANC gained a majority vote and Mandela was elected as president.

2.2 DEFINITIONS

"Ceramics" denotes a broad grouping of the categories (which themselves are fluid classifications) of traditional pottery, production pottery, studio pottery and ceramic art with the latter including ceramic sculpture. For the sake of clarity when writing about specific traditions and practises within South African ceramics, I will make use of these namings.

My use of the term "traditional" does not denote the exact replication of earlier received forms of pottery associated with a culture by its members. That would imply that tradition is staid and stagnant and furthermore would deny the agency of "traditional potters" to re-interpret and even invent forms whether for consumption within an own culture or for outsiders inclusive of the tourist and collector markets. Because such forms pertain to tradition or are derived from tradition (www.wikidiff.com), they retain an authenticity.[2]

[2] According to Bernadette van Haute (2019), some scholars favour the use of the term "historical" over "traditional" with the former referring to the past but without the connotations or expectations of authentic tradition.

For the purpose of this thesis, the term "ceramics" will refer to all non-industrial creative outputs based on the usage of clay as the principal (but not exclusive) body of material for the purpose of creating utilitarian,[3] ornamental and decorative works as well as works that are created as conceptual and sculptural forms and expressions.[4] This thesis, however, excludes references to industrial mass-production utilitarian and ornamental ceramics as well as "hobby pottery". I discount but do not denigrate "hobby pottery" and acknowledge that studio potters and ceramic artists have risen from the ranks of those practitioners.

On a timeline of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, South African traditional pottery has a continuous presence whether in a strict cultural idiom or in adapted expressions. Production pottery had a significant presence from the 1920s to the 1980s but subsequent enterprises have been far smaller in scale. Studio pottery dominated the ceramics scene from the 1950s to the 1990s after which it waned significantly. Studio pottery was also influential in attracting new practitioners to ceramics, some who would later develop as ceramic artists. Ceramic art made its debut in South Africa in the mid-1960s, progressively gaining in prominence and is the current dominant idiom.

Traditional pottery is the term applied to the pottery practices of the (usually) rural-based indigenous, non-white cultural groups. Such pottery includes utilitarian containers for the carrying, storage, brewing and serving of fluids; the storage and preparation of foods and fluids; ritualistic usage as well as figurines. Pottery is made for use in the own homestead or traded amongst other homesteads. The pottery is hand-built with materials available in the immediate environment, using a coiling or scraping technique and then pit-fired or bonfired. Pots are predominantly monochromatic and are minimally decorated with raised

[3] I make use of the term "utilitarian" wares to denote what some authors describe as "functional" wares. The essence of the meanings is the same.

[4] Paul Mathieu (2014a:3) offers a differing division within ceramics: "there are three possible and basically distinct conceptual approaches and specific contexts: functional work, non-functional work and sculptural work as there are three main concepts, function, decoration and representation".

arcade patterns, sgraffito (surface etching) or rouletting (a continuous impressed decorative feature) and burnished with animal fat. In this thesis, attention is given to traditional pottery of the later twentieth century of the Sotho, Venda, Tswana and Zulu cultures. The choice of era is purposeful and based on the entry of traditional pottery into South African mainstream public art collections (as opposed to the anthropological and ethnographic collections) that was, in part, prompted by the academic interest in traditional and contemporary Zulu pottery by the staff and students of the Ceramics Studios of the Centre for Visual Art (CSCVA) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Pietermaritzburg. The attention and recognition given to traditional pottery provided a significant impetus for white ceramists to explore and express a South African identity and for black ceramists to enter the ceramics art world.[5]

Publications and academic studies of note about traditional pottery include those by Wilma Cruise (1991), Alexa Jane Farina (2001), Ian Garrett (1997), Elizabeth Perrill (2008a), Susan Sellschop (2012) and John Steele (2005). The thesis makes reference elsewhere to the pre-colonial indigenous pottery practices in Southern Africa. Detailed attention is also given to how traditional pottery evolved – at times purposefully – in the later twentieth century to accommodate Western aesthetics[6] as well as how ceramists set out to reflect their social and cultural worlds of reference.

Production pottery equates with the output by small- and medium-sized enterprises with the focus on utilitarian wares and decorative items for domestic

[5] I follow Perill's (2008a:82) definition of 'art world': "… I am referring to network of individuals who use shared (or not so shared when the power dynamics are imbalanced) sets of norms and conventions and produce, sell, or purchase art".

[6] For a definition of 'aesthetics', I refer to Brian Moeran (1997:9) who described it as "the effects that physical properties of objects have on the senses [and the] other non-material attributes perceived in objects and which become 'aesthetic' when incorporated into a socio-cultural system of values and meanings". Moeran (citing Wolff 1983:20) added the qualification that "aesthetics is historical, ideological and contingent" and further subject to the roles which people play in the art world whether as ceramists, critics, connoisseurs, collectors or buyers (1997:10–11).

use, as "tourist souvenirs"[7] and for promotional purposes (Gers 2015:x). Alternative namings for production pottery are "industrial artware", "production ware" and "serial production ware", the latter naming used by Jonathan Hopp (2018:96) to describe "a form of artistic expression … which seeps into daily life and is experienced first-hand with little mediation".

Studio pottery is defined as the output of an individual (with or without production staff) who practises pottery as a professional and who operates and manages an independent studio. It could also refer to someone who does so semi-professionally and has an own studio or has access to a collective studio. Generally speaking, studio potters specialise in producing utilitarian ware but, within their oeuvres, they might also create one-off pieces that would fall into the category of ornamental, sculptural, environmental or architectural ware. They will have developed a distinctive style that characterises their oeuvres. High-temperature reduction-fired[8] stoneware[9] typifies studio pottery. The term "studio potter" was commonly used in South Africa between the 1950s and the 1980s but was progressively replaced by "ceramist" (or "ceramicist" and "ceramic artist") even when utilitarian wares remained a significant feature of an oeuvre.[10]

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[7] Also described as "tourist art", "airport art" and "souvenir art" or even considered as "transitional art" (Pawloska 2011:183).

[8] Reduction-firing is typically done in a fuel-burning or gas kiln at very high temperature (in excess of 900° C). The kiln is starved of oxygen at some stage of the firing to prevent it from interacting with glazes.

[9] Stoneware is a type of clay consisting of clay and fusible stone that can be fired to a point of vitrification to make it impervious to liquids (Savage & Newman 1974:275). For the purposes of utility and appearance, glazes can be added to the surface.

[10] Earlier in the twentieth century, those who practised pottery independent of commercial enterprises were named as "craft-potters" and their works were accorded due respect and recognition. Amongst the earliest documented "craft-potters" of the century were Gladys C Short (1892–1974), John (OJP) Oxley (1888–1956) and Florence Lee (dates not known). All three had their pottery selected for prestigious art exhibitions in the craft categories. Short studied pottery under John Adams (1882–1953), Headmaster at the School of Art, Durban from 1916 to 1918, with further pottery studies at the Royal College of Art, London from 1919 to 1921 and afterwards at the Camberwell School of Art. She returned to Durban where she set up a small pottery studio. In 1922, she was included in a pottery exhibition at the Durban Technical College (Gers 2015:13). In 1925, a collection of her work that included bowls, tiles, a candlestick and an ashtray were featured in the 6th annual exhibition of the South African Academy presented in Johannesburg. The same Academy exhibition included a selection of bowls by Oxley who served as the Head of

Conversely, some individuals whose oeuvres could be deemed to have progressed beyond forms and decorative features associated with utilitarian and ornamental studio pottery, continue to proclaim themselves as "studio potters" (for example Andrew Walford and Digby Hoets).

In 2004, at the time of the renaming of the Association of Potters of Southern Africa (APSA) to Ceramics Southern Africa (CSA), a new constitution was adopted in which CSA committed itself to "raise [the] skills and image of the art and craft of ceramics" (Den Bakker 2004:1).[11] This appears to have been an endorsement of the popular view that pottery falls within the domain of craft whilst ceramic art was assigned to art per se. I see no merit in continuing the art vs craft debate in this thesis other than to endorse the stance of Aneta Pawłowska (2011:186) that to name something as craft **"**presumes the cultural destiny of both the object and their makers".

Studio pottery dominated the editorial content of the publications of the quarterly magazine *Sgraffiti* published by APSA and the earlier editions of its successor publication, the *National Ceramics Quarterly* published by CSA. The authoritative publications by Garth Clark and Lynne Wagner (*Potters of Southern Africa,* 1974), Wilma Cruise (*Contemporary ceramics in South Africa*, 1991), Justin Kerrod (*An introduction to Southern African ceramics – their marks, monograms and signatures*, 2010) and Maarten Zaalberg (*The 1985 yearbook of South African ceramics*, 1985) dealt in part with studio pottery. Seven books dedicated to individual ceramists have been published: *Esias Bosch* by Andree Bosch and Johann de Waal (1988), *Maggie Mikula from clay: A retrospective* by

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Art and Design at the Natal Technical College from 1923 to 1936 during which time he promoted craft and design. He was appointed in 1937 as Head of the Department of Fine Art at the (then) University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg where, according to Ian Calder (2012:63), "ceramics provided a capstone in the values" he sought to instil in the curriculum. Lee was a student of the School of Art in Durban and her pottery bowls and ashtrays were selected in 1926 for the 21st annual exhibition of the Natal Society of Artists where Oxley also exhibited a collection of 17 pottery pieces.

[11] There is also anecdotal evidence that the name change was influenced by the confusion of the acronym APSA with the bank known as ABSA (Marais 2019a).

Max Mikula (2004), *Hylton Nel, conversations* and *Hylton Nel, a curious world* by Michael Stevenson (2003 and 2010), *The Ceramic Art of Robert Hodgins* by Retief van Wyk (2008), *A potter's tale in Africa: The life and works of Andrew Walford* by Neil Wright (2009) and *A ceramic journey* by Clementina van der Walt (2016).[12]

My use of the term "ceramic art" is to denote works that are exploratory and expressive in form and meaning beyond what would be deemed as strictly utilitarian and ornamental. Ceramic art can incorporate materials other than clay and the processes could include wheel-throwing, moulding, slip-casting[13] and hand-building. The range of ceramic art extends to figurative and sculptural art as well as forms created to constitute what Paul Mathieu describes as "Material Esthetics"[14] in which "esthetics and esthetics alone" is the intent and purpose. However, ceramic art can include utilitarian and ornamental forms and does not exclude wheel-throwing. The debate to distinguish between pottery and ceramic art and the degree of their overlap has elicited many differing (and often hostile) opinions. Divergent but not necessarily opposing opinions will even be found within the ceramics art discipline. George Melrod (2016), editor-in-chief of *art.ltd* magazine, invited ceramic artists, academics and curators to answer the question "What does it mean to be a ceramic artist in the 21st century?" Amongst them were Tony Marsh, programme head of ceramic arts at California State University, Long Beach who defined (ceramic) artists and their art-making as intended "to critique, subvert, question, to create doubt and move forward" in contrast to crafters who "pursue the betterment of culture, to look back lovingly and to

[12] As Wendy Gers (2015:357) points out, the leading figures within production potteries often adopted the role of studio potters to produce individual "signature" works distinctively separate from the output of their enterprises. Amongst those identified by Gers are Mary Liebermann (1929–2007) of Liebermann Pottery and Tiles, Lindsay Scott of Izandla Pottery and Valmai Olson (1934–2011) of Lucky Bean Farm.

[13] Slip-casting is a technique suited to the mass production of ceramics. Potter's clay mixed with water to a semi-liquid state is poured into a mould where it solidifies.

[14] Mathieu (2014b:8) defines such works as: "… solely stylistic, fundamentally concerned with perception and with the formal characteristics of materials, with color, texture, form and surface qualities and with transformative processes, often extreme processes".

reassure". Melrod's selected dialogue participants also included Katherine Ross, chair of the ceramics school of the Art Institute of Chicago who responded: "The traditional ceramic process, its form and function, appears to be less important to many current ceramic artists than the materiality of the earth-borne material, and its poetic, subconscious, or overt psychological relevance". The pottery versus ceramics debate was regularly reflected in the articles and opinion columns of the *Sgraffiti* and *National Ceramics Quarterly* magazines with some noteworthy articles by, amongst others, Ann Marais, Rosemary Lapping-Sellars, Susan Sellschop, Suzette Munnik, Wilma Cruise and Eugene Hön. The short-lived *Ceramix and Craft South Africa* (initially only known as *Ceramix*), published by the Southern Transvaal region of APSA, had an undeniable bias in favour of ceramics.

2.3 PRODUCTION POTTERY

The scope and nature of the commerce-driven twentieth and twenty-first century South African production potteries have been authoritatively addressed in publications.[15] The first publication dealing with production pottery was by Felix Nilant who, at the time of publication, was a senior lecturer in the Department of History of Fine Arts at the University of Pretoria. More than a decade lapsed before it was again addressed by Clark and Wagner (1974). Production pottery was the theme of the ceramics art historian Wendy Gers' MA dissertation, *South*

[15] For an insight into pre-twentieth century production pottery see Gers (2015) and Esther Esmyol (2012), the latter citing Woodward (1974:163). The first recorded instance of production pottery is described by Esmyol (2012:22):

In 1663, Commander Zacharias Wagenaer wrote to the [Dutch East India] Company officials in Batavia asking them to send potters to the Cape "as he was much in need of pottery". Following this request, the first European-type coarse earthenware, now known as "VOC [*Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie*] earthenware", was produced in the Cape. Using local materials, vessels were wheel-thrown and partially or fully glazed with a clear lead glaze or less frequently with dark green, orange and brown glazes.

More details emerge from Wagenaer's writings as cited by Minette Zaaiman (2004:31) who quotes Böeseken (1973) that the Cape settlers were ashamed of the need to use their hands or shells to scoop food from communal pots, that two potters bound for Batavia via the Cape were "lifted" from their ship and were put under guard to work for the production of "baked and glazed earthenware".

African studio ceramics, c.1950s: The Kalahari Studio, Drostdy Ware and Crescent Potteries (Gers 2000) and in her two books, *South African studio ceramics: A selection from the 1950s* (Gers 1998) and *Scorched earth: 100 years of Southern African potteries* (Gers 2015). Kerrod's identification guide for South African pottery includes details of production potteries. The most recent publication on this subject but with specific attention to a single production pottery, *Olifantsfontein Potteries* was authored by Alexander E Duffey, Riana Heymans and Jan Middeljans **(**2018).

Nilant (1963:104) investigated the scope of South African production of ceramic utilitarian and ornamental wares which the author categorised as "earthenware factories and studios"[16] up to the early 1960s. He defines a "studio" as "a kiln at which no more than three Europeans are employed" (1963:43). Nilant's research covers the factories and studios of Alicia Floral China, Boksburg East Potteries, Continental China, Crescent Potteries, Cullinan Refractories, Dykor Ceramic Studio, Elwood (Globe) Studio, Flora Ann, Grahamstown Potteries, Hamburger's Pottery, Kalahari Studio, National Ceramic Industries, Silwood Ceramics, The Old Jar, Transvaal Ceramics (with Felicitas as trademark), Turgel Studio and Zaalberg Potterij as well as the studio pottery of Bosch. Of these, Continental China was dedicated to mass-production of utilitarian and ornamental ceramics whilst the National Ceramic Industries specialised in sanitary wares, tiles and building products with a limited output of utilitarian wares (Nilant 1963:42, 52). In their book, Clark and Wagner introduce three community-based ceramic ventures of the nature of a "studio-production pottery" (1974:71) that were active by the time of the early 1970s: Rorke's Drift (properly known as the ELC Art and Craft Centre at Rorke's Drift), the Lesotho-based Kolonyama Pottery (Fig 1) and Thaba Bosigo. Gers references 32 ceramic enterprises: Transvaal Pottery, The Ceramic Studio, Crescent Potteries, Dykor Ceramic Studio, Faragher's Pottery, Flora Ann, Globe Potteries, Grahamstown Pottery, Drostdy Ware, Groenkloof

[16] Earthenware is clay that will be slightly porous and coarse after firing. It is typically coated or decorated with slip prior to firing and can also be glazed.

Brick & Tile & Pottery Works, Hamburger's Pottery, Ikhwezi Lokusa Pottery, Izandla Pottery (Fig 2), Kolonyama Pottery (Lesotho), Le Hi Potteries, Liebermann Pottery & Tiles, Lucky Bean Farm, Mantenga Craft Pottery (eSwatini), Marrakesh Ware, Milton Pottery Company, Rand Ceramics Industries, the ELC Art and Craft Centre at Rorke's Drift, Silwood Ceramics, South African Glazing Company, Lucia Ware & Joy China, Thaba Bosigo (Lesotho), Thamaga Pottery (Botswana), The Old Jar Pottery, Vereeniging Brick & Tile Company and Zaalberg Potterij.

Gers (2015:xvii) ascribes the establishment of over 40 production potteries in the post-World War II era to "a gradual rebirth of Western economies and consumer society" and consumer demands for luxury items to complement lifestyles.[17] I find a stronger rationale in the stance of Mark Pennings (2006:125) who points to postwar mass consumerism that empowered people to select and accumulate "valued symbols of cultural capital" with which to create lifestyles that reflected the self and a "whole way of life". In effect, it was an "aestheticisation" of everyday life and part of that were the choices of ceramic wares other than the mundane industry-produced consumer wares.

Of the production potteries listed by Nilant and Gers, all, except for Ikhwezi Lokusa Pottery and the Botswana-based Thamaga Pottery, have ceased operations. The demise of production potteries from 1957 onwards is blamed by Gers (2015:xvii) on "the deregulation of government import tariffs, quotas and

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[17] In 1974, Spies Venter addressed the proliferation of mass-production ceramic companies in South Africa without naming any of them. The known principal industrial-scale operations at the time were Continental China and Huguenot Porcelain and hence I assume that Venter also included the medium- and small-enterprise production in his critique where he bemoaned the quality and aesthetics of product ranges by a myriad of enterprises (1974:8, my translation):

The producer of the mass-produced product dictates the standard of his product. That leaves us with guilty parties who have no sense of aesthetics, whose sole aim is to generate profits and who therefore neglects in investing time, knowledge or patience to achieve a balanced approach to the product.

"Die produseerder van die massa-gemaakte produk is die ‚bepaler' van die uiteindelike standaard van sy produk. En hier sit ons met die sondebokke wat geen gevoel vir die estetiese het nie; hy is die mens wat met die oog net op finansiële gewin alleen, geen tyd, kennis of geduld het om 'n gebalanseerde benadering tot sy produk te hê nie."

protective legislation" and "a 'dumping' of cheap ceramics from Japan and America". Failed production potteries closed down, were absorbed by larger ventures or were re-orientated towards non-utilitarian product ranges. Kerrod (2010) provides abbreviated data for the production potteries that operated on a very small scale. Many of these were short-lived and their outputs limited in range and quantity. Kerrod includes Artists of Africa/Intu-Art, Bitou Craft, Chasms Ceramics, Mapepe Craft, Mzilikazi Pottery, Porcupine Ceramics, The Potter's Workshop, Redhill Pottery and Zizamele Ceramics.

Collectively, production potteries boasted a pool of knowledgeable, skilled and creative ownership and staff several of whom hailed from Europe. Gers (2015:xvii) lists some of those who immigrated to South Africa between the late 1940s and early 1950s from Germany, Great Britain, Holland, Italy and Sweden. Of particular significance is that production potteries offered vocational training for white and black production staff and employed pottery apprentices, many of them progressing to achieve the status of recognised studio potters and ceramists. In some instances, skills and career training were specific objectives of the production potteries notably those that were launched as community-based development projects in Southern Africa in the 1960s and 1970s with domestic or international funding. Gers (2015:360) lists international aid agencies as the American Peace Corps, The Canadian University Services Overseas (CUSO) and War On Want. Local developmental aid facilitated the establishment of a number of production potteries including Izandla Pottery by the Transkei Development Corporation (TDC), Thaba Bosigo and Kolonyama Pottery by the Lesotho National Development Corporation (LNDC), Mantenga Craft Pottery by the Economic Development Bank for Equatorial and Southern Africa (EDESA) and Izandla Pottery by the Transkei Development Corporation (TDC). Two Catholic church orders initiated production potteries: Ikhwezi Lokusa Pottery under the auspices of the Nuns of Precious Blood and Thamaga Pottery under the Passionists. Some of the production potteries' trained black staff would, in turn, become teachers at private pottery schools, community arts projects and tertiary institutions and their relevance to the development of ceramics training will be

further discussed in the following chapters.

Ample proof exists that a few of the production potteries were patently guilty of cultural appropriation in the portrayal of romanticised or distorted imagery of indigenous culture and social life. Those production potteries include The Ceramic Studio, Linnware, Crescent Potteries, Dykor Ceramic Studio, Flora Ann, Grahamstown Pottery, Hamburger's Pottery and, most prominently, the Kalahari Studio. Generally speaking, the owners and designers at the production potteries showed a lack of discretion in developing forms and decorations that reflected "Africa" and South Africa's indigenous cultures. Gers (1998, 2015) investigated the nature and intent of "stereo-typed imagery of the 'other'" in the production pottery of the Kalahari Studio (Fig 3), Grahamstown Pottery and Crescent Pottery. The wares ranged from the usual utilitarian wares to biomorphic forms, decorative masks, native figurines and souvenir items. The "native" imagery, states Gers (1998:29), reflects "a preference for unspoiled tribal images, exotic, beautiful, naked or semi-naked black women and crass sketches of African and pseudo-African culture". This blatantly constitutes what James Young (2008:24–25) addresses as the appropriation of content and of subject. The appropriation of content is the copying of a style associated with a specific group which, when executed other than exactly, distracts from the original aesthetics. The appropriation of subject is the representation of the "other" in a manner that misrepresents the subject. Young and Haley (2009) do not decry all forms of cultural appropriation and see merit when another culture is ethically and accurately reflected. The authors state that "[o]utsiders cannot produce authentic expressions of insiders' culture" for the reason that "[i]n-siders have privileged epistemic access to their culture" (2009:284–285).

The use of questionable representations on ceramics of South Africa's indigenous cultures continues in contemporary times. An example of this is the caricature San representations produced by Ento Ceramics as late as 2019. It made use of transfer images that depicted dancing female San figures with exaggerated physical features, which were arranged and applied onto acquired commercial wares.

The appeal of ethnographic portrayals can be illustrated by introducing one known sculptor of such works, Johanna (Joe) Vorster (1887–1945), commonly known as "Sister Vorster", who created at least 115 busts of "various tribal peoples" (Ogilvie 1988:723) of South Africa, Namibia, Mozambique and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Fig 5). She is particularly relevant to this text for having worked nearly exclusively in clay with no bronze castings of those known to exist. Vorster was a qualified nursing sister and only took up sculpting in 1930 in mid-life. She appears to have been a bohemian character with a flair for painting and crafting (Pillman 1969:79) but had no formal art training other than some brief instruction in 1934. Vorster devised her own way of preparing a very plastic black clay and, rather than building a bust on an armature, she carved it from a suitable sized ball of clay.[18] The references for the busts were gathered during her travels across South Africa and elsewhere in Africa. Her work attracted attention through her participation in group exhibitions from 1930 onwards but the only record of a commissioning party is that of the Portuguese government in Mozambique who commissioned a number of busts in 1934 (Ogilvie 1988:724). Vorster exhibited at the Empire Exhibition in 1936 for which she created a kraal with figures which remained intact and on display during the late 1960s at the former Cultural Historical Museum in Pretoria. Her work was also sent to South Africa House in London.

Naka Pillman (1969) illustrates her text with photos of some of the busts titled *Hottentot* (San male), *Intoxication* (in appearance assumed to be a San male), *Zulu baby*, *Basotho*, *Bushman* (a San male), *Slave* (a female of the "Sequendin slave tribe in French Equatorial Africa", another of a "typical pigmy girl" from Central Africa and a single example of a bust of a young European girl (daughter of a columnist of the Cape Times newspaper). The William Fehr Collection in the Social History Collections of Iziko Museums of South Africa includes the busts, *Bushman Head* and *Mapogger maid with a basket of eggs on her head*.

[18] The processes are described in detail by Pillman (1969:79–80).

Artistically speaking, they are skilfully produced and with no exaggerated features. Those in the collection of the Iziko Museums of South Africa are not used for ethnographic displays and therefore, when viewed, cause no offence. However, their history as purposefully made ethnographic representations cannot be excused nor ignored.

2.4 STUDIO POTTERY

The two seminal books with a principal focus on South African studio pottery and ceramic art are those by Clark and Wagner (1974) and Cruise (1991). Clark and Wagner focus on the eminent figures in studio pottery of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, some who would now be considered as ceramic artists rather than studio potters. The authors group the "potters" into two schools: the "traditionalists" who followed the lead of the Anglo-Oriental tradition of studio pottery and the "expressionists" or, in the authors' further definition, the "craftsman-potters" and the "artist-potters" (Clark & Wagner 1974:9). Cruise's book covers the fields of studio pottery and post-modern ceramics. A section of the book is dedicated to "craft pottery" in the Anglo-Oriental tradition of studio pottery (1991:41). Two other authoritative books that provide insights into the fraternity of studio potters and ceramic artists are those by Kerrod (2010) and Zaalberg (1985). Zaalberg's publication is a catalogue of ceramists who received awards at the APSA exhibitions prior to 1985 and includes limited biographical and career details as well as information about preferred materials, processes and forms. Kerrod's book provides abbreviated personal and career data of studio potters and ceramic artists.

The undated and unpublished memoir of Hyme Rabinowitz (1920–2009) is titled "A few remembrances". This is the only existing biographical document written by one of the pioneer studio potters.[19] The studio potter biographies of Bosch and Walford (Bosch & De Waal 1988; Wright 2009) and the Rabinowitz memoir

[19] Rabinowitz signed his first name as 'Hym' but 'Hyme' is more commonly used by authors.

provide insights into the early contact of the pioneer South African studio potters with the leading English studio pottery personalities of their times. From these, we also gain an impression of their exposure to other influences. It also emerges that their training was challenging and that, in setting up their studios, they had to contend with issues of materials, processes and technology. There was furthermore a challenge in gaining public recognition and support for their wares. Additional information on Bosch, Rabinowitz and Tim Morris (1941–1990) can be gleaned from the internet database *Southern African Art and Art History* (www.art-archives-southafrica.ch), created by The Haenggi Foundation, as well as the three Facebook pages dedicated to Bosch (Esias Bosch – Studio Potter & Artist), Rabinowitz (Hyme Rabinowitz – Studio Potter) and Morris (Tim Morris – Studio Potter & Artist) which share archival texts and images.

I could call on articles published in *Sgraffiti* (1973–1987), *National Ceramics Quarterly* (1987 to 2014), *Ceramix and Craft South Africa* (1987 to 1991) and *Ceramics Southern Africa Magazine* (2015 onwards) to glean biographical facts and commentary on other studio potters. The majority of the articles in the earlier editions of *Sgraffiti* and *National Ceramics Quarterly* were penned by potters and studio potters who wrote about material and technical matters, events and personalities. Those articles provide fragmentary and often anecdotal information. For the purpose of the academic research of the earlier years of South African studio pottery, the articles regularly lack critical data such as dates, designations and details.

Because South African studio pottery was still in its formative stage or because it had yet to be acknowledged as falling within the ambit of the visual arts, the subject garnered no attention in the first authoritative reference work on South African art by Esme Berman, *Art and Artists of South Africa* (1974). The pre-1982 studio pottery (and ceramic art) is briefly discussed in *Three Centuries of South African Art* by Hans Fransen (1982:337–340, 342). A single essay on studio pottery, namely that of Bosch, was featured in the third volume of the Foundation for Education, Science and Technology's *Our Art* [Sa] edited by Heine Toerien

and Georges Duby. The magazines, *Lantern*, *S.A. Panorama*, *ArtLook* and *Ceramix and Craft South Africa* included articles on studio pottery.

Further data on studio pottery and ceramic art can be extracted from the exhibition catalogues of regional, national, biannual and triannual events hosted by APSA and CSA; exhibition notices and catalogues by galleries; newspaper reviews by art critics; and the occasional articles in newspapers, general interest magazines and lifestyle magazines. The public and institutional ceramics collections, in particular, the acquisition data and descriptive catalogue entries, offer another source of information.

The commonly-held (and simplistic) perception of twentieth-century South African studio pottery was (and, to some extent, continues to be) that Bosch introduced it on his return in 1952 from England where he apprenticed at studio potteries; that the studio pottery of most of the second half of the century was firmly rooted in the Anglo-Oriental tradition of studio pottery which Bosch, his fellow studio pottery pioneers and their successors represented and, furthermore, that the studio pottery was staid, bland and repetitious. It is more accurate to state that South African studio pottery "began to develop initial form and stature" (Clark & Wagner 1974:9) with Bosch and his fellow studio pottery pioneers, Rabinowitz and Brian Haden (1930–2016). The studio potters in the early years of the movement did indeed call on the aesthetics of the Anglo-Oriental tradition of studio pottery but also on that of English country pottery and the Scandinavian and Japanese schools of pottery (Watt 2016:109). Those studio potters launched their careers and introduced their ranges of wares at a time when there was a pronounced consumer preference for factory-made white English and Scandinavian tableware.[20]

[20] About his output from his initial studio in Durban, Bosch recounted that: "Nobody wanted my pots in Durban. Hand-made pots were foreign to them. [Shop and gallery owners] said they imported their pottery from England. They really looked down on local hand-made ceramics" (Bosch & De Waal 1988:22). Bosch had better success when he moved his studio to Pretoria but lamented: "Most people still thought that pots were strictly utilitarian, and were reluctant to pay more for a hand-made pot than for a factory-produced item" (Bosch & De Waal 1988:23–24).

I presented a detailed account of the rise, scope and international reach of the Anglo-Oriental tradition of studio pottery in my MA dissertation (Watt, 2016) in which I also contested the generalisation that South African studio pottery bore its stamp. Because of the perception of the role of the Anglo-Oriental tradition of studio pottery in the shaping of South African studio pottery, I will summarise its most salient facts.

The Anglo-Oriental tradition of studio pottery describes a movement in pottery production that arose in the 1920s in England. It manifested in a specific approach to materials, processes, forms, ethics and aesthetics that was seen as a continuation of the handcraft tradition and as a rejection of industrialism, modernism and capitalism. The guiding forces of the movement were the English "artist-potter" Bernard Leach (1887–1979), the Japanese potter Shōji Hamada (1894–1978) and Sōetsu Yanagi (1889–1961) who was a promotor of Japanese folk-craft known as *mingei*. Leach aspired to fuse Eastern aesthetics of form and decoration with English practicality (Lewenstein & Cooper 1974:16–17) or, as described by the British studio pottery art historian Jeffrey Jones (2007:81), to hold "the exotic Eastern and the indigenous English … in a creative tension which gave opportunities for a playful crossover of techniques, styles and sensibilities".

Leach's early studio pottery career took shape at his St. Ives, Cornwall studio. In tandem with developing his style of pottery, Leach also shaped his philosophical approach towards pottery. The philosophy held that the artist was the craftsman, all the processes from conception to completion were of equal importance, and the production of standard wares did not exclude the studio potter from creating individual pieces (Watson 1993:19). In essence, this constituted the "ethical pot" which the Japanese art specialist Ellen P. Conant (1992:2) defined as an "amalgam of philosophical, religious and aesthetic elements that saw beauty in utilitarian objects made by and for common people". Leach promoted his

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Bosch's early oeuvre included individual ornamental works which he later described as "parlour pots"[4] (my translation of *voorhuispotte*) to be appreciated for their distinctive beauty (Grutter 1976:38).

philosophy of studio pottery in *A Potter's Book* published in 1940, which would become *de rigueur* reading within the studio pottery fraternity. The book advanced that a potter, supported by assistants in a studio, could produce both utilitarian wares and individual works as a self-sustaining and profitable enterprise. Proof of that was manifest in the oeuvre of Michael Cardew (1901–1983) who, after his three-year long apprenticeship under Leach, set up a studio in Winchcombe, Gloucestershire in 1926 and, in 1939, a second studio at Wenford Bridge in Cornwall. Cardew's objective was to "run [it] on traditional country pottery lines but meeting the needs of a contemporary audience and market" (Jones 2007:24). Unlike Leach, writes Clark (2006:6), he "was the real thing when it comes to serving utility". Much more so than that of Leach, Cardew's utilitarian wares were earthy and vigorous, "[produced by] robust handling of the clay [and] direct and lively decorative processes" as described by Jones (2007:24–25).

Cardew's first exposure to African pottery was in Ghana. In 1942, he was appointed as manager of pottery at the Achimota College. He then established an independent pottery at Vurne-Dugarne on the River Volta which he managed from 1945 to 1948. He returned to Nigeria to manage the Pottery Training Centre in Abuja from 1950 to 1965. In this latter period, he switched from working in earthenware to stoneware and, in those works, it could be detected how he absorbed a stylistic African influence (Jones 2007:116). In this same time frame, Bosch, Rabinowitz and Haden set out to establish their own studio potter careers. In my MA dissertation, I posit that the pioneers of South African studio pottery were influenced to a greater extent by the philosophy and work of Cardew than that of Leach. Bosch and Rabinowitz had direct contact and work experience with Cardew.

A discussion of the pertinent features of the training, influences and oeuvres of the pioneer studio potters and their successors as is relative to the development of South African studio pottery must suffice. In 1950, Bosch abandoned his pottery study at the Central School of Art and Design in London where he found the

training geared towards the teaching of pottery as craft in which he held no interest. He was then accepted as an apprentice at Cardew's Winchcombe Pottery which, at the time, was under the charge of Raymond Finch (1914–2012) whilst Cardew was engaged in Africa. In mid-1952, Bosch had the brief opportunity to work with Cardew himself at the Wenford Bridge pottery. Bosch would meet up again with Cardew in 1959 in Nigeria for a tour of the pottery workshops in Kano, Sokoto and Abuja. Their last direct contact was in 1968 when Cardew visited Bosch at his studio in White River which Bosch established in 1960.[21]

Rabinowitz's introduction to pottery was at the Frank Joubert Art Centre in Cape Town where he attended a weekly class taught by Audrey Frank (1905–1990). In 1956, he had the opportunity to visit studio potteries in Cornwall. There he met Kenneth Quick (1931–1963) at his Tregenna Hill pottery studio in St. Ives. Quick was a former apprentice of Leach. Rabinowitz accepted a six-month appointment as Quick's studio assistant during which period he met Cardew. He returned to South Africa in 1957 to establish a studio in Higgovale, Cape Town. Rabinowitz and Cardew met again in 1957 at Kano in Nigeria and in 1966 when he was given a short-term appointment as Cardew's assistant at Wenford Bridge.[22] Rabinowitz established his studio, Eagles Nest, in Cape Town in 1962 to which he returned after his stay at Wenford Bridge.

Haden studied fine arts at the University of Natal where he was instructed in ceramics by Hilda Ditchburn (1917–1986). He established his first studio at Hay Paddock in Pietermaritzburg which he operated until 1958 and then started another short-lived studio in 1963 on the family farm, Bonnefoi, in Mpumalanga

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[21] Bosch recounted that his conversations with Cardew during the latter's visit to White River dealt with philosophical and technical issues related to pottery. Bosch later recounted: "His philosophy concerning the relationship between craft and art was simple, yet to an extent revolutionary: he held the view that any individual who created form which was new and not a repetition of what had been made before, was an artist." (Bosch & De Waal 1988:26).

[22] Rabinowitz would later be acknowledged for his association with Cardew. He was included with 13 of the former pupils of Cardew in a retrospective exhibition that honoured Cardew at the Beardsmore Galley in London in 1993. In press coverage of the event, Rabinowitz was identified as the studio potter who "carried the [Cardew] tradition back to southern Africa" (Anon 1993a:11).

Province. From 1964 to 1965, he held an appointment at the Aylesford Monastery Pottery in Kent and that was followed by a teaching post at the Greenpoint Art Centre in Cape Town. In 1966, he established his studio in Gordon's Bay where he worked until 1997, the year in which he suffered a debilitating stroke (Fig 6).

There is no evidence that the three studio pottery pioneer studio potters were inseparably aligned to Leach and the Anglo-Oriental tradition of pottery. Leach is acknowledged as having excelled more in his artist-pottery than in his country-style production pottery. Cardew, on the other hand, is acknowledged for successfully merging art with craft that is similarly revealed in the aesthetics of the South African pioneers. Whilst Bosch, Rabinowitz and Haden are hailed as studio pottery pioneers, it must be understood that it is in the sense of pioneering the studio potter as a persona, practice, ethos and viable enterprise which, as a concept, held an appeal for discerning consumers and the pottery students at educational institutions and private pottery schools.[23] They set the scene for their successors that would include both South African-trained studio potters and émigré studio potters.

Amongst the next generation of studio potters who command attention are Tim Morris, Andrew Walford, Ian Glenny, Elza Sullivan (1935–2020), Yvonne Levy and the partnership of David Schlapobersky and Felicity Potter. Their oeuvres developed to be distinctive within South African studio pottery and in those could be detected various stylistic and ideological influences. Their oeuvres included hand-made utilitarian pottery as well as one-off ornamental works. Collectively, they were representative of self-taught studio potters or those who gained their skills whilst serving pottery studio apprenticeships, were students at informal pottery schools or had graduated from the ceramic departments at tertiary

[23] In recognition of his career, Rabinowitz was awarded a silver medal for Singular Merit and Rare Achievement by the University of Pretoria in 1990. He was also recognised as a "Master Potter" by APSA in 1990. The University of Cape Town bestowed an honorary master's degree in fine art on him in 1992. Bosch was similarly recognised as a "Master Potter" by APSA in 2000. An earlier recognition of his achievements was a medal of honour for ceramic design awarded by Die Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns (The South African Academy for Science and Arts) in 1981. The University of Pretoria awarded Bosch a Chancellor Medal in 1991.

institutions. They boosted their professional profiles via participation in national and regional competitions and enjoyed the patronage of South African and international gallerists. My notes on these studio potters are concise and therefore do not do them proper justice.

Morris graduated in 1964 from the Central School of Art in London where he studied pottery under Ruth Duckworth (1919–2009). He arrived in South Africa in 1965 in anticipation of setting up a pottery studio and workshop. He established a short-lived studio with Helen Martin (Dunstan) in Johannesburg followed by an appointment as lecturer at the Johannesburg College of Art from which he resigned in 1969. He then set up the Ngwenya Studio in the Muldersdrift region of Johannesburg. Walford abandoned his studies at the Durban Art School in 1959 and then joined the Walsh-Marais Pottery as an apprentice. That was followed by an apprenticeship at the Liebermann Pottery Studio in 1959. In 1964, he worked at the Gustavsberg Studio in Sweden and, in 1965 he relocated to Germany to teach at the Hamburg Art Academy. On his return to South Africa, he established his studio at Shongweni in KwaZulu-Natal. Glenny too abandoned his fine art studies to set up his first pottery studio in Durban and afterwards in 1976 at Dargle in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands. Schlapobersky and Potter founded their Bukkenburg studio in Swellendam in 1996. Prior to that, and for a period spanning 20 years, they had studios in Halfway House, Parkwood and Parkview. Schlapobersky throws the pots, and Potter does the decorating. They received some pottery lessons from Gordon Wales but claim Morris as mentor and a defining influence. Sullivan attended the pottery school of Minette Schuiling (Zaaiman) before she established her first studio in Newcastle in KwaZulu-Natal and afterwards in Pretoria where she primarily produced utilitarian works. Levy studied ceramic design at the Pretoria Technikon in early 1970s and then established her studio in Pretoria (Clark & Wagner 1974; Cruise 1991; Schlapobersky 2010; Glenny 2010; Sullivan 2014; Wright 2009).

Collectively, these earlier studio potters represent various backgrounds in training and influence with no or little explicit adherence to the Anglo-Oriental tradition of

studio pottery. They had individual philosophies that translated into individual expressions. Clark and Wagner (1974:14–18) hail the purism, economy and technical perfection of Bosch's work. Nilant (1963:55) notes the simplicity of materials and shape and Fransen (1982:339) praises the fine balance of shape and decorative elements (Fig 7). Of Rabinowitz's oeuvre, Marais (2000:11) states: "There is no artifice, no 'cleverness' in his strong, simple forms. Form, surface and decoration are integrated in harmonious balance. There are no trivial appendages to distract the eye or block the hand in holding. All elements serve the goal of 'usefulness'".

Both Cruise (1991:48) and Clark and Wagner (1974:41) recognise the craft potter's ethics and aesthetics in Haden: robust and generous in his traditional shapes, not over-decorated (Fig 8). According to Clark and Wagner (1974:121), Morris did not "subscribe to the aggrandisement of pottery as an expensive elitist art form". John Dewar (1971) describes Morris's work of the 1970s as having shapes that "are decided, direct and complete in themselves" with "embellishment of a minimal design in glazes [having] just enough meaning"[24] (Fig 9). Of Walford's oeuvre, Clark and Wagner (1974:188) hold the opinion that there is little evidence of Scandinavian influence in his work but rather a reflection of the Japanese and Korean pottery philosophy. Gers (2016) describes Walford as a "master of the Leach-Hamada tradition" but Walford himself has reservations about being branded as such. As far back as 1988, he pronounced: "Leach and Hamada were purists; they were the ice breakers; they allowed others to do the ice cream cones. We stand on their shoulders" (Guassardo 1988:23). In recent times, he again distanced himself from such an association: "I am wearing the [Anglo-Oriental] shoes and they pinch … describing me as Anglo-Oriental is a bit like playing calypso on the violin" (Walford 2010) (Fig 10). Glenny describes his oeuvre as a marriage of the tenets of the Anglo-Oriental tradition of studio pottery

[24] Glaze is the glassy material applied in its fluid form to seal the body and enhance the surface. Glazes made of different organic and inorganic materials produce different colours and effects (Savage & Newman 1974:136).

and the *mingei* folk craft movement but denies that he is a traditionalist: “I went for traditional English ceramics … with a little bit of Oriental … domestic ware ... saleable, so that I could make a buck out of it. I didn’t want to be a starving artist” (Glenny 2010) (Fig 11). Sullivan’s oeuvre must be considered as being in the idiom of the Anglo-Oriental tradition of studio pottery but not strictly adhering to the tenets of that ideology rather than the continuum. Her approach was simple: she produced functional wares with which the user would engage in everyday life and everyday surrounds.

John Steele (2015a) states that features – or “uptakes”, as he puts it – of the Anglo-Oriental tradition of studio pottery remained evident in the studio practises of the late twentieth-century South African studio potters and can even be traced in the oeuvres of twenty-first century studio potters *and* ceramic artists. In his grouping of these studio potters, Steele (2015b) includes amongst others, Anton van der Merwe (1950–2016), Barbara Robinson (1938–2002), Graham Bolland, Yogi de Beer, Paul de Jongh, John Ellis, Nico Liebenberg, Vale van der Merwe and, to some extent, also Steele himself. I would further include Dave Wells who was an apprentice of Haden in 1978 and John Wilhelm, also apprenticed to Haden from 1980 to mid-1982. Christo Giles counts amongst those who are acknowledged as twenty-first century ceramic artists but whose oeuvres are dominated by an “emphasis on utility of the object [which] is in essence the core of the Anglo-Oriental belief system” (Cruise 2018a:10). In my opinion, the oeuvre of Austin Hleza (1949–1998) straddles studio pottery and ceramics, the latter for his acknowledged skills and flair in the production of utilitarian wares and notably so whilst employed at Mantenga Craft Pottery in the mid-1970s.

The interest in producing “craft pottery” in the 1960s and 1970s was fuelled by a consumer demand for articles that championed the handmade, “earthy” and unique in opposition to industrial mass-produced wares. In his opening address at the APSA Western Cape regional exhibition in 1980, Dr RH van Niekerk (1980:5) expressed the opinion that

> the enormous popularity of traditional craftsman pottery amongst the

> South African buying public has also tempted many a potter to stick to his wheel and keep turning out what is all too quickly snapped up for the sitting-rooms and redesigned rustic kitchens in Constantia and Sandton.

Munnik (1989:25) writes that craft pottery embodied the "anti-establishment and anti-materialist moral value" whilst conferring on the makers of craft pottery a "'cosmic consciousness' peculiar to the alternative culture of the 1970s". The establishment of APSA in 1972[25] flowed from a proliferation in the numbers of potters seeking to copy the work and achievements of the studio pottery pioneers and their successors. As a representative forum, APSA had the objective of:

> the encouragement and fostering of the art and craft of ceramics in Southern Africa. In particular, it encourages and fosters the creation of awareness of the aesthetic, artistic, cultural and utilitarian value of ceramics. It also assists in the building of cooperative relationships between the participants in the value chain of ceramics from resource production through to public distribution; the development of the art and craft as a vehicle for economic empowerment and value creation; the professional and ethical management of the activities to increase the economic importance of the art and craft in Southern Africa. Art produced in clay today is strong and valid, and is crossing the boundaries of other art forms and media (Goldblatt 2012:5).

The membership interest was sufficient for APSA to establish branches early on in Cape Town, Durban, Pretoria, Port Elizabeth, Bloemfontein and the Vaal Triangle (De Klerk 1997:18). By 1998, there were more than 1 000 members (Feldman 1988:2) who came from a broad practising potter base that was estimated to number some 4 000 by 1992 (Lapping-Sellars 1992:19). Many of the members had their first exposure to pottery in local pottery schools.[26] Liebermann

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[25] The formal establishment of APSA was preceded by an exploratory meeting in Johannesburg, attended by, amongst others, Sammy Liebermann (1920–1984), Mary Liebermann (1929–2007), Morris, Bosch, Joyce Keyser, John Shirley, Mollie Fisch, Wendy Goldblatt, Charlotte Katzen, Loma Bloom, Gillian Bickell, Thelma Marcusson, Peggy Simpson, Peggy Klein and Annette Beming. To rouse interest amongst potters and the public, a pottery exhibition was organised at the Brickor central office in Edenvale.

[26] The earlier schools and teachers included Angelique Kirk, Ann Leader, Barbara Robinson (1938–2002), Barry Dibb, David May, Elza Sullivan, Gordon Wales, Helen Martin, Jo Bosman, Dilys Hoets (1921–2006), Lesley-Ann Hoets, Digby Hoets, Margie Malan, the Frank Joubert Art Centre, the Greenpoint Art Centre, the Cape Town Art Centre, John and Valmai Edwards, the Ruth

Pottery and Tiles in Johannesburg and Kolonyama Pottery offered a few opportunities for apprenticeships. The former attracted Andrew Walford, Bruce Walford, Rosten Chorn (1954–2005), Chris Green, Kim Sacks and Jeremy Zinn who would, in time, achieve prominent standing as studio potters or ceramic artists. The availability of modern and easy to use technology, such as electric kilns and "instant" ceramics materials, made the practice of studio pottery more appealing and bolstered the growth in the number of studio potters and hobbyist potters. The electric kilns[27] were suitable for the firing of earthenware and stoneware, low-temperature overglaze and underglaze colours. Ready-prepared clays and even a supply of a big selection of bisqueware[28] that eliminated the need to throw or slab anything eliminated much of the effort usually associated with pottery (Schlapobersky 2010).

Public appreciation of studio pottery was promoted by APSA, craft galleries and shops, as well as fine art galleries. APSA organised regional and national ceramics competitions with the first national exhibition that attracted participation by some 100 potters staged in Cape Town in 1975. Up to the early 1980s, the regional and national exhibitions were dominated by "artists working in the traditional manner" (Werth 1978:5) whose works were mostly reduction-fired stoneware and usually utilitarian in nature.

As early as 1975, Clark sounded the warning that the attention of South African potters was totally focused on Leach, Hamada, Yanagi and the English craft-

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Prowse School of Art, Marissa Horn, Maxie Heymans, Maxie Schuiling, Robin and Joy Standing, Sarie Louise Maritz, Sonja Gerlings, Susan Annandale, Katinka Twigg, Suzann Passmore, the Walsh-Marais Studio, Jeremy Zinn, the Sylvia Baxter Studio, the Craft Studio in Tshwane and Ruth Green (1916-1981). Advanced techniques could be acquired at APSA's workshops that were hosted by the established studio potters such as Bosch, Rabinowitz, Haden, Morris, Andrew Walford, Glenny, Chris Patton (1939–2018), Chris Green, Bill van Gilder and Toff Milway.

[27] Cruise (2018a:10) points out that electric powered kilns were regarded as the province of "women garage potters" ... Women were excluded from the dominant (Anglo-Oriental tradition of studio pottery) narrative all the more so if they fired with electric power and bought, instead of made, their tools and glazes. Thus, until late in the twentieth century, women were derogatorily labelled as "garage potters".

[28] Bisqueware is unglazed earthenware or stoneware fired once which ceramists can then decorate and re-fire.

movement studio potter William Staite Morris (1881–1962). He contrasted the Anglo-Oriental tradition of studio pottery with the approach by contemporary English ceramists "where imagery supersedes craft" (1975:4, 6). The idiom and quality of exhibited works of utilitarian nature repeatedly attracted criticism or, at best, guarded praise. In his critique of the APSA-hosted Ceramics '75 exhibition where he officiated as one of the judges, Mike Kamstra (1975:15) noted that "the overall quality of the pieces submitted was mediocre … It would appear that if potters have an eye for anything at all it is at most only for one aspect of their work at a time; it is either the glaze OR [sic] the shape of one section of the piece OR [sic] the inside OR [sic] the outside … very few pieces were complete, resolved and integrated." The APSA national "Mud" exhibition staged in 1976 drew similar criticism when Kathy Jones (1976:4) observed:

> One questions the validity of some of the thrown ware which purports to provide functional everyday objects that will give the user more joy than their machine-made equivalents, but which fails to take into account such factors as the relationship between the base of a goblet and its bowl, leading to a precariousness of balance both visually and practically; or the requirement that a teapot pour well and be relatively easy to lift; or that a casserole dish with a lid should not be so heavy when filled, it must require a mighty pair of biceps to lift it from the oven.

Barry Alleson (then the national chairman of APSA) in his opening address at the 3rd APSA national exhibition had praise for what the potters were achieving:

> [traditional, functional ware] pottery [has] become more deftly handled as South African potters have come to terms with their medium, the initial stages of pseudo-Leach and Hamada influence inexorably changing to more indigenous pottery, but more important, not forsaking the craftsmanship, which has over this period of time become more and more proficient (1979:8).

Three years later however, Dr Albert Werth (then Curator of the Pretoria Art Gallery) in his opening address at APSA's 6th national exhibition, referred to the prevailing criticism that South African pottery was "too traditional and conservative" and, in particular, that "there is so little experimental work being done even by our foremost potters" (1978:4). Further criticism was voiced by

Spies Venter who was, at the time, the Head of Department of Ceramics at the College of Art in Johannesburg. Venter (1979:4) bemoaned the work of established potters on exhibit at the 1979 national exhibition as showing "a lack of soul, a stereotypical style that will eventually lead to their downfall" (my translation).[29]

With few exceptions, the criticism that potters' outputs and exhibited items were predominantly utilitarian forms was valid. What must be borne in mind was that pottery, at the time, was virtually exclusively associated with utilitarian wares: plates, cups and saucers, mugs, tea and coffee pots, bowls, casserole dishes, jugs, goblets, storage jars, chargers, vases, butter dishes and more. For the part-time, as well as the studio potters, the example was set by the production potteries such as Kolonyama Pottery, Izandla Pottery, Mantenga Craft Pottery and Thaba Bosigo with their utilitarian product ranges that had a distinct "craft" look.[30] Studio potters of the standing of Bosch, Morris, Chris Green, the Walford brothers Andrew and Bruce, Glenny, Chris Patton and Sullivan relied on the sale of their "bread and butter" utilitarian works to keep their studios in good finance. Admittedly, those studio potters tried to convey a non-commercial ethos in their output. Another example of adapting an oeuvre to make a studio a financially viable enterprise can be seen in the approach of Glenny. Though acclaimed for his one-off collector pieces, Glenny acknowledged that the market for those was small and he therefore introduced wares that would appeal to the tourist market. Few if any of the potters could, by the turn of the century, in the words of Glenny (2010), afford the luxury of the "nobility of poverty". Other studio potters, such as Steve Shapiro, resisted the advance of new ceramic trends:

> I am and I am not of the past and so, hopefully, my pots will, at their best, reflect this without having to abandon all that has always been right and good and without slavishly copying the, largely gaudy, often

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[29] 'n siellоosheid, 'n stereotipe styl wat uiteindelik tot diesulkes se ondergang gaan lei.

[30] The team of trained throwers and slab-builders at Kolonyama Pottery were able to produce 5 000 stoneware pieces of various designs and sizes per month, most which found their way onto the South African market (Van Gilder 1974:9).

> vulgar angst objects of the avant garde. … I find that I can produce working everyday pots that ordinary people can use for their cornflakes and their Nescafé (1991:11, 14).

Cruise, who never stints in giving credit to exemplary utilitarian pottery where it is due, delivered a stinging condemnation of those potters who were guilty of merely copying the forms of the Anglo-Oriental tradition of studio pottery whilst standing ignorant of tenets.[31] The outcome of that, she stated, was that "Anglo-Orientalism soon degenerated into a hollow copy of itself" (2009:18).

2.5 CERAMIC ART

By the 1950s, the Anglo-Oriental tradition of studio pottery was already standing in direct opposition to a new ceramic art movement emerging in England and the USA. It was a movement which, according to Karen Weiss (2006), shifted the focus towards "authorship, tactility, sensuality, original form and direct manipulation". It must be noted, however, that ceramic art already had a presence in South Africa in the mid-twentieth century. The painter, Irma Stern (1894–1966), produced a limited number of ceramics described as:

> [s]ome large earthenware jars and jugs, glued and decorated in shiny glaze with bright colours – some vases in the form of female figures, partly thrown with modelled upper bodies, and decorated plates, mostly unglazed. Most of the larger are decorated with female figures and nudes, smaller pieces and plates with faces, some of which bear a family resemblance to the artist (Slemon 1992:4).

Stern produced her ceramic works[32] between 1949 and 1954, a period that coincides with Pablo Picasso's (1881–1973) work in ceramics which he started in 1947 at the Madoura ceramics studio in Vallauris, France. Probably because of her limited ceramic art output and public attention that focused on her painting,

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[31] Cruise held that the Anglo-Oriental tradition of studio pottery was neither a rigid nor a closed practice. There is support for Cruise's stance in a comment made by Leach's wife Janet (1918–1997) that Leach was "the great granddaddy of the 'do your own thing' generation" (Hatcher 1998:4).

[32] It appears that Stern did not necessarily throw works but decorated wares thrown by the Sherwood Pottery of Charles and Micheline Street (Esmyol 2020).

Stern's ceramic art was never considered to have had any influence on the development of South African ceramic art (Figs 12, 13).

Another ceramist who was an early exponent of expressive works that stood in stark contrast to the ceramics output of the era, was Ann Glaser (1900–1992). Glaser, who trained as a craft teacher, was active outside of the ceramics fraternity during the 1950s and 1960s, exhibiting her figurative works at private galleries and, as such, only garnered attention in the daily press. The scope and relevance of Glaser's oeuvre resurfaced when her estate was auctioned in 2011. Some of her works were created by carving and glazing bricks, others were modelled in clay and then glazed and fired. Biblical themes, the lives of saints and African references were hallmarks of her range of sculptures and vessels. The figurative works exhibited in 1962 were described by an unnamed art critic (*The Star* 1962:[Sp]) as "a little theatrical … due rather to a love of grotesque elaboration than to extravagance of colour". Facing up to public criticism for her oeuvre that defied the convention of the time, Glaser (*The Star* 1965:[Sp]) responded that "they are not ready for such advanced stuff". In retrospect, Glaser's oeuvre was a fit for the ceramics movement abroad that saw the abandonment of convention (Fig 14).

Ceramic art, as it arose in the USA during the 1950s and Britain during the 1960s, represented an expansion and diversification of materials, forms and aesthetics usually associated with pottery. The public was given a foretaste of what was to come in the ceramic art ventures of Picasso and Joan Miró (1893–1983) who translated the concepts they captured in their abstract expressionist painting in clay (Levin 1988:196). This was further explored and developed in the 1950s by the ceramist Peter Voulkos (1924–2002) at the Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles. Damon Moon (2009) considered that Voulkos brought "the macho energy and physicality of abstract expressionism to clay" in the spirit of abstract expressionism. Voulkos' work developed from basic pottery forms but, rather than translating those into conceptual containers, he sought to achieve sculptural forms (Lewenstein & Cooper 1974:19). Watson (1993:30) interpreted this as

Voulkos' "investigations of form, material and captured movement". The ceramics students at the English schools of art shifted their attention from the pot to the vessel and sculptural forms. In the initial stage, there was much experimentation in which the students were not held to any standards and explored alternative methods of making. One of South Africa's earliest champions of the ceramics art movement was Yoshie Shilove, editor of the magazine *Ceramix Art and Craft*, who hailed the "super object" with its "accented super realism, tactile illusion and fetish finish, to make contextual art statements" (1988:27). Clark describes the "super object", which became a significant feature of American ceramic art in the 1980s, as being identifiable "by its decadent use of craft, extravagant lustre surfaces, trompe-l'oeil china painting, and soft-core surrealist imagery" (1978:xviii).

What has largely been overlooked in writings about the South African ceramics history is that studio pottery and ceramic art (even if the latter did not yet go by that name) shared the same founding years. Hilda Ditchburn (1917–1986), a student of Dora Billington (1890–1968) at the Central School in London, emerged as one of the leading early figures in guiding attention away from studio pottery to ceramic art. Ditchburn's lectureship at the University of KwaZulu-Natal commenced in 1946 where she was appointed to teach "pottery and modelling" (Vurovecz 2008:33). (She would later head the CSCVA at the university.) This precedes, by a few years, Bosch's appointment in 1953 as head of the ceramics department at the Durban Art School. Ditchburn also pioneered the first stoneware kiln in 1953, some seven years before Bosch built his wood-fired stoneware kiln.

Cruise (2016b:142-143) has advanced that Ditchburn merits consideration of being a pioneer of equal standing alongside Bosch, Rabinowitz and Haden, and that the absence of such recognition amounts to an androcentric approach to South African studio pottery history. The naming of Bosch, Rabinowitz and Hayden as studio pottery "pioneers" is by popular rather than academic convention. I would argue that Ditchburn has gratuitously been denied the pioneer status on the grounds that she was not a dedicated independent studio potter but was rather

associated with teaching pottery at an academic institution.

In this same foundation era, Alice Heystek, who graduated in 1946 with a degree in ceramic art and design from the New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University, taught ceramics at the Pretoria Technical College. Ditchburn was orientated towards utilitarian work but with an expanded and liberating range of materials, techniques and processes beyond those which the early South African studio potters were familiar with. Heystek favoured hand-built organic forms and shapes in earthenware and stoneware, described by Clark and Wagner (1974:50) as "tall and monolithic or low and wide with strongly swelling curves" (Fig 15).

The other "artist-potters" cum "expressionists" active in the early 1970s and considered as such in Clark and Wagner's (1974) book, were Helen Martins, Thelma Marcusson, Marietjie van der Merwe and Hannatjie van der Wat. Martins produced pinched stoneware pots with, at times, pitted surfaces and ragged edges. Marcusson created pinched pots and organic forms, favouring porcelain[33] and also using crystalline glazes. Van der Merwe, who gained a BA degree in design at the University of California, included coiling as a technique and introduced composite forms. Van der Wat introduced solid hand-built stoneware forms, some organic and others near-figurative.

Creative expression was encouraged by Malcolm P. MacIntyre-Read, a graduate of the Central School of Art and Design in London, who lectured ceramics at the University of KwaZulu-Natal from 1972 to 1976. His teaching portfolio included attention to hand-building processes of construction and sculptural aspects of ceramics (Calder 2012:66). This bore fruit in the outcomes of the university's third year ceramic students as evidenced in the 1975 critique of Van der Merwe (1975:8) who was their external examiner. She described the works as "highly imaginative" and that "their own interpretation of form-image was emerging". Similar strides in advancing ceramic art were made at the Technikon

[33] Porcelain is a mixture of kaolin and feldspathic rock, usually white of colour.

Witwatersrand (later absorbed into the University of Johannesburg's Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture) which introduced a three-year National Diploma in Ceramics in 1966. Amongst its alumni that pursued careers as ceramic artists and achieved national prominence are Clementina van der Walt, Michelle Legg, Rhé Wessels, Suzette Munnik, Sue Sellschop, Liza Firer and Querardien Van Vliet (Hön 2008:26).

Hön positions ceramic art as venturing "beyond the walls of traditionalism and conformism" and the "breaking down [of] the barriers that previously existed between art, craft and design" (2012:29) via new materials, techniques and processes to "produce work that is unconventional and confrontational" (2012:28). Prior to the 1980s, such a clear defining of ceramic art was not evident in South African thinking and debates raged within the ceramics fraternity whether ceramic art should be exhibited alongside studio pottery in exhibitions, whether there should be different categories for wheel-thrown and hand-built works and even whether ceramic sculpture has a place within ceramic art.[34]

Ceramic art flowered in the 1980s by means of new materials and processes as well as colour, expressed in familiar and unfamiliar forms inclusive of figurative works and sculpture. Perrill (2012:51) sees the earliest evidence of this in the awards made to sculptural forms and works with bright colours at the 1980 APSA national exhibition and the 1981 "Things People Make" exhibition. Cruise (1991:13) described the "eclecticism and variety":

> The range of work [varied] from the ultra-sophisticated vessel, showing the virtuoso skills of the master craftsman, to the crudely constructed but vigorous forms of the native potter. Vessels with paint, vessels with additions of non-ceramic materials, and plates stuck with glitter and glue – all have their place in the new South

[34] In the *Sgraffiti* edition of September 1982, Joan Winn (1982:6–7) condemned the entries seen at a regional exhibition as "lumps of clay that have been poked, prodded and squeezed into some grotesque shape". She shared her impression that the pottery community "seem[s] to be ruled by the students of technikons and art schools". Walford (1978:7) earlier suggested that special categories ought to be created in the national competitions for works produced by "traditional potters" and "people who are creating objects in clay".

African ceramics.

Impetus for this came from the visits in 1982 and 1983 to South Africa by the American ceramist, David Middlebrook. Middlebrook hosted ceramic workshops where he introduced new approaches to ceramics and dismissed long-held conventions about pottery. According to Cruise (1991:13), it was Middlebrook's vision of ceramics that "finally ended the dictatorship of Anglo-Orientalism" in South Africa.

The pursuit of the vessel became a prominent feature in South African ceramics from the 1980s onwards. What differentiates the vessel from the pot is that it makes a metaphorical statement even when the vessel's form does not completely break free of that of the pot or when it retains some sense of utility. Generally speaking, the vessel does not aspire to be either utilitarian or ornamental. Cooper (2009:59) considers the vessel as holding a position between the pot (utilitarian) and the object (ornamental) but independent from those, without explicit function other than to engage both eye and mind via its material, form and idea. Clark's view differs somewhat in that he assigns an abstract function to the vessel which is to serve as an idea rather than as a reality or to "become a container for ideas rather than a container for tangibles" (1978:xxii; 1981:8). The vessel's true function, according to Cruise (1991:15), "is to expand and enrich our consciousness of the world". In every form and intent, the vessel stood in stark contrast to familiar utilitarian and ornamental studio pottery. Based on Cruise's selection of ceramic artists for inclusion in her book, the vessel-as-metaphor was expressed in exaggerated forms (as by Hendrik Stroebel) (Fig 16), cast and assembled forms (as by Wessels), thrown and assembled forms (as by Rita Tasker), reinterpretations of forms and decorations (as by Hylton Nel) (Fig 17), vigorous colours (as by Barry Dibb), symbolic representations (as by Kim Sacks) and hyper-refinement (as by Martha Zettler).

The ceramic artists did not escape criticism from within their own ranks that their works did not consistently show proof of mastery of technique and form. Cruise (1990:21) wrote:

> In ceramics there is a tendency to forget 'the bloody horse'. There is so much polishing of the saddle and dressing the bridle that the gutsy, breathing, living, animal is forgotten. Technique becomes subordinate to the real thing. Instead of being in service to a visually exciting object it becomes an end in itself – the horse is forgotten or at least neglected.

Cruise's concern went unheeded and she repeated her admonishment in 2009 in her review of the Gauteng regional exhibition:

> [I]t seems now that the new postmodernist flowering in ceramics itself has reached a stasis. In retrospect it seems that we threw the baby out with the bath water. In discarding the stringent formalist precepts of Anglo-Orientalism we came to neglect form itself. This was evident on this regional exhibition where – but for a few notable works, the form of the vessels, objects and sculptures was generally poor. Shapes were attenuated and seemed not so much stifled as strangled (Cruise 2009:18).

2.6 CERAMIC SCULPTURE AND INSTALLATIONS

Ceramic sculpture had an early presence in the history of APSA.[35] Charles Gotthard Jacobs, Sonja Gerlings, Susan Geddes-Page, Spies Venter and Ronnie van der Walt were amongst those whose works were included in APSA's national exhibitions in the 1970s. The studio potter Morris also dabbled with small-scale sculptural works but received nominal recognition for those. Clark and Wagner (1974:60) consider Gotthard Jacob's work as avant-garde by South African standards in that he "distorts and magnifies [thrown shapes] to create a dynamic interplay of lines and angles". Of relevance is that Gotthard Jacobs incorporated non-ceramic materials such as Perspex and cork. Gerlings' sculptural output was limited but included figurative works in earthenware that were either coiled or slab-built.

John Nowers (1940–1995) is considered to be a leading force in the development of South African ceramic sculpture. Nowers lectured ceramic sculpture in the

[35] For a comprehensive survey of South African ceramic artists up to 2012, see the sculpture review by Ann Marais (2012:18–25).

early 1980s at the Michaelis School of Fine Art at the University of Cape Town. His figurative idiom, wrote Hön (himself a student of Nowers and, in his own right, a ceramic sculptor of note) was "humorous and funky, realized though his expressive use of clay, bright colours, mainly Amaco under-glaze colour, and … acrylic paint" (2012:29).[36] The former director of the South African National Art Museum, Marilyn Martin (1996:8) hails the awards of merit at the 1983 Cape Triennial to Nowers and a fellow ceramic sculptor, Davydd Myburgh, as acknowledgement of the development in the quality and scope of South African ceramic art. Further acknowledgement came when the ceramic sculptures of Ros O'Connor, Evette Weyers, Nowers, Hylton Nel, Clare Gavronsky and Sonya Zytkow were selected for inclusion in the "Recent SA Ceramics" exhibition staged in 1983 at the South African National Gallery (Marais 2012:19).

Cruise's rise to becoming the leading South African ceramic sculptor came about when she was named as winner of APSA's first biennial ceramics exhibition staged in 1992. It was the first time that ceramic sculpture trumped studio pottery or other ceramic art forms at exhibition level (McInnes 2007:5). Lapping-Sellars was fiercely critical of both the collection of works and the manner of display at that exhibition which she described as a "display of hundreds of pieces of fired clay, all carefully placed side by side, cheek by jowl on display units hugging the walls like a church bazaar" (1992:19). Further commentary at the time came for ceramic sculpture to be divorced from pottery. I interpret her follow-on commentary as tongue in cheek: "[T]he [ceramic sculptors] being a splinter group of artists who really should be out there competing with their like and not stealing the thunder from the makers of finely glazed casserole dishes … The contrast is too great, it just does not make sense." Alongside Cruise, the other ceramic sculptors that came to exemplify this discipline of ceramics include Deborah Bell, Nicolene Swanepoel, Carol Hayward-Fell and Marais.

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[36] Funk as a movement in ceramic art was spearheaded in the 1960s by Robert Arneson at the Davis Craft Centre of the University of California. It was a short-lived movement that made use of low-fired techniques and non-traditional materials by "deliberately embracing hobby craft and lowbrow humor" (Clark 1978:xviii).

The format and physical scope of installation ceramic art, whether as large-scale murals or as architectural and interior decorating features, are the probable reasons for it garnering little attention and consideration in South African ceramics literature. Dirk Meerkotter (1922–2017), James Hall (1916–2006), Walford, Gotthard Jacobs and Bosch are considered as the leading exponents in this field. For his larger panels, Meerkotter used approximately three tons of clay to make up to 3 000 individual tiles, each tile shaped to contribute to the design of the work (Meerkotter 2018). The largest of these, measuring 20 square metres, was commissioned in 1982 by the Phalaborwa Civic Centre. Meerkotter's other ceramic murals include those commissioned in 1980 for the Drama Theatre of the State Opera House in Pretoria that measured 3.5 x 16.5 metres and his 1954 mural for the Sand du Plessis Theatre in Bloemfontein with dimensions of 4.4 x 16 metres (Fig 18). Hall studied and taught ceramics and sculpture in England before taking up a post at the Durban Art School in 1956. He was prolific in producing pottery, ceramic sculptures and panels, the latter for office buildings, libraries, universities, churches, restaurants, hotels and banks (Hall-Chadrou 2020). Hall was also the consultant to the brick and tile company, Corobrik, where he designed decorative tiles and tile panels and developed the glazed finishes (Fig 19). Gotthard Jacobs produced murals for the Arena Studio at the State Theatre in Pretoria and the Civic Centres of Krugersdorp, Rustenburg and Brits. Bosch's large murals flowed from the making of stoneware tiles and lustre[37] tiles. An example of the former was the stoneware mural for the international departures hall of the Jan Smuts Airport (now the O.R. Tambo International Airport) in Johannesburg. The mural measured 57.9 x 6.4 metres (Fig 20). It was later demolished during a renovation project. An example of Bosch's lustre tiles is the 6 x 1.25 metres installation in the foyer of the Vineyard Hotel in Cape Town that dates to 1984. From 1988 onwards, Bosch produced vitrified panels that measured up to 2.25 x 1.5 metres. These very thin panels were decorated with multiple layers of underglaze ceramic stains which Bosch mixed with china clay and

[37] Lustre is a glaze consisting of highly-reflective metals (e.g. gold, silver, copper) that results in bright and reflective metallic colours.

various frits and were then fired no less than seven times (Bosch 1988:50, 154–155, 180). Walford produces stoneware "jumbo tiles" that measure up to 1.1 x 0.85 metres. The large tiles are sought after for home display but Walford also produced tiles on commission for the International Convention Centre in Durban and the Old Mutual buildings in Durban and Pietermaritzburg (Wright 2009:104). Meerkotter's designs incorporated abstract designs, Gotthard Jacob's murals featured figurative designs, Bosch switched between abstract forms and painterly narratives and Walford is best known for his Zen-inspired brushwork and inlay tiles.

2.7 ADDITIONAL FEATURES AND CONSIDERATIONS

Martin (2002:256) pointed to the cultural and academic boycott that was instituted by the United Nations in 1980 as a significant factor in how South African art developed during that decade:

> The cultural isolation created a widespread sense of cultural inferiority among performers and audiences alike, but … it forced artists, academics, art and museum administrators and dealers to re-assess candidly their roles and functions against the background of a rapidly changing socio-political landscape in general.

Martin saw evidence of this in "cross-pollination and crossover of cultures … [that] contributed to the erosion of boundaries between art forms". This manifested in ceramic art, according to Juliette Leeb-du Toit (2012a:65), in the late 1970s as the period in which South African-produced ceramics – in particular studio ceramics – revealed indigenous, African and Oriental cross-referencing which "convey[ed] a distinct modernity which upheld individuation and *indigeneity* (my emphasis), reflecting a shifting of preconceived values, boundaries and paradigms". The matter of ceramists' referencing of cultures other than their own for the purpose of conveying an identity is investigated in Chapters 3 and 4.

Though their presence was known, the black staff in South Africa's production potteries only received acknowledgement with an article about Liebermann

Pottery and Tiles, published in 1972 in *ArtLook* (Wright 1972:11–13). The author included references to the "master potters", Patch Mpofu whose "ambition is to make bigger pots than [the pottery owner] Sammy [Liebermann] can make", "Wilson, a Shangaan from Duiwelskloof" (probably referring to Wilson Ngobeni) and an "African woman deftly mak[ing] fleur de lis-like markings on the sides of newly thrown pots" (Wright 1972:11–12). Clark and Wagner (1974) included the production potteries, Kolonyama Pottery and Thaba Bosigo, in their book. Though both production potteries were heavily reliant on black staff, the authors neglected to name even a single staff member. Clarke and Wagner did, however, in the same publication feature the pottery studio of the ELC Arts and Craft Centre at Rorke's Drift with its pottery output exclusively in the hands of black students and workers. Gordon Mbatha, Ephraim Ziqubu (1948–2011), Joel Sibisi, Miriam Khumalo, Dinah Molefe (1927–2011), Lephina Molefe, Lovinia Molefe, Ivy Molefe and Miriam Khumalo were the named potters.

Black ceramists increasingly became involved in the activities of APSA and CSA in presenting workshops or serving as judges at competitions. Amongst those were Simon Masilo (1936–2018) who was strongly associated with the Katlehong Arts Centre and later named a Life Member of CSA, Meshack Masuku who was a ceramics graduate and later lecturer at the Port Elizabeth Technikon (later the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University), Nic Sithole and Peter Mthombeni.

In the late twentieth century, the restrictive legislation that dictated which tertiary institutions were accessible to black students was lifted. This opened the doors of those institutions that offered ceramic training to a new generation of aspirant ceramic artists and, on their graduation, their entry into the ceramics art market. Concurrently, many small community-based ceramic art co-operatives were established, notably in the Western Cape where, by 2002, 10 artists participated in the 5th "Bumba Udongwe – Working with Clay" exhibition hosted by Iziko Museums of Cape Town (now Iziko Museums of South Africa) (Esmyol 2002:15–19). These co-operatives would fill the training void when many of the tertiary institutions closed their ceramics departments in the twenty-first century.

The tertiary institutions and co-operatives produced a crop of ceramic artists who would come to lead the field in South African twenty-first century ceramics, amongst them Andile Dyalvane, Clive Sithole, Madoda Fani and S'bonelo Thau Luthuli. The training and education of potters and ceramists are discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

The Corobrik Collection held at the Pretoria Art Museum[38] is the flagship public collection of South African studio pottery, traditional pottery and ceramic art. Perrill (2008a:124) aptly describes the Corobrik collection as "an index of ceramic taste" in the sense that the collection reflects prevailing expressions in the entries of the various APSA and CSA exhibitions. With a few exceptions, the collection comprises purchased award-winning entries. A number of other ceramic collections of twentieth and twenty-first century South African ceramics were subsequently created of which those at the Durban Art Gallery, the Clay Museum in Durbanville, the Pretoria Art Museum and the William Humphreys Art Gallery in Kimberley are the most significant. Whereas for the greater part, the Corobrik Collection serves as a showcase of mostly award-winning works by APSA and CSA members, the other collections aspire to be representative. Iziko Museums of South Africa has taken the lead in hosting thematic ceramics exhibitions in which context rather than aesthetics is emphasised.

A measure of the success of the South African ceramics of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in achieving recognition within the mainstream art world, are the prices that some works are able to attract in fine art galleries and at fine art auctions. Most recently (in February 2019), a vitrified ceramic panel by Bosch was sold at auction at a record price for the ceramist's work of R850 000 and a painted ceramic figurine by Nel for R70 000. A vessel by Dyalvane sold for R600 000 in 2016 at his "Camagu" exhibition hosted by the Friedman Benda

[38] The Corobrik Collection was initially established in 1983 as a joint venture by Corobrik, the University of Natal's Department of Fine Arts and History of Art in Pietermaritzburg and APSA and was held on the university campus. The foundation works of the collection were by APSA members acquired since 1977 for the former Oude Libertas Collection.

Gallery in New York.

By the late 1980s, APSA's membership stood at well over 2 000 members (De Klerk 2019:29). Though membership figures dwindled to about 500 by 2019 with the majority of members based in the Western Cape region (Marais 2019a),[39] CSA remains the representative body of the South African ceramics fraternity and the *Ceramics Southern Africa Magazine* as its mouthpiece. It is, however, no longer the driving force in promoting South African ceramics. The internet, social media, invitations to exhibit in prominent fine art galleries overseas, feature articles in international ceramic art magazines, participation in international ceramic art exhibitions and local lifestyle fairs all serve as new platforms for ceramic artists to promote themselves and sell their works. Despite the achievements of the black ceramists, CSA has yet to induct any of them as Fellows of the CSA. By 2019, this prestigious accolade had only been bestowed on white ceramists. The Fellows category was introduced to recognise the exceptional qualities of work by individual members and to acknowledge their contribution and commitment to CSA. The number of Fellows was capped at 30 but the call for a revision of this award system, which would create the opportunity to consider all of CSA's members, has already gained ground. CSA has similarly not given any formal recognition to the most prominent of the gallerists, collection curators or academics whose contribution to the promotion and study of South African ceramics cannot be ignored. No black ceramist has served on the national council of APSA or CSA.

I have illustrated that the developmental history of the South African ceramics of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries cannot be separated from the socio-political setting that characterised the country and its multi-cultural community. Within that, recognition must be given to multiple influences that came into play

[39] The CSA membership data for 2019 is not a true reflection of the number of active ceramists in South Africa at that time which, in my consideration, would be substantially more. Many would be excluded from membership because of the cost of membership or, more likely, for not being dependent on the CSA for recognition and promotion.

in the shaping of individual oeuvres with some of those relating to ceramic practices and others to contextual circumstances. I will elaborate on the role and contribution of education and training policies and opportunities as further contextual factors in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3
South African ceramics education and vocational training

One of the contexts within which the development of South African ceramics must be considered is the education and vocational training available to aspiring ceramists and the social and political constraints that governed access to that. Also of relevance are the community-based projects and co-operatives that offered in-service training and sometimes also employment or alternatively rewarded participants with a share of profits from sales. These opportunities were available at school level and tertiary institutions (universities and universities of technology, previously known as technikons), privately owned "pottery schools" which abounded in the later twentieth century, via community art centres and community development projects, in-house training at production potteries or studio potteries and, more rarely, as protégés of established studio potters and ceramists. I will focus on some of the issues that came to define the nature of the formal and informal South African education system with specific attention to art and craft training.

3.1 THE PRE-1994 IDEOLOGY-DRIVEN EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM

Education was a tool in the pre-1994 era to implement the nationalist government's political, economic, social and cultural dogma. Up to the mid-twentieth century, missionary services were the main providers of schooling for black pupils. According to Elizabeth Perrill (2014:12 citing Christie & Collins 1982:57), as many as 5 000 state-aided mission schools were active prior to 1953. The Bantu Education Act of 1953 brought all schooling under government control with the objective, as voiced in 1954 by H.F. Verwoerd, author of that act:

> to transform education for Natives into Bantu Education … A Bantu pupil must obtain knowledge, skills and attitudes which will be useful and advantageous to him and at the same time beneficial to his community … There is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour (Legodi 2001:40 citing Robertson 1973:159).

Compulsory education only applied to the white and partially to the coloured and Indian populations. Art and crafts education in the white schools followed a Western curriculum which Elsbeth Court (1996:294) describes as "geared towards the generation of a defined mode of imagery, i.e., "'European' realism/naturalism, 'African' expressionism or international formal modernism". In government-funded black schools, art education was directed towards developing craftwork. According to Court (1996:294), less than 0.14 per cent of black pupils were registered for their matriculation examination in fine arts. Gavin Younge (1988:21) points out that there would not have been mastery of the fine arts at any level in black schools because children were taught by teachers who themselves were inadequately schooled, the pupils-to-teacher ratio was excessively high and schools lacked facilities and materials.

Prior to 1953, the tertiary education institutions that (with some exceptions) accepted white students only were the University of Cape Town, the University of Stellenbosch, the University of the Witwatersrand, the University of the Free State, the University of Pretoria, the University of South Africa, the University of Natal and Rhodes University. Provision for tertiary education for non-white students came with The Extention of University Act 45 of 1959. The legislation empowered the Minister of Bantu Education to establish non-white colleges and universities with admission strictly confined to specific non-white ethnic groups.[1] The first fine art department at a non-white university was established in 1976 at the University of Fort Hare. Art and crafts training were offered to students from the coloured community at the Hewat Teacher Training College in Athlone; Indian students could enrol for such training at the ML Sultan Teacher's Training College in Athlone; and black students in the arts and crafts could attend the Ndaleni Teacher's Training College near Richmond.

[1] The University of Fort Hare accommodated Xhosa-speaking students; the University of the North (Turfloop) was set aside for Northern Sotho, Venda and Tsonga speaking students; Tswana-speakers were allocated to the University of Bophuthatswana; Zulu and Swazi students enrolled in the University of Zululand; coloured students attended the University of the Western Cape; and Indian students were assigned to the University of Durban-Westville.

In 1914, the Natal Technical College (now the Durban University of Technology)[2] became the first tertiary institution to establish a ceramics department at the initiative of the head of its school of art, John Adams (1882–1953). A founding figure in South Africa's studio pottery history, Esias Bosch (1923–2010), was appointed as head of the college's pottery department, a post that he held for two years. Another early notable tertiary institution offering ceramics training was the Johannesburg Technical College headed by John Edwards (d. 1989) in the 1950s. Edwards was a fifth-generation potter from Stoke-on-Trent, England (Anon 1990:5). Both these institutions offered ceramics as elective courses. The School of Art associated with the Pretoria Technical College (renamed the Pretoria College for Advanced Technical Education, then Technikon Pretoria and currently Tshwane University of Technology) included training in pottery in the 1950s presented by Dulcie Campbell and Bosch (Van Wyk 2020).

Dedicated, full-time training in ceramics for white students was first offered in 1966 at the former Johannesburg Art School where a national diploma in ceramics could be obtained upon completing the three year syllabus (Hön 2008:26). Other tertiary institutions where students could train in ceramics in the later twentieth and early twenty-first centuries included the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Technical College, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Walter Sisulu University, Port Elizabeth Technikon, Tshwane University of Technology (formerly Pretoria Technikon), Technikon Witwatersrand (later incorporated into the University of Johannesburg),[3] Vaal Triangle Technikon, Technikon Orange Free State (now the Central University of Technology), Boland Technical College (Paarl campus), University of Stellenbosch, the Gugulethu campus of the College of Cape Town (formerly known as Sivuyile College) and the University of Cape Town. Dwindling student interest and the financial

[2] Technikons/Universities of Technology were intended to serve as vocational based training institutions with emphasis on skills based training.

[3] The ceramics department of the University of Johannesburg offered vocational and traditional training programmes. Emphasis was placed on studio practice skills with the History of Ceramics, Ceramic Sciences and Business Studies being taught as separate subjects (Hön 2020).

constraints of running a dedicated ceramics department forced the closure of such training facilities at tertiary institutions. Currently, the only remaining tertiary institutions offering training in ceramics, as part of their fine art programmes, are the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Walter Sisulu University, Tshwane University of Technology, Central University of Technology, Durban University of Technology and Lovedale Technical, Vocational, Education and Training College (Alice campus).

3.1.1 Jack Grossert as a key role player in black art and crafts training

Perrill (2014:10, 16) researched the manner in which the apartheid-era's art education policy for black pupils was shaped with the intent to define and refine cultural artistic diversity and to tribalise the various indigenous black populations. Perrill focused on the influence wielded by John W ("Jack") Grossert (1913–1997) who, in 1948, was appointed to the post of Organizer of Art and Crafts for Native Schools in the province of Natal and, in 1954, assumed the post of Inspector of Arts and Crafts for African Schools and Colleges for all of South Africa. In 1953, Grossert published *Art and Crafts for Africans: A Manual for Art and Craft Teachers* as a teacher's manual for instruction in primary and secondary schools. This manual, asserts Perrill (2014:14), followed the "assimilationist pedagogy of the missionary schools". Grossert advocated that pupils should be taught to make "spice, sugar, and flour containers for kitchens" with decorative work that reflected the "[t]raditional patterns for pottery [that] have been developed among the tribal groups of the Bantu people. These can be made use of but should not limit pupils from composing new patterns of their own" (Perrill 2014:14 citing Grossert 1953:77). As a guideline for pottery making, Grossert provided illustrations of four Zulu beer vessels and three traditional Shona vessels which all later proved to be traditional Zulu forms as well as illustrations of "western objects and vessels, sculptural forms, and tools utilised in western ceramic traditions" (Perrill 2014:14–15). For black pupils, Grossert recommended that prescriptive teaching must be avoided because it would impact on "the African's natural ability" (Court 1996:294) and the loss of "black South Africa's

cultural tradition" (Magaziner 2017:54). John Peffer (2008:183) positioned this as a "colonial notion that an 'African essence' might be contaminated through the acquisition of too much knowledge of Western culture".

Grossert also held the appointment of principal of the Ndaleni Teacher's Training College that offered advanced training in arts and crafts for teachers of the Department of Bantu Education. Ndaleni was established in 1952 outside Richmond in the Natal Midlands region of KwaZulu-Natal Province and was closed down in 1982. Training initially spanned two years but was later condensed into one year. The curriculum covered painting, drawing and an array of crafts, including working in clay. Peter Bell, who retired in 1964 as Ndaleni's artist-in-charge, appears to have endorsed Grossert's views on education and training. Interviewed by Evelyn Brown (1966:93), he stated: "I make no effort to encourage any particular type of work … my only concern being to see that whatever a student may produce genuinely rises out of his spirit". Daniel Magaziner (2017) wrote an account of Ndaleni in which he also narrates in detail the challenges that teachers faced in acquiring pottery skills. According to Magaziner (2017:168–172), students had to gather their own clay from nearby streams which then had to be hauled back to the school for grinding, sieving and curing. They had no access to potter's wheels or a modern kiln. An electric kiln was supplied in the early 1970s but it was never put to use, the argument being that, in the places where the students would eventually teach, there would be no need for such modernity because there would be no electricity. The students were therefore reliant on a kiln that was little more than a bricked-over pit that was fired with scrap hardwood (Fig 21).

3.1.2 Cecil Skotnes and the Polly Street Art Centre

A contemporary of Grossert was the artist Cecil Skotnes (1926–2009) who, according to Court (1996:293), shared Grossert's stance that "[t]he teacher's role was to facilitate self-discovery … rather than through instruction, apart from critical discussions of work". Skotnes was appointed in 1952 as head of the Polly Street Art Centre in Johannesburg where he encouraged his black students to

explore a "naturalistic imagery based upon direct observation, supposedly to encourage the representation of urban living" (Court 1996:294) whilst "steer[ing] clear of aesthetic prescriptions" (Martin 2001:39) and was "not dependent on the teaching of traditional art forms" (Berman 1974:232). Skotnes also promoted an awareness in his students of African material culture.[4] Skotnes' approach to developing black art was not far removed from that of Ulli and Georginia Beier in Nigeria. The Beiers hosted workshops in Oshogbo in the early 1960s where skills were taught whilst prompting the "release [of] the creative energies which were thought to lie deep within these individuals" (Kasfir 1999:50). The Beiers made the claim that, after attending the workshops, the previously untrained students were "instantly transformed into competent, professional artists" (Oguibe 2002:257). In the same era, Frank McEwen established the Salisbury Workshop School in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) where he believed that the art students should not be taught at all but left to their own devices to develop techniques and themes (Beier 1968:78). According to Olu Oguibe (2002:255), McEwen was obsessed with "purity and authenticity" and exalted the "untutored craftsmanship" of "an unspoilt people".

Polly Street closed in 1960 and its successor was the Jubilee Social Centre (later known as the Molofo Art Centre) which fell under the auspices of the West Rand Bantu Administration Board. This board saw no need for the provision of cultural facilities for the black community within the city and closed the centre down. Whilst Polly Street itself did not produce any leading black ceramists, its successor organisations would do so but usually as mixed-media artists who incorporated ceramics in their oeuvres.

3.1.3 The ELC Centre for Art and Craft at Rorke's Drift

Polly Street set the example for the ELC Centre for Art and Craft at Rorke's Drift

[4] Lize van Robbroeck (2003:175) notes that Skotnes exposed his Polly Street students to "reproductions of Western and Central African art in order to inculcate awareness of 'their' cultural heritage".

(initially known as the Umpumulo Art School) that was launched in 1962 by the Evangelical Lutheran Church's mission in South Africa at Mapumulu in the KwaZulu-Natal Province to serve the indigenous community. The centre was originally conceptualised as an art and craft school for the training of advisors. The constitution adopted by the centre's board in 1963 had a more focused set of aims and objectives, including the training of occupational therapists for the Lutheran institutions and the training of art and craft advisors to encourage these practices as a means of self-support (Hobbs & Rankin 2003:24, 53). The reality was that the centre produced artists rather than advisors of art. The curriculum included spinning, dyeing, weaving, sewing, embroidery design, textile printing, theatre puppets, batik, pottery and bookkeeping (Hobbs & Rankin 2003:25). It was for the weaving, printmaking and ceramics that the centre would achieve national and international acclaim. The Fine Art School closed down in 1982 but the weaving, textile printing and ceramics continued into the twenty-first century.

Because of the prominence the centre achieved in the national market and the international attention that it attracted, I will elaborate in detail on the workshop and its ceramists. The centre grew from an initiative by the Swedish artist, Bertha Hansson, and Helge Fosseus, who was the head of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the South-East Region of South Africa. The first art and craft teachers recruited by Fosseus in Sweden were Ulla and Peder Gowenius. Ulla Gowenius specialised in textile art and weaving and Peder Gowenius in printmaking, sculpture and art education. They commenced work at the Ceza Mission Hospital at Mapumulo in KwaZulu-Natal Province where the female patients were instructed in sewing and weaving and the male patients were engaged in handcrafts, drawing, painting and printing. From this developed four workshops established at Oskaersberg which was the site of the earlier Swedish mission station at Rorke's Drift near Dundee. The workshops focused on the teaching of weaving, sewing, printmaking and ceramics. Instruction in ceramics production commenced in 1964 under the guidance of the Swedish artist Kerstin Olsson

(Hosking 2005:9).[5] With no electricity available and hence no access to potter's wheels and electric kilns, Olsson and the women potters had to improvise and proved themselves very creative (Olsson 2019). The works were, at first, fired with an open-fire technique that Olsson copied from a local woman potter and later in a wood-fired kiln.

The Danish potter Peter Tyberg founded the fully-fledged pottery workshop in 1968. Tim Maggs and Val Ward (2011:151) describe the project as orientated towards the use of "materials and technical facilities of contemporary western arts" and Ian Calder ([Sa]a) positions the workshop's intent as being to "nurture the unique artistic heritage of Africa" and the training of the potters "for a professional career, with the emphasis on well-crafted wares" to be sold via outlets. In reality, only a few of the men and none of the women associated with the pottery workshop became independent artists who included ceramics in their mixed-media oeuvres. Dinah Molefe, a local potter, who was producing hand-built vessels in the Sotho tradition, was recruited to join the workshop. Amongst the next women recruits were Ivy Molefe, Lephinah Molefe and Nestah Molefe. The first of the local men to join the studio was Gordon Mbatha and the male potters' ranks were later swelled by Joel Sibisi, Bhekisani Manyoni and Ephraim Ziqubu. The project was initially handicapped by problems with the kiln and unsuitable clay that resulted in a low output of unglazed stoneware. These issues were resolved by the potter, Marietjie van der Merwe (1935–1992), who became a regular visitor and advisor until her death. Amongst Van der Merwe's initiatives were the design and building of a paraffin-fired kiln[6] that replaced the drip-feed kiln and she accessed a neutral kaolin glaze to enhance the black, iron, yellow ochre and umber slips for surface decorations (Clark & Wagner 1974:144).

The pottery was first exhibited alongside the centre's weavings at an exhibition at the Durban Art Gallery in 1968 and immediately attracted attention. Two years

[5] Wendy Gers (2015:264) states that 1966 was the foundation year for the initial ceramic production.

[6] The pottery studio only gained an electric kiln in 2000 (Martin & Wilson 2013:31).

later, the gallery acquired hand-built and thrown works from the studio for its permanent collection. This was significant for being the first ceramic works by black South African artists to be acquired for inclusion in a public collection during the apartheid era, a time in which, states Lize van Robbroeck (2013:[Sp]), black artists were consistently marginalised, excluded from education and exhibition opportunities, denied representation in national art collections and had their works reduced to curiosities.

The majority of the women hand-builders belonged to the Sotho group[7] and had the skills to produce pots in the traditional Sotho form. Those forms included *mirifi* for brewing, *pitsa* for cooking and Zulu forms of domestic pots such as the *ukhamba*[8] and the multiple neck-pot forms known as *ingcazi*. In the Sotho and Venda cultures, decorative elements are added to these forms and appear as applied motifs or are incised into the surface or could be a combination of both. Zulu motifs included *amasumpa*, pinched surfaces and geometric designs of hatched and cross-hatched lines and grooves, zigzags and triangles, which are borrowed from designs and repeat patterns on traditional Zulu mats (*isithebe*), Zulu basketry and beadwork, and raised linear coils (Perrill 2008a:106; Maggs & Ward 2011:151; Motsamayi 2012:12; Hosking 2005:83, 90; Calder [Sa]a).

The women preserved distinctive indigenous form and designs in their pots even when non-traditional features and sculptural appendages were added. Elizabeth Perrill (2008b:[Sp]) states that Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) of materials, methods, forms and values are not monolithic and permit an expansion of innovative aesthetics within and as a continuation of a culture. This was evidenced in the manner that the women created their versions of Western forms

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[7] Elizabeth Perrill (2008a:106) states that, other than Dinah Molefe, several of the early potters at the ELC Art and Craft Centre at Rorke's Drift were familiar with the techniques and aesthetics of ceramics not dissimilar to Zulu and Sotho *izinkamba* wares.

[8] Kent Fowler (2006:110) notes that ceramic vessels in the traditional Zulu repertoire for the purpose of cooking cereals and vegetables (*isikhamba, isiyoco* and *isoco*) and for the serving of foods (*umcakulo, umcengezi, isikhangezo* and *umgenqele*) are now rarely made. Such vessels became obsolete from the 1950s onwards with ready access to Western ceramics and plastic and metal wares.

of bowls and vases (*uvazi*) (Motsamayi 2012:12, 53) and also vessels that approached sculptural forms (Motsamayi 2012:41) or were "purely sculptural forms" (Calder [Sa]a), the latter as produced by Dinah Molefe and Elizabeth Mbatha. The impression of the works that Garth Clark and Lynn Wagner (1974:48) noted was of a "sameness of shape and decoration". What Clark and Wagner failed to acknowledge was that the women were "a collective representation of several social and cultural groups" (Motsamayi 2012:12) and, for the most part, stayed within the parameters of traditional Sotho and Zulu forms (Fig 22).

There were variations in the forms and decorations. The decorations usually covered most of the surface and were applied as incised or built features and painting in layers of slips. Sarah Hosking (2005:42) notes that the decorative features were "sympathetic to the underlying form of the piece". As decorative features, Hosking indicates abstract, repeated motifs and decorative patterns of zigzags, triangles, semicircles and squares which follow the form of the pot and accentuate structural elements (2005:26). Ian Calder ([Sa]a) describes "biomorphic cartouches" that formed individual motifs and also decorations of imagined species of animals or based on nature or Zulu myth and legend (Calder [Sa]b). Mathodi Motsomayi (2012:53, 72) and Hosking (2005:55–57, 97, 100) discuss other decorative features that included corded designs of shields, arcs and rings, and *amasumpa* arranged in geometric patterns.

A new form that emerged within the workshop oeuvre was the "bird pot" introduced by Judith Mkhabela who worked in the studio during the 1970s. This was a pot with a pedestal base to which the head, wings and tail of a bird were added. Whether this form was Mkhabela's own innovation is not a certain fact. It might have been modelled on the nineteenth century European hen-on-nest form (Maggs & Ward 2011:155–156) that served as a container for fresh eggs.[9] It was

[9] It is equally likely that the pot referenced two other indigenous cultural vessel forms, namely, the bird-shaped earthenware vessels made by the South Sotho cultural group for possible use as water

probably also the model for the variant of a boat-shaped pot with a bird's head at either end or a pot in the form of stacked birds (Fig 23) of which Elizabeth Mbatha was an exponent and her subsequent adaptation of this zoomorphic form in which she replaced the bird heads with cattle heads. Hosking (2005:96) notes that the women's works after 1984 became progressively more intricate with a prominence of composite works that were richly painted and texturally decorated.

Apart from Mkhabela and Mbatha, Calder ([Sa]a) lists seven other women working as potters: Euriel Damman (née Mbatha), Miriam Khumalo, Dina Molefe, Ivy Molefe, Lephinah Molefe, Nestah Molefe and Florence Sibisi. Justin Kerrod (2010:170) added the name of Loviniah Molefe but this could be a corrupted form of Lephinah Molefe. There was a strict gender division of labour in the workshop. The women created hand-built pots whilst the men threw pots on the wheel. It was also the men's duties to fetch clay, mix the slips and glazes, pack and fire the kiln. Hosking (2005:27) nevertheless notes some cross-influences such as the women copying the men by adding handles and foot-rings. The men who studied and worked in the pottery studio produced pots that were more aligned with Western utilitarian forms and the decorative work was quite different from that of the women. Their decorations had more muted colours and the sgraffito designs were usually applied in bands and cartouches according to the forms of the works. Their linear and figurative designs relate to the linocuts and etchings produced in the graphics workshop where the men were taught the intaglio process of linocuts and etchings. In their ceramics, this was mimicked in the incised decorations (Leeb-du Toit 2012:78). Ziqubu, who developed into an acclaimed printmaker, was particularly adept at transposing his style of linocut images onto his pottery (Hobbs & Rankin 2003:62–63). Wendy Gers (2015:267) notes that the majority of the decorations by the men were "figurative, animal or zoomorphic motifs" derived from sources that included cultural mythology and oral history as well as biblical narratives (Fig 24). What must also be noted is that

containers, water coolers or egg storage (Riep 2011:185) and the other being the totemic pig and elephant vessel forms made by the amaHlubi tribe associated with the Basotho cultural group (Garrett 2020a).

the men delivered social commentary in their decorative work such as portrayals of men as farm labourers.

The best of the pottery was selected to be sold in overseas outlets with Sweden and Germany as prime destinations. The potters set a precedent amongst South African black potters by signing their works on the feet of the pottery and further adding the kiln data (year date and firing sequence) alongside the leaf logo of Rorke's Drift (Fig 25). This practice copied Western potters who identified their works with potter's marks, signatures or monograms and, as such, Gers (2015:268) considers the addition of signatures by the potters to be "a bold political statement" during the era of apartheid.

The pottery of Dinah Molefe, Elizabeth Mbatha, Gordon Mbatha and Joel Sibisi was particularly sought after by collectors.[10] The demand for the pottery started to wane in the 1990s for several reasons. Dealers and collectors broadened their interest to include the other indigenous potters who had since come to the fore. Problems with the management of the centre and financial constraints detracted from the promotion of the pottery and the recruitment of new potter talent.[11] The quality of the pottery deteriorated after the introduction of commercial clay bodies and glazes and there was little variance in the forms and their decorations. The potters were no longer producing for the collector market but had to produce works that met the expectations and budgets of tourists (Fig 26). From the sales, they would be rewarded with a percentage of the profit. Christiane Voith, who was the centre's manager until 2013, sought to revitalise the pottery studio through workshops for the potters. The American ceramist, Prof. Lois Peterson, led a workshop on artistic tile making and, from that, Voith ([Sa]) initiated a

[10] Two substantial collections of the pottery of the ELC Art and Craft Centre at Rorke's Drift were expatriated from South Africa. Dr Franco Ferrario, a former lecturer in geography at the University of Cape Town, took his collection of 42 works to Italy (Ferrario 2019) and Barbara Zinn in Israel owns a collection of 33 works which she acquired whilst living in South Africa or purchased afterwards (Zinn 2019).

[11] The most recent recruit to the pottery studio is Lindumusa Mbaso whose narrative decorations are held in high esteem.

collaboration with a South African home furnishings retailer to translate the distinctive workshop designs in printed textiles. Calder's workshop demonstrated the combining of different forms and shared his expertise in developing oxide recipes for surface finishing on stoneware (Voith 2009:11). These oxides produce a dull metallic finish which, at the time of my visit to Rorke's Drift in 2014, appeared to be a dominant feature in the works and stood in stark contrast to the polychrome decorations of the past. Jill Addleson (2004), who initiated the acquisition of the first examples of the ELC Art and Craft Centre pottery for the Durban Art Gallery, decried the "cosmetic decoration" of the twenty-first century versions and dismissed those as not matching the calibre of the earlier works.

3.1.4 The community art centres

The ELC Art and Craft Centre at Rorke's Drift, in turn, served as an example, if not as model, for other community-based art and crafts centres that were established. As per the definition of Ingrid Stevens and Runette Kruger (2011:37–38), these centres were usually rural-based and were for the purpose of training, employment and social development including access to housing and health care. The authors further explain that such centres were organised as tight or loose structures with artists and crafters either based at the centres or working from home but using the centres for access to training and materials and for the delivery of their works. A further outcome of such co-operatives was that a recognisable "house style" developed whether purposefully or drawing on mutual influence.

The government's regulation of formal education and training opportunities for the non-white citizenry prompted alternative initiatives in the 1970s: community art centres and community art training programmes funded by non-governmental organisations or public bodies. The art historian, Eben Lochner (2013:315), defines the community art centres as "spaces [where] nuanced engagements of identity [emerged] which simultaneously expressed a form of socio-political critique". Aneta Pawłowska (2004:85–86) is more specific in defining this as the "aesthetic of political resistance" that drew on the Black Consciousness Movement and its commitment to initiating projects and educational programmes

through which a community could grow to be self-dependent. Amongst the more prominent of the community art centres (with the founding year in parentheses) were: the Johannesburg Art Foundation (1972), Katlehong Art Centre (1977), the Community Arts Project (CAP) (1977), Fuba (Federated Union of Black Artists) Academy (1978), Nyanga Arts Centre (1979), Funda Centre (1983), Community Arts Workshop (CAW) (1983), Alexandra Art Centre (1986), the BAT (Bartel Arts Trust) Centre (1995) and the PELMAMA Academy (1993).

Katlehong Art Centre, Alexandra Art Centre and PELMAMA offered training in ceramics as part of their comprehensive art and craft curricula. Katlehong paid special attention to crafts development and the ceramists associated with that training and some of their ceramics students achieved formal recognition in the art world. The first ceramics teacher was David Myburgh who was later joined by Ziqubu and Bhekisane Manyoni, both recruited from the ELC Art and Craft Centre at Rorke's Drift where they were trained in ceramics and later by Clyde Carstens, a specialist in mouldmaking. The mixed-media artist, Speelman Mahlangu (1958–2004), was one of the first students at Katlehong Art Centre. Mahlangu was initially trained at the ELC Art and Craft Centre at Rorke's Drift before joining Katlehong Art Centre in 1977 where he was taught ceramics by Myburgh, Ziqubu and Stanley Nkosi (Meyer 1987:6). Mahlangu threw utilitarian wares and made bases for lamps from altered and augmented casts but was then encouraged by Ziqubu to explore clay as a sculptural medium (Meyer 1987:6–7). One of the earliest documented series of Mahlangu's sculptural works in clay was *Cagehead* for which he drew inspiration from sculptor Gunther van der Reis's copper helmet series. In his *Cagehead* figures, Mahlangu explored the theme of "trapped heads" (Meyer 1987:6). The figures in pipe clay were built up from a coiled base from which he created planes using a rasp and hacksaw blades. The painter and sculptor Helen Sebedi joined Katlehong Art Centre in 1980 to learn pottery and sculpting in terracotta clay and afterwards taught at the centre as well as at the Alexandra Art Centre. Her work was selected for APSA's 1988 national exhibition. Two other Katlehong Art Centre students were Godfrey Ngobeni (Fig 27) and Leonard Xaba (Fig 28) who both excelled in ceramic sculpture. The

ceramist who would become inextricably linked to the Katlehong Art Centre was Ntate Molelekoa Simon Masilo (1936–2018) who joined the centre in 1982 and garnered multiple accolades and honours for his ceramics (see Chapter 4). The collective entry of Katlehong Art Centre was awarded the first prize in the Tertiary Art Institutions category at APSA's 1989 national exhibition.

The Alexandra Arts Centre was established in 1988. One of the principal figures in the centre's pottery workshop was Meshack Masuku (Fig 29). His career in pottery started when he was hired as a sweeper in a small pottery established by the Swaziland Economic Development Corporation (SEDCO). According to the studio potter, David Schlapobersky (2018), a group of white ceramists initiated the Alexandra Centre's pottery workshop and continued to support it in the early 1990s. This group, states Schlapobersky, recruited Masuku. The workshop held honorary membership of APSA and participated in the association's workshops and exhibitions. Masuku later enrolled at the Port Elizabeth Technikon where he gained a National Diploma in Ceramic Design in 1994 and a B.Tech in Ceramic Design in 1999. He served as a senior ceramics lecturer at the Technikon and later established his own studio, Lusiba Ceramics, at Kenton-on-Sea.

3.1.5 Apprenticeships and in-service training

Training in pottery and ceramics could also be gained by enrolling as apprentices or gaining employment with the industrial ware ceramics enterprises, production potteries and studio potteries. Kerrod (2010) was the first author to include data on the black staff of some production potteries even if he restricted that to their names and their fields of speciality such as clay preparation, throwers, slab-building, figure-modelling, decorating, glazing and kiln-firing. Gers (2015) expanded substantially on the biographical and career data of black staff at production potteries, rightly stating that: "The establishment and consolidation of the ceramics industry was facilitated by cheap labour and these anonymous workers deserve recognition" (2015:xii). The role of the black labour force in production potteries did get earlier attention in a chapter which Dr AJE Sorgdrager contributed to FGE Nilant's book, *Contemporary pottery in South*

Africa with Sorgdrager giving both praise and criticism (1963:89):

> The migrating habits of the Africans necessitate a replacement pool to safeguard against interruption in the production process. Such interruptions push up the overall costs even more … The South African native has shown himself to be a designer and potter of no mean stature. He could be used to a far greater extent in fixing the elusive 'South African taste' that artists here will have to find if they are to expand their market.

A number of the white and black apprentices of the production potteries would, in time, gain recognition as studio potters in their own right. The Lieberman Pottery and Tiles studio grounded the skills of, amongst others, Chris Green, Rosten Chorn (1954–2005), Kim Sacks, Andrew Walford, Bruce Walford and Jeremy Zinn. Andrew Walford earlier apprenticed at the Walsh-Marais Pottery. Green also served as journeyman[12] under Tim Morris and later as apprentice under Bill van Gilder who managed the Kolonyama Pottery in Lesotho. Morris had David Walters as apprentice. Bryan Haden had three apprentices: Nico Liebenberg, Verena Baraga and Rudi Botha. From the ranks of the black employees at production potteries and studio potteries rose acknowledged black ceramists such as Watson Nyambeni, in the studio of Digby Hoets where he continues to be employed (see Chapter 5), and Austin Hleza, initially at Kolonyama Pottery and then at Mantenga Craft Pottery in Swaziland under management of Green (see Chapter 4). Ncamekile Kokane, studio assistant of Hyme Rabinowitz for more than 20 years, created small figurines of birds, cattle and lizards as well as small slabbed lidded boxes (Giles 2019; Rabinowitz 1995:66) (Fig 30). Kokane's brother, Makwazewe Mvokwe, an earlier assistant of Rabinowitz, was appointed foreman at Izandla Pottery (Rabinowitz 1995:67; Gers 2015:147).

3.1.6 Community-based ceramics projects

The incentive to establish community-based production potteries was for the

[12] One definition of a journeyman is that of an experienced, competent but routine worker (www.dictionary.com)

socio-economic upliftment via the production of wares which would appeal to Western buyers. Some infusion of cultural references or translation of western-style wares and objects were accommodated rather than purposefully encouraged. These production potteries had varying degrees of success ranging from the production of quality utilitarian and decorative wares to the output of items for the tourist and consumer markets. Two community-based pottery projects, initiated by the Catholic Church, were Ikhwezi Lokusa Pottery and Thamaga Pottery. The former was established in 1972 at Mthatha in the Eastern Cape Province by the Catholic nuns of the order of Missionary Sisters of the Precious Blood. The workshop was part of a larger project providing rehabilitation and sheltered employment for physically disabled adults (Farragher 1979:13; Gers 2015:128–137; Steele 1988:27). At first, the potters produced slabbed and coiled pots but teaching the potters to throw on the wheel opened the door for the production of simple domestic wares. Under the management of John Steele, who steered the studio from 1984 to 1992, the output also included wall tiles, sculpture and animal figurines. Steele abstained from influencing the designs and limited giving guidance other than having regular meetings to discuss successful or failed aesthetics (Gers 2015:131). In the village of Thamaga in Botswana, the local Catholic mission priest, Fr Julian Black, established the Botswelelo Centre in 1972 where local crafts could be practised and sold to supplement the income of families whose breadwinner fathers worked as migrant labour in South Africa. Anita Hutchings was recruited in 1973 to develop its pottery studio. The pottery produced at that time was a mix of press-moulded and coiled pots based on traditional Tswana pottery forms (Gers 2015:307), burnished and pit-fired and then painted “in brilliant yellow, bright baby blue and Day-Glo red, all guaranteed to make you cross-eyed” (Hutchings 1975:5). Hutchings introduced new studio techniques and a wood-fire kiln, encouraged the drawing of designs before the making of pots and rewarded the potters with a share of the income from the sale of their own works. The output was initially specifically geared towards the tourist market (Hutchings 1975:6) but Hutchings then introduced the production of tableware with an “African” orientation (Gers 2015:308).

Within 18 months of converting seven grain silos in the village of Kolonyama in Lesotho into a production pottery, the Kolonyama Pottery studio established itself as a significant producer of quality utilitarian wares for the South African market. The success was directly attributable to the high calibre of English-trained studio potters who were appointed as teachers and managers. Kolonyama was the venture of the Lesotho businessman, Ian Dare, who approached the studio potter, Joe Finch of Winchcombe Pottery in England, for assistance to set up Lesotho's first pottery establishment. Finch trained the staff in wheel-throwing and slab-building. His father, the renowned English studio potter Raymond Finch, then managed Kolonyama for a six-month period after which Malcolm Bandtock, a graduate of the Harrow School of Art in London, stepped into the managerial and teacher roles. Bandtock's stint at Kolonyama ended in 1973 when he was succeeded by another Harrow-graduate, Bill van Gilder, who was later joined by Toff Milway who similarly hailed from Harrow. The production team was able to produce 5 000 stoneware pieces of various designs and sizes per month (Van Gilder 1974:9). There is nothing in either the form or decoration of Kolonyama that reveals the Lesotho setting of the studio. The pottery was distinctly in the style of English studio pottery and the slip-trailed designs were specifically that of Raymond and Joe Finch (Clark & Wagner 1974:71).

The Thaba Bosigo Pottery hails from the same era as Kolonyama but, unlike the latter, it was a government-funded initiative. The Lesotho National Development Corporation contracted Peter Hayes in 1972 to set up the studio in a deserted brewery building. Hayes recruited studio workers from the local community, teaching the men to throw on the wheel and the women to coil and slab-build pots (Clark & Wagner 1974:157). Thaba Bosigo's wares ranged in look from the "Anglo-Oriental" style to "a more avant-garde, contemporary, abstract, modernist idiom" (Gers 2015:299) but also the hybrid "Letima" form that reflected the external wall decoration of Basutho homesteads (Fig 31). Gers (2015:299) also notes utilitarian and decorative wares illustrated with "simplified and naïve" war scenes and mythological motifs as well as figurines based on Basutho fertility dolls.

Several small scale community co-operative ventures were launched in the later twentieth century by white entrepreneurs with the objective to engage with local non-white communities for training and employment. Most were short-lived ventures. Bitou Crafts in Knysna was the initiative of Ronnie van der Walt (1951-2020) and Clementina Berger (now Van der Walt) in the late 1970s. It aimed at involving the local coloured community partly to address the unemployment situation and partly to promote participation in "a new cultural field" and perhaps even "come up with a new indigenous type of work which could be most refreshing for the South African pottery scene" (Van der Walt 1978:10). The coloured and black people of Grahamstown were recruited to participate in the Makana Pottery project that was established in 1979 by a group of local white potters. The output was exclusively utilitarian wares and supplied to outlets in the town itself and the nearby cities of Port Elizabeth and East London (Maritz 1980a:12–13). The Kumkani Pottery in King Williams Town was intended to benefit the local Xhosa community. Established by Carel le Roux in 1980, Kumkani grew into a small but thriving pottery that eventually employed 13 Xhosa workers (Morris 1989:12). In 1978, in the village of Henley-on-Klip, John Sachs converted old farm sheds into the Mapepe Craft pottery studio. Fourteen people from the local black community were employed. The throwers were shown books and taken to exhibitions "to get them to try and differentiate the good from the bad" (Sachs 1981:11). Porcupine Ceramics is, strictly speaking, not a co-operative pottery studio but rather a production studio which draws its workers from the community of The Crags near Plettenberg Bay in the Western Cape Province. The project was launched by Patricia White in 1994 and continues to be active and successful with its own dedicated retail outlets. It did not set itself up to explore and absorb any indigenous cultural influences but introduced its workers to the raku firing technique with which a wide range of pottery items is produced (Guassardo 2009:18). A more recent example of a community-based project is Afrikania, established in 1999 in the community of Phalaborwa in the Limpopo Province. The project evolved from the "discovery" by the designer Tom Joubert of distinctive decorative features on traditional mud houses in Phalaborwa's Lulekani Township which is a meeting point of the Tswana and Pedi cultural

groups. Under Joubert's guidance, the "crafters", who work in a modern studio setting (Fig 32), are encouraged to give their individual interpretations of the hybrid Tsonga-Pedi patterns on ceramic items that include tiles, pots, plates and bowls. Joubert views the project as the preservation of "our African heritage" (Coetzee 2015:133).

Ardmore Ceramic Art was launched by Fée Halsted-Berning in 1985 as a co-operative to initially benefit women from the local Zulu community of Winterton in KwaZulu-Natal. Over the span of three decades, it has grown to be the most prominent and acclaimed studio project in South Africa with an international presence. Halsted-Berning graduated at the former University of Natal and then enrolled for a two-year course in specialised ceramics under Juliet Armstrong. At the university, she became familiar with David Middlebrook's unconventional approach to ceramics that included working with materials that fell outside the ambit of ceramics. She also briefly joined the Caversham Mill pottery studio of David Walters in 1983. After her retrenchment in 1985 from the Natal Technikon where she taught, Halsted-Berning moved to Ardmore Farm to develop a studio.

By 1999, the Ardmore studio had already been expanded with staff and facilities. There was an abundance of reference material in the form of illustrated books and magazines and Halsted-Berning's collection of craft and English and European ceramics. As owner, manager and mentor, Halsted-Berning dismissed conventional approaches to ceramics and created alternative techniques using materials such as acrylic craft paints, boot polish and oven blackeners to colour the fired terracotta works (Hön 2012:32). Doherty (2015:[Sp]) describes this as "an organic style of making" via the "chameleonlike" appropriation of European ceramic traditions and painting styles and, on the other hand, the artists' "natural flair for design, colour and rhythm". The resulting oeuvre has been met with criticism that it is blatantly hybrid and a parody of Western material culture through which a romanticised image of "Africa" is created (Fig 33). This, as it is relative to establishing and conveying identity via ceramics, is further discussed in Chapter 4.

By 2008, Ardmore's collective had about 80 sculptors, wheel-throwers and painters drawn from the men and women within and outside of the original local community. The earliest and best-known of the Ardmore ceramists was Bonnie Ntshalintshali (1967–1999) whose oeuvre is detailed in Chapter 4.

Under the broad umbrella of teaching and promoting craft, the Bartel Arts Trust (BAT) Centre and the Imbali Visual Literacy Project facilitate training in ceramics. The Imbali Visual Literacy Project was established in Johannesburg in 1988 and offers craft training as well as advanced training for teaching crafts. It places particular focus on ceramics training for underprivileged youth and women. The output of its crafters is showcased and sold in the Imbali Shop at Museum Africa in Johannesburg. The BAT Centre, based in eThekweni (formerly Durban), supports local artists and "encourage[es] cross-fertilisation … by sourcing talent, imparting skills and developing markets" (www.batcentre.co.za) with special attention to rural-based artists and crafters.

The proliferation and successes of community-based projects that were fully or partly focused on pottery and ceramics can, in part, be ascribed to the interest by international non-governmental organisations to promote and sell the output as "a human rights support mechanism" (Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology 1998:79–80) with little regard for quality or cost. Following the achievement of political freedom in 1994, international funding was diverted to the government and that saw the collapse of many non-governmental organisations which, in turn, impacted on the viability of the projects.

3.2 TRAINING IN THE POST-APARTHEID ERA

It does not appear as if APSA and CSA initiated any significant programmes for the benefit of ceramics training in the non-white communities. In the pre-democratic era until 1993, the Department of Cultural Affairs provided financial support to APSA for the education and training of its members of which the vast majority were white. In 1995, APSA did join the Suid-Afrikaanse Vroue Federasie (translation: South African Women's Federation) at the request of the

Department of Education and Culture to participate in a “reconstruction programme” for the benefit of the black squatter community, Stanza Bopape, in Mamelodi near the city of Tshwane (formerly Pretoria). APSA delegated Wanda Haarhof to teach the women pottery which was then sold at craft markets (Viljoen 1996:30). The project was beset by financial and logistical problems and was short-lived. In 2001, the Western Cape branch of APSA supported a skills development programme aimed at equipping young ceramists with business skills whilst also encouraging artistic merit and technical excellence (Esmyol 2002:15). Four non-white young ceramists were selected for participation in the first year of the programme.

The Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology commissioned a report in 1998 to investigate the status of **“**cultural industries” and proposals to stimulate growth and development. The report identified six categories of cultural goods with pottery falling in the ambit of four of those: “traditional art”, “craftart”, “functional wares” and “souvenirs” (1998:9). One of the proposals in the report was to create a national craft and design institute with, amongst others, the responsibility to facilitate exchanges between the craft and design sectors from which would presumably flow an emphasis on the training of producers to meet standards of quality craftsmanship. The proposed national council did not materialise but the Craft Council of South Africa (CCSA) was established in 1991 as a non-governmental organisation initiative. The vision of the CCSA was to support crafters (including potters) to exhibit and market their work “so that they could earn a living from their work and also pass their skills to others in their community” (www.basa.co.za). The National Arts Council (NAC), established in 1997, similarly promotes the “making of craft products” including ceramics and pottery by “[i]dentifying and nurturing artistic talent through funding the academic and professional development of arts practitioners, managers and support practitioners” (www.nac.org.za). I have not found any assessment of the success by the CCSA or the NAC in the training of potters or ceramists and assume that, if any, it would be incidental to its promotion and marketing of craftspeople and artists and their output.

Amongst the successful twenty-first century co-operative ventures in the Western Cape Province are the Cape Town-based Art in The Forest, Zizamele Ceramics, Potterswork and Imiso Ceramics. Art in The Forest was established in 2004 as a philanthropic project of Anthony Record and Carole Turner-Record. It is described as a social enterprise with all profits going towards community clay programmes for children. Under the management of Anthony Shapiro, Art in The Forest developed a distinctive style to be "monochromatic, chic, African and noncurio" (Shapiro 2016:31).

Toni Spiller Burton guided Zizamele Ceramics from an earlier job creation project for the Masiphumelele community at Noordhoek, Cape Town towards a thriving ceramic enterprise which even attracted interest from the upmarket US-based Anthropologie store. Spiller Burton studied ceramics under John Nowers (1940–1995) at Michaelis School of Fine Art. After teaching high school art for a number of years, she accepted the post of lecturer for a craft learnership course from which she later resigned to launch Zizamele Ceramics in 2008. The production team consists of members of the Xhosa community in Masiphumelele with the majority being women. The ceramists work co-operatively, dividing the production process but with each team member fully capable of independently producing a product. They are encouraged to develop and apply innovations to the product range.

Spiller Burton says that the Zizamele product range developed out of local references and "radiate[s] with the vibrancy of Africa's colours and patterns, which gives them their particular identity" (Pagani 2008:13). She elaborates that the Zizamele range is a cross-over of Western and African elements, "sometimes tongue-in-cheek or to give a twist to what 'Africa' means" (Spiller Burton 2019). The earliest principal product was the Bambanani Bowl, a press-moulded bowl featuring along the rim a circle of women dressed in bright colours and holding hands. The bowl was modelled on the "friendship bowl" produced by the Pueblo Jémez tribe in north-central New Mexico. The Zizamele version was later renamed as the Ubuntu Bowl (Fig 34). Another product range is the African

Family of boxes adorned with modelled busts.

Potterswork (originally known as Potter's Shop and afterwards as Potter's Workshop) was initiated by Chris Silverston in the Kalk Bay suburb of Cape Town. Silverston was apprenticed to Barbara Robinson and, some years later, in 1986 she opened a shop and, in 1991, an adjacent studio. The first exhibition featured a group of ceramists among who were Rabinowitz. The shop was geared towards promoting and selling "bright, commercial, ready-mixed colours, moving away from the traditional reduction, more muted glazes" (Silverston 2018:19). The studio attracted white and black ceramists and currently has 14 artists and 26 support staff. The output range is purposefully functional and decorative wares, all in rather restrained forms. A consistent style of decoration is a bead-like painting which suggests "African" but then only in the use of adapted animal and geometric designs and colours. Silverston (2019) admits that this does make the wares appear "frilly" (Fig 35, 36).

Potterswork nurtured the talents of some of South Africa's leading contemporary black ceramists. The first of those to join the studio was Ndoda Theo Ntuntwana after he graduated from the Gugulethu campus of the College of Cape Town and in whose work Silverston recognised "a completely new wave of design sense and aesthetic sensibility" (Silverston 2018:21). Other students of the same college followed: Andile Dyalvani, Madoda Fani, Patrick Mbethe, Sibongile Siboma and Fezile Ntoshfu. Apart from offering studio space and the opportunity to earn a share of the wholesale prices, Potterswork brokers residency and exhibition opportunities for the ceramists.

Two black ceramists who are acknowledged as trainees and protégés of ceramists and achieved significant recognition in their own right are Henriette Ngako and Nico Masemolo (1987–2015). Ngako was mentored by the studio potter Elza Sullivan and the ceramist Tineke Meijer and is discussed in detail in Chapter 4 for the relevance of her oeuvre in the consideration of hybridity. Masemolo, who died at an early age, was the ward and protégé of the ceramist Hylton Nel. Nel tutored him at his studios in Bethulie and Calitzdorp where Masemolo was initially taught

to produce hundreds of cups, each unique and all of them in a green glaze (www.princealbertgallery.co.za). Some semblances to his mentor's style have been noted in Masemolo's own work. Chris Chafin (www.pamono.ca) writes of Nel that he produces ceramics, including figurines, "that skate between whimsical, charming [and] mildly befuddling". Masemolo, in turn, produced small figurative sculptures in a naïve style which Helen Doherty (2015:2) describes as unpretentious "narratives drawn from his personal, daily life in a language unique to the artist" (Fig 37, 38). Masemolo is represented in the collection of the Iziko Museums of South Africa.

From 1998 to 2002, the former South African Cultural History Museum (now incorporated into Iziko Museums of South Africa) in Cape Town hosted annual exhibitions of ceramic works by non-white artists and artist collectives in both urban and rural centres in the Western Cape Province. The Bumba Udongwe (translation: Working with clay) exhibitions were highly successful in introducing these ceramists to the market, which they otherwise might not have had access to, and for gaining a standing in the ceramist community (Esmyol 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002). In the process of selecting participants, the museum gathered biographical information from which can be gleaned a history of ceramics training and networking at formal, informal and even familial level. The 1998 exhibition included ceramists associated with the Gugulethu campus of the College of Cape Town, Zenzele Enterprises in Khayelitsha, the Community Arts Project in Cape Town and the Uncedo Pottery Project that is associated with the College of Cape Town. The subsequent exhibitions highlighted other development projects that promoted ceramics skills training in the Western Cape Province, amongst those the Ulwazi Pottery Project, which serves young adults who suffer from cerebral palsy, Ncedanani Ceramics and Zamani Ceramics which operated from the Gugulethu campus of the College of Cape Town, the Sisonke Project for the blind or partially sighted and Genadendal Pottery that draws inspiration from the Khoikhoi culture inspired pots. Particularly noteworthy is that black ceramists of the likes of Ntuntwana (a former ceramics student at the Gugulethu campus of the College of Cape Town) and Mfuneko Dingiswayo took the lead in establishing the

centres to serve their own communities.

In conclusion, the ideology-driven education and training in ceramics that characterised most of twentieth century South Africa were purposefully aimed to favour white ceramists and entrench Western aesthetics. However, from the ranks of the community-based ceramics projects and community arts centres, a strong and dynamic black fraternity emerged to claim recognition for its own authentic idioms of ceramics. There are parallels to be found in African Modernism of the shedding of Western convention embedded in the training and education systems as I will make evident in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4
African Modernism and South African ceramics of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries

A distinctive feature that characterised twentieth-century African Modernism – and continues to be an insistent feature of contemporary African art in the opinion of Chika Okeke-Agulu (2006:14–15) – was its hybrid features. Though hybridity in African art is usually approached from a postcolonial point of view, several authors emphasise that intercultural contact had been expressed in Africa's material culture (inclusive of its art and craft) in much earlier times. At the very basic level, as Eisenhofer and Guggeis (2019:199, 203) suggest, the rise of new markets would have prompted the development of artistic expressions to meet the expectations of buyers. This would have assumed some distinctive features according to the circumstances, transcultural experiences and consumer expectations associated with the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial eras.

Susan Vogel (1991a:33, 36) describes the history of traditional African art as an "elastic continuum" in which it was trapped but not constrained by inherited forms and, more importantly that "Africans have so thoroughly digested and interpreted foreign forms in terms of their own value systems and visual codes that the foreign origins of those forms have become virtually unrecognizable". Contemporary African art, says Sidney Littlefield Kasfir (1999:9), further builds on its early colonial and postcolonial genres through a process of *bricolage* which, in essence, is the process of creation by accessing a diverse range of available resources.

In Chapter 4, I present the argument that South African ceramics of the later twentieth century bear evidence of hybridity but not necessarily in exact parallel with the circumstances, intent and form that are associated with African Modernism and as expressed elsewhere on the continent. I will further illustrate that this was differently nuanced by white and black ceramists. That discussion must be preceded by an overview of the history and positioning of African Modernism.

In comparison with South Africa that achieved a full democracy in 1994, other African countries gained their independence much earlier, amongst them Ghana in 1957, Somalia in 1960, Uganda in 1962, Nigeria and Kenya in 1963, Zambia in 1964, Mozambique in 1975 and Zimbabwe in 1980. It was in the postcolonial era of the countries that gained independence in the 1950s and 1960s that African Modernism emerged as an art practice and aesthetic that challenged the Western perception and positioning of African art.

4.1 DEFINING AFRICAN MODERNISM

The discourse on what constitutes African art and the positioning of African art in world art has drawn on the writings of the postcolonial[1] theorists Edward W. Said (*Orientalism*, 1978 and *Culture and imperialism*, 1994), Homi K. Bhabha (*The location of culture,* 1994), Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (*A critique of postcolonial reason*, 1999), Ziauddin Sardar with Rasheed Araeen and Sean Cubitt (*The Third Text Reader on Art, Culture and Theory*, 2002) and Wole Soyinka (*Of Africa*, 2012). Amongst the eminent African art historians who contribute to the discourse are Chika Okeke-Agulu (*Postcolonial Modernism: Art and Decolonization in Twentieth-Century Nigeria*, 2015), Kasfir (*Contemporary African art*, 1999), N'Gone Fall (*An anthology of African art: The twentieth century*, 2002 with Jean-Loup Pivin), Olu Oguibe (*The culture game*, 2004), Okwui Enzewor (*Reading the contemporary – African art from theory to the marketplace*, 1999 with Oguibe) and Araeen who is the founding editor of the *Third Text* journal.

The African academics and artists who challenged the Western concepts of African art investigated the factors that influenced the development of colonial and postcolonial African art, described those forms of artistic expression and repositioned African art in the international art world. The enquiry resulted in defining African Modernism as an expression of self-awareness that is cognisant

[1] Postcolonialism was succinctly defined by Amanda Alexander and Manisha Sharma (2013:87) as "a state of becoming or constant evolution that nation-states and cultures exist in – as they reinvent themselves physically, mentally, emotionally, and economically in an ongoing response to the event of being colonized".

of culture and tradition but not constrained by them. In its essence, African Modernism is reflective of the core understanding of modernism which the Tate Galleries (www.tate.org.uk) describes as a twentieth-century expression of the realities and hopes of modern societies distinguished by the rejection of conservative values, commitment to innovation and conspicuous engagement with materials, techniques and processes. The key issues of African Modernism include the recognition of the African artist's agency to abandon or alter convention, liberally but judiciously reference cultures other than the own, utilise materials and processes associated with non-African art and create art that is *from Africa* as opposed to art *of Africa* (my italics). Olu Oguibe (2002:243–245) states that, in the opposition to colonialism, the African artist of the twentieth century had the options either to persevere in creating the indigenous forms which the colonial authorities sought to obliterate or to appropriate and master the forms and techniques of Western art and, in that way, erase its exclusivity. It was not, states Oguibe (2002:245), for the purpose of proving equal competence but to "undermine the ideological foundations of the colonial project and overwrite, as it were, the colonial text". This underpins the consideration of all twentieth and twenty-first century artistic expressions of African art in all forms and guises inclusive of "craft" and "tourist art".

Though not fully representative nor definitive, five exhibitions can be considered to have introduced late twentieth and early twenty-first century African art to the international art world with varying degrees of success of portrayals of what African art of the time constituted. The African art historian, John Picton[2] (2013), summarises these exhibitions. The first was the "Magiciens de la terre" exhibition staged in Paris in 1989 with a nominal presence of African artists and which, according to Picton, created the impression that the participating artists were "naïve autodidacts" and that the exhibition hence promoted a "neoprimitivism" (Picton 2013:313). The second was "Contemporary African Artists: Changing

[2] Picton was central to the shaping of the multiple African arts exhibitions project known as 'africa95' staged in Britain in 1995.

Traditions", presented in New York in 1990 which, though it only showcased the work of nine artists, was a "most useful survey of African modernisms to that point" (Picton 2012:313). A second exhibition in New York followed in 1991: "Africa Explores" introduced artists other than those who were featured in the 1990 exhibition and shared "the full breadth of current art making" (Picton 2013:314) whilst it also "underscored the importance of placing contemporary African art in the context of African art, history, and culture" (Susan Vogel cited by Picton 2013:313). The next was "africa95", presented in London in 1995. The event flowed from the staging by the Royal Academy of Arts of "Africa: The Art of a Continent" exhibition that excluded twentieth-century African art. The supporting exhibitions[3] however showcased a broad spectrum of contemporary art and craft which, though representative, failed in establishing their interconnections (2013:315). "Africa05", also known as "Africa Remix", was an archival exhibition that toured Europe, Japan and South Africa in 2005. According to Picton, the exhibition was "spectacular" but lacked "any sense of a history – or rather any sense of a set of histories" (2013:315).

These five exhibitions were hosted outside of Africa and, irrespective of their merits and successes, were Western initiatives. By the mere act of selection of what and who were represented and the curatorial presentations of those artists' works, the exhibitions could be considered paternalistic and, as suggested by the art historians Gitti Salami and Monica Blackmun Visonà (2013:9), served to "reify Western paradigms" about African art.

African art historians and post-colonial theorists have argued the fallacies, misconceptions and prejudices, summarised by the art historian Rasjeed Araeen (2005:416) as a "moribund past", that deny the agency of the twentieth century African artists to create works within and outside of usual disciplines; challenge

[3] One of the exhibitions that featured South African art was an exhibition hosted by the Art First Gallery in London. "Found in South Africa" promoted "untaught artists many of them working in remote areas" (Geers & Ross 1996:11). The selected artists included Noria Mbasa, Jackson Hlungwani (1923–2010) and Johannes Segogela.

binaries (craft-art, traditional-modern, continental-international, representative-reflective, mimicked-original, the Other-the Self, etc.); interrogate colonial and postcolonial histories and identities; deliver socio-political commentaries; and claim recognition that does not hinge on being African or from narrating Africa (namely the "other" and the "exotic"). Enwezor's (2001:12) summation of African Modernism is that it

> concern[s] the African systematization, deployment, and usage of modern forms, values, and structures … this modernism is not founded on an ideology of the universal, nor is it based on the recognition and assimilation of an autonomous European modernism, or on the continuity of the epistemic field of artistic territorialization achieved and consecrated by the colonial project.[4]

Okeke-Agula (2001, 2015) presents an account of the colonial and postcolonial phases and influences in the evolution of African Modernism in Nigerian art of which I provide a broad outline. Okeke-Agula positions the policy of the colonial authorities to favour indigenous craft over the visual arts as a purposeful exercise to negate artistic freedom and independence of expression which otherwise could have challenged the colonial ethos and authority. In an early response, the colonial authority and ideology were subtly parodied, caricatured and critiqued in Nigerian craft and art. Some Nigerian visual artists relocated to Europe (London and Paris) to pursue formal art studies. Following the founding of colonial art schools fashioned on European institutions, students of those schools and others formed art societies that promoted a break with European art traditions and directed their focus towards their own culture and society. Self-consciousness in the visual arts received further impetus from the ideologies of Pan-Africanism, Pan-Islamism, Pan-Arabism, Negritude and Nationalism. Following independence, European patronage supported training in the visual arts. Diaspora African artists and the inclusion of African artists in exhibitions in the West promoted a familiarity with

[4] Enwezor's statement was included in a publication that accompanied "The Short Story: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa 1945–1994" exhibition staged in Munich in 2001. This event is considered to be the first comprehensive exhibition of twentieth century African arts. It included painting, sculpture, photography, architecture, music, theatre, literature, film and textiles.

twentieth-century African art. The recognition of African Modernism came with the intercession of African (and non-African) art historians who contested Western perceptions of twentieth-century African art, explained and proclaimed its modernity, and claimed its recognition within mainstream art.

In his definition of African Modernism, Okeke-Agulu (2001:29) underplays colonial Western influence in shaping African art and credits the African artists themselves for engaging with issues in postcolonial societies from which flowed new artistic expressions rooted in "an essentialist nativism or a supposedly progressive adoption of patently European aesthetic styles and propositions". Okeke-Agulu expanded on this in an interview with Lisa Aronson and John S. Weber (2012:80–81), stating that African Modernism represents the artists' "awareness or an attempt to negotiate one's relationship with tradition, but to go beyond that". Salah M Hassan (2014:454) offers a more weighted view: "modern art practice … signals … a self-conscious process of refashioning the self and the projection of particular attitudes toward the past and the present". John Peffer (2008:183) views the techniques of modernism "as a skill set that could be acquired in order to build a relevant local culture that was modern and cosmopolitan but not necessarily European".

Okeke-Agula's perspective (2001, 2015) on the development of African Modernism art in Nigeria in the twentieth century would be equally relevant, though not an exact mirror, in an appraisal of the art histories in other African countries.[5] He speaks of plural modernities in Africa (2001:29) and of "diverse, contemporaneous modernisms" (Okeke-Agula 2006:14) where he emphasises that it is "reductive to speak about *an* African modernism" (my emphasis) but that what must be considered are "the specific histories of [the artists'] countries, as well as … the intellectual, political, and artistic philosophies and ideologies to which they were exposed". We should also consider that African Modernism was

[5] The ideologies underpinning the colonial objectives and the forms of colonial administrations of Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Portugal, Spain and Italy had significant differences and the subsequent postcolonial independencies evolved specific to African countries (see Betts 1985).

expressed differently in the various art forms and within the same art forms, for example, with a lesser or greater degree of adherence to associated materials, form and method. Abdou Sylla (1998:52) points out that "[a]uthentic contemporary African art forms" emerged in the later twentieth century but, within those forms, one can read "accentuated" differences and "national specificities" related directly to the particular traditions of the postcolonial African countries. Within those traditions, according to Andre Magnin and Jacques Soulillou (1996:9), the local, regional and national contexts must be considered. Okeke-Agulu (2006:15) similarly emphasises that "local historical and cultural conditions and intellectual traditions therefore determined the specific form of [African Modernism's] constituent parts".

African Modernism challenged the long-held but artificial view by the West of what defined African art as regards form, purpose, originality and authenticity. Collectors, dealers, museologists, academics and authors contributed to the shaping of a Western perspective that attributed meanings and aesthetic values which were, more often than not, grounded in prejudiced opinion and reflective of an attitude of superiority (see Araeen 1991; Kasfir 1999). Applying its own hierarchy of aesthetics, the West furthermore compartmentalised Africa's art and crafts.

4.2 HYBRIDITY AS A STATEMENT

Okeke-Agulu (1996, 2006, 2015) and his fellow African Modernism authors make repeated reference to hybridity by African artists. Said (1994:xxv) claims that no culture could be considered pure but that all are "hybrid, heterogenous, extraordinarily differentiated, and unmonolithic". Steven Leuthold (2011:21–22, 25) addresses hybridity within the broader framework of the processes of cultural diffusion. He distinguishes between cultural incorporation, assimilation and integration. In cultural incorporation, native peoples adopt foreign features of technology and culture with no loss of any features of the own culture. Cultural assimilation is the adoption of foreign cultural elements which replace own features. The outcome of the synthesis of two or more cultural systems, resulting

in changes within the adopting culture, is deemed to be cultural integration. Hybridity is therefore measurable by the processes of incorporation and the reflected expressions of adopted features.

Hybridity became a distinctive feature dubbed as “Natural Synthesis” (Okeke-Agulu 1996:41–42) of the Zaria Art Society in the late 1950s that drew its members from the Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology at Zaria in Nigeria. Okeke-Agulu (1996:14, 42) explains that the objective was to merge “the best of the indigenous art traditions; forms and ideas with the useful western ones” or, more specifically, to merge “ideas, ideals, and materials from indigenous African cultures as well as those associated with Islam, colonialism, and the West” whether those be single or diverse sources, local or foreign, old or new. The Angolan art historian and curator, Adriano Mixinge (2009:63), reflects that the earlier quest by African artists to define and express “a fixed and immutable essence of Africanness” drew on collective commonalities whereas the contemporary African artist sifts that collective history and “freely draws on elements evocative of pre-existing cultural substrata, to invent, reproduce, revert, challenge, question or construct new imaginary forms”. Hassan’s view (2010:460) is that “the African modernist experience is by definition transnational and a product of a global experience”. Considering the collective writings of the African art historians, I would phrase it that both the modernist and the contemporary expressions of African art are translocal, transcultural and transnational within and outside of Africa.

Some further definitions and analyses of hybridity deserve attention. Noel Castree, Rob Kitchin and Alisdair Rogers (2013) describe it as “[a] condition arising from the mixing and transcendence of binary opposites such as nature-society, or colonized-colonizer”. In John Scott’s definition (2014), hybridity is “a positive condition of cultural change and creativity [that] has attempted to challenge fixed or essentialist accounts of identity and culture”. Amanda Alexander and Manisha Sharma (2013:88) cite Bill Ashcroft et al (1998) who defines hybridity as “the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact

zone produced by colonization" and furthermore that influences contributing to the hybrid identity can be drawn from multiple locations whether associated with the coloniser or the colonised. I subscribe to Marvan Kraidy's (2002:317) concern that hybridity must not be a merely "descriptive device" but must be approached as a communicative practice and space through which "interactions of differential power" are continuously negotiated. Frank Vigneron (2011:30) holds a similar view to Kraidy by stating that hybridity is not inherent in the object itself but is subject to who perceives it and from what point of view. This is particularly relevant to counter the purist (Western) view that hybridity, on the one hand, negates originality and authenticity and, on the other hand, dilutes the "African essence". Magnin and Soulillou (1996:10) have a curt response to such concerns and state that African art "cares little for the process of legitimation". Oguibe (2010a:352) was vehement in his dismissal of the denigration of African art and said the purpose behind the questioning of authenticity had more to do with enforcing a cultural distance between Caucasian and African art. Another view is that of Jean Fisher (2012:329) who blames the denial of the non-Western artist as an innovator on Western criteria and curatorial practices that serve as "an exoticing/marginalizing screen" through which non-European art is read. The outcome, says Fisher (2012:331), is "an ignorance of the diversity of modernisms each inflected differently through the specific contexts of cultures outside the northern metropolises" and diminishes the non-Western artist to the status of "a bearer of prescribed and homogenized cultural signs and meanings".

4.3 CERAMICS IN AFRICAN MODERNISM

In their critical enquiry, art historians of African Modernism and contemporary African art have given sparse consideration to ceramics and, as evidenced in Sylla's comment that was made as late as 1998, were even dismissive of it:

> Ceramic [African] art exists, but it is less developed than sculpture or painting; it has no doubt been penalised by the prodigious development of traditional pottery, which has always provided the African populations with the vases and different utensils required for domestic activity. When oriented towards artistic creation, ceramics

> produce statues, masks, and various sorts of gadgets (1998:67–68).

When attention was given to African ceramics, it was usually to the ceramics of mixed-media artists (or artists with some African reference). Furthermore, when ceramics within mixed-media oeuvres or as dedicated oeuvres were considered, the focus was usually directed at Nigerian, Sudanese and Tunisian ceramics. The prominence of the ceramic practices and influences of Nigeria is merited because of the country's rich legacy of traditional pottery as well as a thoroughly documented history of the blending of traditional and modern forms with foreign techniques and technology in the twentieth century. This was brought to international attention through the involvement of Michael Cardew at the Abuja Pottery Training Centre, a project which Liz Moloney (2002:[Sp]) not unfairly describes as

> an intermediate technology project, prompted by the perceived need for a home-grown industry to supply the middle-class Nigerian demand for glazed tableware suitable for European-style meals and hot drinks, at that time already supplied by factory-produced imports.[6]

Cardew (1958:109–113) was enthralled by Nigerian hand-built "peasant" utilitarian pottery with its practical but elegant forms and minimalist "charming" decorations. His concern was whether traditional pottery would gradually become extinct and whether it could be technically improved. To counter the former concern, Cardew envisaged "a state of equilibrium between primitive pottery and glazed domestic ware, both kinds flourishing side by side" but, as regards the latter, he noted that "the potters themselves are for the most part resistant to technical innovation, at least in those areas where it is a woman's trade". Cardew (1958:112–113) makes two further comments which must be noted. Firstly, that centres arose where "the native [sic] make careful but rather pathetic imitations of

[6] In Nigeria, Cardew's pottery training was preceded by that of Kenneth Murray who taught art in Nigeria from 1929 to 1939. During his leave in 1929, Murray studied pottery under Bernard Leach (1887–1979) and afterwards developed the vision of working with traditional potters in southern Nigeria to improve their skills with Western pottery methods and technology. Though his personal views on African art differed from those of the British colonial office, he failed in elevating pottery from its craft status to that of formal art (Onuzulike 2013:310).

imported porcelain shapes" and secondly that, in some of the markets, pots and bowls with incised designs of modernity ("motor lorries or aeroplanes") made their appearance. Of the latter, he said that the new designs were "lively translations into clay technique of things seen in the mind, not copied from pictures or photographs [which] is not to be dismissed as childish. It is just as childish, and as genuine, as any other original art". He was also quoted (Brown 1966:59) as saying that "[n]ew shapes are seen simply as parts of a developing tradition".

Amongst Cardew's workers was Ladi Kwali (c. 1925–1984), a potter from the Gwari region in Northern Nigeria who produced traditional pottery in the style of the Gbagyi culture. Kwali was recruited to Abuja in 1954 as the centre's first female potter and was encouraged by Cardew to continue the production of traditional Gbagyi pottery with the benefit of Western techniques and technology. She became familiar with wheel-throwing, glazing and kiln-firing and mastered the production of Western style forms, such as tankards, coffee pots and cups, casseroles and platters, which she continued to decorate with figures of arachnids, lizards, reptiles, birds and fish and also with geometric, linear patterns (Fig 39). Cardew lavished praise on Kwali, naming her as *prima inter pares* (the first amongst equals) at Abuja (Brown 1966:60). Emman Okunna (2012:5) points out that Kwali's oeuvre illustrates that she "bridged the techno-cultural gap between the traditional and modern practice" without the loss of cultural values. On the other hand, Okunna (2012:3) acknowledges that Kwali submitted to the lure of the collector market by producing designs, for example, water pots that were decorative rather than utilitarian. Breaking with tradition, her pots were given flat bases as opposed to the usually rounded form to facilitate their stability. Kwali became internationally known under Cardew's patronage, visiting Britain, France, Germany and the United States where she gave demonstrations of her pottery skills.

Demas Nwoko is considered to be one of the earliest of the Nigerian ceramists who pursued the "Natural Synthesis" objective of the Zaria Art Society in the

1950s. Nwoko drew inspiration from the terracotta sculptures of the Early Iron Age Nok culture as well as traditional Nigerian pottery and, in particular, sought to emulate the rich textures associated with terracotta. Disappointed with the results of traditional firing that generates limited heat and with modern kiln firing which tends to produce a uniform colour, he devised a firing technique in which the fuel (teak wood) was burned in direct contact with the object.

Also hailing from the 1960s generation of African Modernist artists is the Ghanaian-born but Nigeria-based mixed-media artist El Anatsui who epitomises the breaking of traditional boundaries in art-making. He "unapologetically grappled with inventive, experimental processes" (Okeke-Agulu 2010:37) that included the use of non-traditional sculptural devices (such as a chainsaw) and materials that included cloth and found items (such as bottle tops). Following his appointment to the art department at the University of Nigeria-Nsukka in 1975 and for a period of some six years, he explored clay for "its malleability and its ambivalent denotation of both permanence and transience" and its figurative associations of memory, social relationships, spirituality and regeneration (Oguibe 2018:49–50). It must be noted that El Anatsui did not deem himself as a ceramist but as a sculptor working with clay as a medium.

The pot, said El Anatsui (cited by Oguibe 2018:50), is "an expressive vehicle … open to an inexhaustible array of symbolic, metaphoric, reflective meanings, interpretations, manipulations". Oguibe (2018:52) emphasised that El Anatsui's "pots" are rhetorical in so far as they transcend original function and in their sculpturality. The sculptural features, as pointed out by Oguibe, include the combination of different clay bodies and the use of bold lines, incisions, ribbing, appendages, fissures, protrusions, rough edges and sharply contrasting colours. If not sculpture *per se*, argues Robert Storr (2012:53), then El Anatsui's work invokes "a primary mode of sculpture and a primary purpose – commemoration" (Fig 40). In his ceramics, he referenced the Akan *adinkra* ideography of Ghana which Oguibe (2004:1991) explains as "idioms [that] encapsulate common wisdoms as well as deep, philosophical deductions about life, history, society,

existence, and the nature of the universe". Within *adinkra*, the *sankofa* ideogram is that of a bird turning to look backwards which denotes "return and retrieve" or "go back and pick" (Worth 2009) which El Anatsui, according to Okeke-Agulu (2010:37–38), approached as:

> not merely a process of recuperating the past – a revisiting of African history for the sake of refuting colonial and racist claims of the continent's existence outside of the horizon of human history – but instead was an argument for critical examination of not just African history but also the consequences, in the postcolonial present, of its encounter with the west and the rest.

El Anatsui produced two series of ceramics. The first was *Broken Pots* exhibited in 1979 and the second was *Venovize* which he produced as artist-in-residence at Cornwall College in 1985. The first series has particular relevance in positioning El Anatsui's postcolonial-informed and expressed enquiry. Oguibe (2010b:32) explains that El Anatsui considered the broken pot as both a phase and metaphor of evolution and transformation for a society emerging from adversity with the further understanding that "the constituent parts remained and could be reconstituted, not in order to recover the old forms but to produce fragile new entities". The potsherds, which were reassembled but continued to reveal fractures and uneven restoration, states Oguibe, denotes "Africa's experiment and experience in modernity"; the diverse materials used in the reconstruction signified "a patchwork of the old and the new, the indigenous and the foreign"; and the assemblage by itself "represents evolution and recovery, reconstitution and rebirth". In a later commentary, Oguibe (2018:54) gives this further substance by stating that "[El Anatsui's] rehabilitation of the fragment … invalidates originary notions of identity, questioning the fetish of the whole and the fiction of integrity upon which supremacist ideology is hinged".

Whereas El Anatsui made use of Adinkra ideography as a visual and textual reference, the contemporary Tunisian mixed-media artist, Khaled Ben Slimane, employs Arabic calligrams to the same purpose and effect. Slimane returned to the country of his birth after graduating in 1977 from the Escola Massana Art and Design Centre in Barcelona, Spain. Ceramics with a predilection for architectural

forms are a dominant feature in his oeuvre in which the themes of Andalusian and Berber cultures can be traced. Slimane became acquainted with the Spanish artists Joan Miró (1893–1983) and Antoni Tàpies **(**1923–2012), both known for their work with ceramics, and he also studied the ceramic traditions of Iran, India and Pakistan. In its profile of the artist, the Barjeel Art Foundation (www.barjeelartfoundation.org) describes Slimane as holding a belief "in the power of heritage and sees his craft as a contemporary reinvention of historical ceramics". Slimane calls on signs, symbols, imprints, calligrams and Qur'anic verses (Anon 2018a; www.barjeelartfoundation.org) which invoke "Sufism through graphic repetition of words and phrases" (www.galerielmarsa.com). The contemporary Algerian mixed-media artist, Rachid Koraïchi, who is a Sufi follower, similarly draws on Arabic calligrams as well as Chinese ideograms and pre-Islamic Berber and Tuareg art forms (www.barjeelartfoundation.org). He initially trained at Algeria's Institute of Fine Arts and the Superior National School of the Arts (1967 to 1977) and afterwards continued his studies at the École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs and the Institut d'Urbanisme in Paris. Koraïchi combines ceramics, textiles, metals, silk, paper and canvas for his mixed-media works for compositions that "integrate … layered systems of signs into an organised and marvellous description of the world that surrounds us" (www.octobergallery.co.uk) (Fig 42).

A ceramist from the same era as Nwoko and El Anatsui, was Mohammed Ahmed Abdalla Abbaro (1935–2016) – generally known as Mo Abarro – who graduated in 1958 from the Khartoum Technical Institute in Sudan and, in 1959, continued his studies at the Central School of Art and Design in London. Afterwards, he taught at the Camden Arts Centre and later served as head of its ceramics department. Similar to the Nigerian mixed-media artists who were his contemporaries, Abbaro experimented with materials and processes to resolve utilitarian forms, surfaces and colours (Anon 2016a) whilst drawing on ancient Sudanese pottery and Sudan's natural environment for the treatment of ceramic

surfaces.[7] The results, according to Jean Kennedy (1992:121–122), reveal traces of antiquity that can be read in encrustations and patinas which recall archaeological findings. Hassan (1996:124) was more specific about this, stating that Abbaro's ceramics revealed features of Sudan's ancient Meroitic culture. Kenneth Okwesa (1970:29) critiques the ceramics as organic and primordial, and the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art (www.africa.si.edu/exhibitions) considers the textures reminiscent of volcanic earth and snakeskin. The ceramic forms, according to Kennedy (1992:121), relate to "the domes, arches, animal horns, and various calabash and basket forms indigenous to Sudanese culture". Kennedy (1992:122) and Hassan (1996:122–123) further address the strong presence of Islamic aesthetics in Sudanese art with specific mention of how that was manifested in the ceramics of Abbaro. Hassan traces this back to the Khartoum School and the School of the One that promoted the Arabic and Islamic identity of Sudan within which the Sudanese culture was acknowledged as hybrid and Africanised. In her reflection on the Islamic influence, Kennedy states that Sudanese art (as evidenced in Abbaro's work) represents "the mystical and poetic aspects of Islam" on which artists draw to reflect on the relationship between art and country, social and political themes, religion and tradition.

The contemporary Nigerian ceramist, Ozioma Onuzulike, a 1996 graduate of the University of Nigeria-Nsukka, has been exploring figurative ceramics and sculptural tableware. In a continuation of African Modernism's experimentation to break the confines of convention, Onuzulike searches for forms and visual effects that support and convey his enquiry of Nigeria's contemporary culture and socio-politics. His mixed-media ceramics have featured combinations of clay and found materials, which include wood, grass, plastic strings, stones, metal (for example colanders, sieves, spent cans, stones and iron slag) and acrylics (Okpe 2007:[Sp]), with which he creates abstract forms. His techniques range from modelling on the pottery wheel to casting and carving with open-firing of the

[7] Kasfir (1999:208) states that Abarro "worked within a formal tradition associated with the Nile valley" which he adapted in his wheel-thrown and high-temperature fired works.

bisque forms to achieve textural effect (Okpe 2007:[Sp]; Obodo 2018:[Sp]). In 2003, Onuzulike presented his *Casualties* exhibition of ceramics and multi-media sculptures in which the titles of the works explicitly reference Nigeria's social, environmental and political issues (Fig 44): *No Water*, *Democratic Question*, *The Politicians are Back*, *National Cake*, *From the Woods*, and *Burnt Forest I*. His earlier works addressed decadence, oppression and the theme of genocide (Obodo 2018:[Sp]).

For my discussion on African ceramists in the era characterised by African Modernism, I drew on publications which I found to be failing in comprehensively addressing the twentieth century and twenty-first century African ceramics. The expatriate South African ceramist, Kim Bagley (2014:90), makes a similar finding in her research of the representation of Africa in ceramics, stating that "the literature indicates the relative invisibility of contemporary African ceramists and African themes when compared to artists and their work from other geographic categories". Those publications (books and journals) either included brief references to African ceramics of this period or profiled individual ceramists. None offered a broad overview or a comparative study of African ceramists. To illustrate my point, I will refer to the publications by Eileen Lewenstein and Emmanuel Cooper (*New Ceram*ics, 1974), Spring (*African art in detail*, 2009) and Edmund de Waal (*The pot book*, 2011) which have some overlap in the ceramists they feature. Lewenstein and Cooper present a survey of ceramics of Europe, the former East-Bloc countries, North and South America, the Middle and Far East, Australasia and Africa with the acknowledgement that the ceramic object must "consider its relationship both to the pots of history and also the society in which it is made" (1974:21). In the chapter on African ceramics, attention is given to South Africa as "the most active centre of ceramics in Africa" and notes the making of murals and wall decorations as a particular feature (Lewenstein & Cooper 1974:137). Sammy Liebermann, Esias Bosch, Tim Morris, Pieter Maritzberg [sic], Alice Heystek and Andrew Walford are named as South African ceramists. The ceramics of Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) were considered to be similar to those of South Africa (Lewenstein & Cooper 1974:38)

but none of the ceramists were named. In a brief discussion of Nigerian ceramics, Lewenstein and Cooper focus on Harry Davis (1910–1986) and Cardew as key figures in modernising West African ceramics and further name Isaac Olusegun Aina and Saidu Na' Allah, both from Zaria, as "potters [who] have made interesting attempts to integrate traditional shapes into their own work" and that "their pots merge the essence of the African and Western cultures creatively" (1974:138). Two flower vases by Aina are featured in images which illustrate the text. For the greater part of his writing on African ceramics, Spring (2009) deals with ethnographic traditional pottery but includes brief notes on Slimane and Koraïchi in the captions that accompany images of their works. De Waal's book (2011) is a showcase of more than 300 ceramists and examples of cultural and historical ceramic styles. The brevity of the accompanying texts negates its value as an academic reference work. Of the Africa-related ceramists, De Waal features Cardew, Helga Gamboa, Kwali, Magdalene Odundo and Slimane. The most recent publication on African ceramics is *African Ceramics – a different perspective*, edited by Angelika Nollert (2019). It features the exemplary and comprehensive collection of more than 600 African ceramics objects assembled by Franz, Duke of Bavaria, which was donated to Die Neue Sammlung – The Design Museum in Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich, Germany. Referring to the works in the collection, a panel of distinguished authors discuss culture-specific ceramics as well as issues of cultural heritage, self-definition, the transcultural and the transnational. Amongst the South African ceramists who feature in the collection and/or the texts are Ian Garrett, Andile Dyalvane, Clive Sithole and members of the Nesta Nala dynasty.

4.4 AFRICAN CERAMICS OR CERAMICS WITH AN AFRICAN-NESS?

Lewenstein and Cooper (1974:21) state that the ceramic object must "consider its relationship both to the pots of history and also the society in which it is made" (1974:21). Bagley echoes this in the research for her doctoral thesis that focused on the construction and representation of African-ness in ceramics (2014:1) with specific reference to African ceramists or ceramists who have an association with

Africa. Bagley follows other authors' suit in featuring Cardew, Kwali, Odundo and Slimane. Bagley additionally introduces Lawson Oyekan who was born in Britain, reared in Nigeria and trained in England where he is now resident; the British ceramist Jonathan Garratt who draws extensively on African material culture and imagery; his compatriot Michael OBrien who succeeded Cardew at the Abuja Pottery Training Centre and later continued his studio practice in England; and Siddig El Nigoumi (1931–1996) who was born in Sudan but was trained in England where he settled permanently. Extensive coverage is given to Cardew who Bagley considers to be both a marker and gatekeeper of the interface between Western and African ceramics for ceramists and audiences of ceramics, alike (2014:57). Bagley presents comparative notes on the ceramists whom she groups for their association of location, practices and oeuvres to illustrate "allegiances, similarities and resonances" (2014:127) which, in my opinion, does not stand too distant from either the philosophy or the practices associated with African Modernism. For this reason, I will discuss Garrat, Odundo and Gamboa.

Of Garratt, Bagley writes that, whilst his direct exposure to Africa was limited, he had substantial knowledge of the techniques, forms and decorations of African objects which he studied in museums and private collections (2014:153). A further African influence came via OBrien for whom Garrat worked for a period and who can be considered his mentor. One of the African ceramic features which Bagley notes is Garrat's use of rouletting[8] as decoration. Oyekan, like Slimane and Koraïchi, employs calligraphy on his sculptural ceramics but in an obscure, intelligible and even illegible manner, more gestural than verbal (Bagley 2014:143) and calling on both English and the West African Yoruba language. Interviewed by Bagley (2014:144, 147), he declared himself African and specifically associated himself with the Yoruba religion of Ifa: "I can only make references to what I know. That is Ifa. That is what I understand. It is wisdom in Yoruba. That's what I am." Arabic calligraphy was also a feature of Nigoumi's

[8] A roulette is an object (natural or man-made) impressed onto the surface of a pot, usually in a repetitive pattern, prior to firing to create decorative patterns.

oeuvre but it is more so for his use of techniques strongly associated with Africa (low-temperature firing and surface burnishing) that merited his inclusion in Bagley's survey.

Two recent publications also make reference to Kwali and Gamboa and, in both, the authors applied the term "hybridity" to characterise their oeuvres. Of Kwali, Moira Vincentelli (2008:[Sp]) writes that she produced "a fascinating hybrid of African form and European studio pottery in stoneware" and, of Gamboa, that she "uses ideas of hybridity". Kathleen Bickford Berzock (2007:15) considers Kwali's oeuvre as "an odd hybrid of African creativity and European intervention". Bagley too makes extensive use of the term but consistently qualifies and contextualises where she applies it. Bagley (2014:166) uses hybridity as a method of making in African ceramics, both through materials and techniques, to achieve an African visual language and as a vehicle to assert an African identity. This is analogous to how hybridity is defined and qualified by Okeke-Agulu and other proponents of African Modernism.

Odundo was was born in Kenya but trained in England where she is now permanently based. Without contesting that her oeuvre bears evidence of Nigerian influence, Christopher Frayling (2004:6) and Chris Spring (2009:18) draw attention to Odundo's study of the twentieth century British studio pottery; the traditional and contemporary ceramics of the Pueblo women of New Mexico; the ancient pottery of the Mediterranean region and Attic culture; the pottery of the Toro Guild made for the Ganda royal court in Uganda; and the traditional ceremonial vessels of Kenya. Her initial training was at the West Surrey College of Art and Design after which she worked for three months at the Abuja Pottery Training Centre where she paid specific attention to the hand-building techniques of the Gwari women potters. I favour the description by Frayling (2004:7) that Odundo's oeuvre is grounded in "living traditions [including] the handbuilding techniques of a part of Sub-Saharan Africa". Emmanuel Cooper (2004:9) reads in her oeuvre "the concept of shifting cultural identities, of ancient processes and techniques as well as the role of the ceramic vessel in the modern world … in

which there are many histories to be discovered and stories to be told". Cooper (2004:41) adds that, in adapting traditional forms, Odundo "[gave] them meaning and significance in the modern world". Cooper's (2004:9–62) review of Odundo pays detailed attention to her experimentation with materials and processes to create forms which recall rather than replicate traditional pottery (Fig 45).

Odundo's vessels are hand-built, covered in a terra sigillata slip, burnished to achieve a very smooth surface and then fired in saggars filled with combustible materials in a kiln (which is akin to pit-firing). When fired in an oxidising atmosphere, the terra sigillata results in a silky orange-red colour and in a carbonising atmosphere will produce a lustrous black. At times, the surfaces show mottled patterns of red-on-black or black-on-red when there is a partial re-oxidisation in the carbonisation process. Odundo's vessels have small bases, are full-bellied and the necks are typically elongated and arched. Some are symmetrical, others asymmetrical. Surface features might be absent and only reliant on the colour, others are nominally embellished with seams, nipples, ears or small lugs. Cooper (2004:30) alludes the forms to the human figure and the seamlines and nipples as "analogous with ritual scarification, body markings and tattooing associated with African cultures". Cooper (2004:30) and Susan Vogel have separately commented on what, at first glance, appears to be a sameness in Odundo's vessels. Vogel (1991b:19) argues that the African artist produced a "reprise" which she explains as a process of not attempting to innovate or replace a model but "to play off it". In relating this to Odundo's vessels, Vogel considers that the ceramist neither exhausted nor repeated the forms. Cooper's view (2004:30) is that each vessel is distinctive but "share[s] the same language and so become[s] part of a family, each piece echoing but adding to the other forms".

According to Cooper (2004:52), Odundo is "inscrutable" on the issue of whether she must be labelled as an African artist and whether the "African-ness" in her oeuvre must be acknowledged. In an interview with Alexa Farina (2001:34–35), Odundo identified herself as a "global person" and said that she "will only draw from Africa if it suits me in my quest for perfect simplicity, for natural forms". Of

greater importance for Odundo, states Cooper, is the recognition that she is an artist and not a crafter.[9] Spring (2009:13) appears to be mediating the question by explaining that "superficially, at least, her work seemed to conform more to an African artistic norm … Yet Odundo's 'pots' are at once profoundly African and triumphantly universal" and further qualifies (2009:18) that, whilst "echoes of African forms run through Odundo's work, her ceramics have a universal appeal and quality which transcend any attempt to impose such easy technical, ethnic and geographical labels".

Gamboa, who is an Angolan-born resident of Britain, is unapologetic about expressing her cultural identity and her views on Angola's turbulent colonial and postcolonial history in her ceramics (Gamboa 2008:[Sp]). She holds a master's degree in ceramics from the University of the West of England. Exploring Angola's pottery tradition served as a reintroduction to her cultural, social and political heritage. Her studies in the 1990s of Angolan craft and traditional African pottery techniques are reflected in her choice of materials, colours, processes and non-traditional elements, such as ceramic transfers and lustres, which, in their manner of use and application, represent or infer slavery, colonialism, civil war, domination, destruction and motherhood (Fig 46).

4.5 MODERNISM IN SOUTH AFRICAN CERAMICS

Three South African ceramists of the twentieth century who echo African Modernism, even if they predated that era, were Samuel Makoanyane[10] (c.1909–1944), Hezekiel Ntuli (1912–1973) and Noria Mabasa. They broke with tradition and convention in a significant manner. Makoanyane and Ntuli are amongst the earliest recorded black ceramists of the twentieth century.

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[9] Odundo was excluded from the workshop of the Yorkshire Sculpture Park which was considered a prestigious associate event of *africa95* because one of the organisers considered her a "craftswoman" (Geers & Ross 1996:8).

[10] The South African art historian, Anitra Nettleton (2020:66–79), gives the surname as Mokoanyane.

A detailed biography of Makoanyane and his work was written by CG Damant (1951) and further information was gathered by Elza Miles (1997). Damant was employed by a general dealership that operated in Basotholand (modern day Lesotho) and was the patron, promotor and agent of Makoanyane. Makoanyane was born near the town of Parys in South Africa and relocated to Lesotho with his parents in about 1913 (Miles 1997:34) where, according to Damant, he was reared in the village of Koalabata near the capital, Maseru. It is unknown whether he received any formal education but he inscribed his works in perfect Roman lettering (Miles 1997:34). In the early 1930s, at a time of economic distress in Basotholand, Makoanyane followed the example of other Basotho men and women in crafting objects that could be hawked for an income. His forte was to create animal figurines in clay for which he found references in school and other books,[11] including a children's encyclopaedia, with the figurines usually being 15 to 23 cm high and weighing 1.8 to 2.25 kg (Damant 1951:2). The figurines of baboons, bucks, tigers, lions, crocodiles[12] and birds attracted attention and sales because they were true to life and made with great care. Damant encouraged Makoanyane to produce smaller size figures for the sake of easier and cheaper transport to reach dealers in Cape Town, Johannesburg and Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe).

Makoanyane progressively became interested in producing human figurines (Fig 47). Amongst the first of those were figurines of King Moshoeshoe I (c.1786–1870)[13] and his general-in-chief, Joshua Nau Makoanyane (Fig 48), the latter being Samuel's great-grandfather. These were modelled on the drawings by François Maeder (1811–1888), an artisan missionary associated with the Paris Evangelical Mission Society who documented Basotho society, which

[11] As mentioned in Damant (1951) and in a report published in *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* (Anon 1952:79).

[12] The crocodile is the totem animal of the Bakwena clan in Lesotho.

[13] King Moshoeshoe I was the late 19th century founder of the Basutho nation and the state of Basutholand.

Makoanyane found in school books.[14] Makoanyane's figurines of these two historical personalities were executed in the finest detail and for which, at the suggestion of Damant (1951:5), he used materials, such as feathers, wood and rodent skins, to fashion the traditional regalia and weapons. Damant (1951:5) estimated that Makoanyane produced some 150 figurines of King Moshoeshoe I and some 250 of the king's general-in-chief. His other earlier human figurines were of missionaries but Damant advised against that in the belief that figurines of everyday Basotho engaged in their daily lives would hold greater market appeal (Damant 1951:7). This proved to be true. Sometime in the 1930s, Prof. Percival Kirby, an ethnomusicologist who served as head of the music department at the University of the Witwatersrand, commissioned Makoanyane to create a set of figurines playing traditional musical instruments (NYU Press [Sa]). In August 1936, Makoanyane received a request from an ethnologist of the Transvaal Museum to create three models for the Empire Exhibition staged in Johannesburg (Damant 1951:9). Damant (1951:11) states that, by 1938, Makoanyane's work had been exhibited in the major centres of South Africa as well as the US, England, Ireland, Scotland and France. Damant also mentions (1951:13) that "Chief Jeremiah Moshesh of Mpharane in Matatiele, East Griqualand" who was a grandson of King Moshoeshoe I, became a keen collector of the figurines and presented some to Field Marshal Jan Christian Smuts (1870–1950) who, in that era, served as prime minister of the Union of South Africa. Makoanyane's figurines of Basotho people included portrayals of other Basotho chiefs, "a man seated, holding a dagga pipe in his hand", a witch doctor, a woman winnowing grain, a woman grinding grain, a woman hoeing, women carrying items (a rolled reed mat, a clay pot, a bundle of wood and a grass basket) as well as several of girls undergoing their initiation rites (Damant 1951:24–28). In his stone hut with a long sheet of metal serving as a work bench, Makoanyane created his figurines in anatomically correct detail and with a sense of movement via the gait of the body and the sweep of the dress (Miles 1997:35). Damant (1951:9) quotes a South

[14] Damant (1957:6) suspects that Makoanyane also referenced his own father as model for the figurines of Joshua Nau Makoanyane.

African collector who praised the work as “far in advance of any native clay work I have yet seen … the anatomy was remarkable, from the larger contours … to the minute details”.

Damant voices three opinions on Makoanyane that speak of a Eurocentric view of indigenous peoples and their cultures. Firstly, the author tells, with some glee, how he fobbed off Makoanyane with some crushed chalk as a magic potion to counter the crumbling of figurines during the kiln firing which Makoanyane believed was the result of a bewitching of his clay pits (Damant 1951:14–15). Secondly, he holds the view that Makoanyane might not have been of pure Basotho descent, in part, because of his physical features that reminded him of the San people who earlier inhabited the region and “his artistry [that] could not be called Bantu in character and in its fineness of technique it was very reminiscent of the rock paintings left behind by those mysterious and little known [San] people” (Damant 1951:16). Thirdly, Damant considers it fortunate that Makoanyane turned down the opportunity to attend a school of sculpture in South Africa because “there was little that he could have been taught in his own work” and “it might only have confused him and possibly spoilt his work” (1951:16). By his own admission, Damant guided Makoanyane in what figurines to produce, how many to produce and the prices for the figurines. The South African art historian, Anitra Nettleton (2020:74), says that Damant, in his mediating of the oeuvre of Makoanyane, positioned the ceramist as representative of “tradition”. The fact that Makoanyane created realistic figurines, says Nettleton, puts the ceramist “squarely within the realm of modernity”.

Posthumously, Makoanyane’s work was exhibited in 1951 at the premises of the I.D. Booksellers in Cape Town (Miles 1997:34), in 1952 as part of the “Oranje Exhibition of Pan African Arts and Crafts” in Bloemfontein (Miles 1997:36) and in 1988 when his work was included in the Johannesburg Art Gallery’s exhibition “The Neglected tradition: Towards a new history of South African art (1930–

1988)".[15]

Elizabeth Perrill (2014:13) identifies the figurative ceramic sculptor, Ntuli, as one of the most eminent South African ceramic artists to have emerged from the missionary educational system. Ntuli was born in 1912 in KwaZulu-Natal Province to a Zulu father and Swazi mother. His early education was at a mission school in the Entumeni district of Eshowe. Whether he was taught craft at school does not emerge from the writings of John Sack (1988), Perrill (2014), Rika Stockenström (2014), Magaziner (2017), Miles (1997) and Hayden Proud ([Sa]). Magaziner (2017:28), citing an article in the *Natal Mercury* edition of 11 October 1930, notes that Ntuli was held in awe for his instinctive artistic skills, despite his lack of training, and that he was considered "a natural genius". This is probably the same article referred to by Miles (1997:36) in which Dr John Edward ("Jack") Holloway, then chairman of the Native Economic Commission, "likened [Ntuli's] artistic talent to the dormant energy which characterised work of the ancients – called 'Bushmen'".

According to Miles (1997:38), Ntuli started making figurines at the age of four. These were of oxen and calves and were fashioned with cattle dung. He later started working in clay and was also introduced to commercial paints and plasticine (Miles 1997:39). In 1929, at the age of thirteen, he was "discovered" by Stanley Williams who found Ntuli selling his animal figurines to passing white pedestrians on a sidewalk in Pietermaritzburg and then facilitated two years of school attendance for him (Proud [Sa]). Williams became his patron and appeared to have been adamant that Ntuli should concentrate on producing quality rather than quantity (Proud [Sa]). Ntuli would later also attract the patronage of other individuals and institutions in Durban, Pietermaritzburg and Eshowe (Perrill 2014:13). When Ntuli was seventeen years old, he was indentured by Holloway to the Native Affairs Department where he produced his sculptures full-time (Sack

[15] Other black ceramists selected for the exhibition were Dinah Molefe, Bonnie Ntshalintshali, Noria Mabasa, Elizabeth Mbatha and Ephraim Ziqubu.

1988:122). Being indentured permitted Ntuli to sell his works in an area reserved for whites from which he otherwise would have been evicted as a black hawker (Proud [Sa]). According to Miles (1997:37), citing the *Natal Mercury* article dated 13 October 1930, Holloway was opposed to Ntuli receiving any formal art training and warned: "You will have to be careful … that Hezekiel does not come under the influence of tutors who will so concentrate on the perfecting of his artistic abilities that his uncanny instinct for putting life into his models will be eliminated". Ntuli apparently spent many hours in the Natal Museum in Pietermaritzburg where he copied photographs and works on display (Sack 1988:122). The works were not fired. On some works, the surfaces were treated with clay slips and black ink to add colour or he resorted to commercial enamel paints which he sometimes applied in layers and afterwards varnished.

Public recognition for Ntuli came fast. He won a first prize at the Royal Agricultural Show in Pietermaritzburg in June 1930 and his works were exhibited at the Natal Museum in the same year (Proud [SA]; Sack 1988:122). As many as 71 of Ntuli's works were donated in 1931 to the Natal Museum. Proud ([Sa]) therefore considers Ntuli to be amongst the first black artists in KwaZulu-Natal to be a named figure in a South African public collection. In 1931 and 1932, his works were selected for the "Special Exhibit of Native sculpture" category in exhibitions hosted by the South African Academy (Miles 1997:40). Further exposure followed at the 1936 Empire Exhibition in Johannesburg, in the 1952 Van Riebeeck Tercentenary Exhibition, the Rhodes Centenary Exhibition in Bulawayo in 1953 and a two-man exhibition in 1966 alongside his brother Jubalani at Kiel University in Germany (Miles 1997:40). His figurines were purchased by Countess Alice (wife of the first earl of Athlone and former Governor of the Union of South Africa) and he gifted four works to King George VI during the royal visit to South Africa in 1947 (Proud [Sa]; Sack 1988:122).

His oeuvre included wildlife, Nguni cattle and busts of men and women (Fig 49). Wildlife figurines featured a natural setting, such as rocks and foliage, but with

the attention focused on the subject (Miles 1997:40). As in the case of Makoanyane, Ntuli's talent too was considered to be extraordinary when measured by European standards against traditional craft. Miles (1997:40) cites a statement by Grossert (1978:38) that: "Some Zulus, such as Hezekiel Ntuli … have shown remarkable ability in the naturalistic representation of [the] human figure and animals. This work is outside the stream of Zulu tradition and more interesting for its uniqueness than its artistic expression".

In Perrill's (2014:13) view, Ntuli's busts with the characters in traditional dress and those depicting Zulu kings were popular amongst white buyers because they met "Darwinist racial typologies of the area" and "reflect[ed] obsessions with the Zulu royal house held by South Africans of both British and Zulu heritage".[16] Hence, states Perrill, the push of Ntuli towards the production of works that would appeal to Western concepts of art.

In this chapter, I have outlined the semblance in the manner that the South African schools of art of the twentieth century followed other African countries in the postcolonial challenge of Western concepts of art with the intent of presenting an own identity and conveying own meanings. In this there was the liberal use of hybridity whether materials and techniques or the adoption and adaptation of features not necessarily associated by the West with African art forms. There was no formal pursuit of modernism in the South African ceramics of this era but there is ample evidence that it manifested in either subtle or exaggerated ways in individual ceramists' oeuvres. African Modernism was not prescriptive in the outward forms that it had to assume and therefore it can only be recognised in South African ceramics by noting how the ceramists evolved a visual language centred on or reflective of their African legacy or association. The same was attempted with various degrees of success by other South African ceramists of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, as is discussed and illustrated in Chapter 4.

[16] According to Miles (1997:40), Ntuli stated: "The Europeans who buy my work prefer Zulu heads, so I go on making them".

CHAPTER 5
Negotiating a "South African" or "African" identity in ceramics

Andrew Verster (2004:10) posed the question (and gave his own reply) as to why South African potters and ceramists venture outside of convention, whether Western or indigenous traditional:

> Through all our art has been a thread that has troubled people to a greater or lesser extent, one of belonging. Where do we as artists fit into Africa? How to prove our credentials? How do we resolve the dilemma of being Western and African at the same time? … Authenticity is everything. But identity has been elusive, is elusive, and cannot be invented. … The secret is in the way the ideas are used. The secret lies in the imagination of the artist.

What must be considered as context within which twentieth and twenty-first century South African ceramics developed are the circumstances and influences that prompted ceramists to engage with the issue of a South African or African identity. The identities could be confined to that of an own culture, the referencing of other cultures (transcultural) within South Africa or the referencing of other cultures outside of South Africa (transnational), whether that be Africa or beyond the continent. The expressions of identity range from the innocuous, such as the natural environment imagery, to the objectionable such as cultural appropriation. Within this wide-ranging spectrum can be found ceramists who interrogate their own, the "other" or the shared cultures and histories with issues ranging from design to socio-politics.

5.1 IDENTITY AS A LABEL

Exhibition reviews published in the *Sgraffiti* and *National Ceramics Quarterly* magazines addressed the earlier tentative or overt referencing of cultures other than the own. Writing in 1974, Garth Clark and Lynn Wagner (1974:11) were dismissive of the influence of "[t]ribal African pottery … on any of the White potters, as the culture is alien and the work aesthetically and technically limited". At the third APSA national exhibition that attracted 122 entrants from South Africa, Lesotho, Botswana, Swaziland and Zimbabwe, Gawie Fagan, in his

opening address (1975:10), questioned whether the South African pottery fraternity had thus far called on local influences. Fagan urged that all influences had to be absorbed for South African ceramics to remain viable as an art form and, in doing so, "initiate the construction of an unselfconscious identity" (Bauer 2004:24).[1] Both to encourage new creative expressions and for ceramists to reflect their African environment, APSA's Southern Transvaal region included the category "African Odyssey" in its 1981 exhibition. Though entrants were cautioned not to submit copies of African pots and "pseudo-primitive artefacts", the majority of the works were just that when compared with the works of black ceramists exhibited alongside them (Cruise 1981:9). The exhibition judges were also critical of works in which socio-political ideas were addressed, specifically for failing in translating the idea into visual language.

Whilst not making specific mention of Africa, Alexander Podlashuc, as cited by Sarie Maritz (1980b:10) in her report on the 1980 APSA Eastern Cape regional exhibition, bemoaned the indiscriminate borrowing from other cultures by South African ceramists which he considered to be the root cause of the lack of a true South African ceramics tradition. Amongst the works accepted for APSA's 1981 national exhibition, Muffin Weideman (1981:4) noted an "integration of a sophisticated, western quality with a primitive African quality" and "echoes of Africa, ancient tribes and archaeological finds". Stanley Cohen (1983:13) reviewed the 1983 APSA national exhibition where he observed the incorporation of features of African pottery in both the forms and the decorations of works. Cohen described such works as having "a strong indigenous flavour, for it seemed reminiscent of ethnic pottery … and a style of decoration that derives from tribal designs and local ways of working clay". A review of APSA's 1989 Natal regional exhibition by the art critic, Carol Brown, of the *Natal Daily News* (Anon

[1] It can be assumed that this reflects the ignorance on the part of some South African ceramists of that era about indigenous traditional pottery. This is evidenced in an article written by the then well-established potter Ronnie van der Walt (1982:12) in which he indicated with surprise his discovery of Shangaan and Tswana culture pottery. Because that pottery was all done by elderly women, Van der Walt predicted that their potmaking tradition would totally die out within twenty years. He concluded his writing with the request for any information about "ethnic pots".

1989:5) paid specific attention to the exhibited works of Rodney Blumenfeld who was named as a joint winner. Brown was enamoured with Blumenfeld's incorporation of elements of traditional shapes and artefacts associated with African culture such as headrests, animal horns and Zulu earplugs. It must be kept in mind that the referencing of cultures other than the own, as it was done in the 1980s, was, in fact, encouraged by The Schutte Commission of Enquiry into the Creative Arts (1981–1985). In its report, the commission recommended that "the spontaneous and natural cross-pollination between cultures and their art must remain unrestricted" (Pawłowska 2011:194).

Another indicative but poorly qualified statement that linked the works of white ceramists with Africa was published by *National Ceramics Quarterly* in a report on the Western Cape region's celebratory exhibition of APSA's silver jubilee held in 1997. The author (Anon 1998:11) stated that some of the exhibited works "related strongly to our rich African heritage". In her review of APSA's 1998 biennale, the art award judge, Lucia Burger (1998:14), acknowledged that South African ceramists were free to call on techniques and ideas to express statements about their lives in South Africa whilst the selection judge, Ann Marais (1998:15, 26), was disappointed in the lack of entries which showed an awareness of the African environment and the "African consciousness". The ceramist, Lindsay Scott (1998:10–11), also wrote about the biennale and addressed the "[e]xaggerated pressure on the artist to ground his or her work on African paradigms" which, he opined, would be met with compliance or defiance and, if the former, could prompt creative solutions.

For my master's degree (2016:87), I invited contemporary South African potters and ceramists to describe the manner in which their oeuvres can be associated with South Africa or Africa. The responses and the terminology used were varied and, generally speaking, unsubstantiated: "African inclined" (Botes 2015), incorporating "African elements" (Van Niekerk 2015) and being "African but not ethnic" (Cox 2015). I also corresponded with the ceramist, Ralph Johnson (2015), who shared his view that potters and ceramists have shown self-discipline and

moderation in the use of elements of African identity and have avoided the pitfall of lapsing into "derivatives of African craft". In 2018, Scott (Wilson 2018:11), who produces high-temperature, reduction-fired stoneware, asked "How do you transmute the tradition, and what would an Afro-Oriental tradition look like?" to which he did not give a specific reply. When I questioned Scott (2019) about this, he responded that it was a "catchy riposte to [the] 'Anglo-Oriental tradition [of studio pottery]'" and that his use of "Afro" as a designation is his reflection on the South and East African artefacts which he admires, studies and considers to have "an astonishing spirit". He is emphatic that he does not consciously impart an African dimension to his work but that he sometimes notices what could be construed as an African feeling to his work. This, explains Scott, is not because of any embodiment within the works but because of the (African) ethos they "exhale". "Ethos" is defined as "the distinguishing character, sentiment, moral nature, or guiding beliefs of a person, group, or institution" (www.merriam-webster.com) and I propose that it can be read in both the subtle and the patent.

A debate is triggered when a South African ceramic work or an oeuvre of South African ceramic works is presented as "South African" or "African" because it includes or alludes to features that are patently associated with either as geopolitical (and even cultural) entities. A case in point is the current output of the Ardmore Ceramic Art studio. Generally speaking, the Ardmore works are richly and even exaggeratedly decorated with the fauna and flora of the continent. Bagley (2015:[Sa]) contradicts herself by stating, on the one hand, that the Ardmore work "reflects Africa as seen through the eyes of African artists" and, on the other hand, that the oeuvre is an "upcycling" of the stereotype of Africa as imagined by the non-African audience". Juliette Leeb-du Toit (2012a:67) sees in Ardmore "an inverse borrowing and hybridity in which European shapes and conventions were indigenized". These views are not shared by Wilma Cruise (2015) and Steven Smith (2010:[Sp]) has a guarded opinion. Cruise considers the works as the most un-African ceramics "because indigenous traditional pottery emphasises formal elements and shape and exquisite restraint and the less-is-moreness and Ardmore is colourful and exuberant and illustrative and imitative".

Smith described the works as "[n]ot quite African nor European in neither aesthetic nor sensibility" and only 'African' in subject matter, the style of modelling and colouring. Eugene Hön (2020) dismisses the current Ardmore range as "derogatory in its imagery and representation".

As regards the denoting of identity (by direct or indirect association), the terms "culture", "South African" and "African" carry political and emotional weight and merit discussion. Citizenship (the right to claim to be South African) is guaranteed in government rulings[2] and The Bill of Rights of the 1996 South African Constitution (www.sahistory.org.za) affirms the freedom of religion, belief, opinion, association, language and culture. The citizenry of the country is classified according to five racial groupings (black, white, coloured, Asian and "other") within which a large number of ethnic groups and sub-groups are identified, all with distinctive or shared cultural norms and practices. There is no legislation that bars a South African citizen of one ethnic or cultural group to reference any other South African ethnicity or culture but moral, ethical and political objections could arise. Heide Becker (2008:2) addressed this in her discussion of "meanings of culture" in South Africa which she preceded with the note that South Africa has a history of imposed prescripts on race and culture. Becker approached "culture" as a negotiated process rather than as a "thing" with the process denoting the addressing of issues "around cultural difference, identity politics, multiculturalism, traditionalist discourse, culture-as-resource, and hybridity in the everyday life of persons" (Becker 2008:8).

The terms "Africa" and "African" are terms that were and continue to be widely used to indicate that the ceramists reference indigenous South African and cultures from elsewhere on the continent as well as to denote their association with the continent of Africa in the sense of being an African. "African" denotes an

[2] According to the South African citizenship legislation, a person is automatically a citizen if (a) born in South Africa from at least one South African citizen or born from one parent who holds permanent residency or (b) adopted by a South African citizen. Citizenship can also be applied for on the grounds of descent or naturalisation (www.gov.za).

inhabitant of Africa, a person of (black) African ancestry or any feature that relates to or characterises the continent of Africa (www.merriam-webster.com).

In writing about the era of the 1940s to the 1980s, John Peffer (2008:180–181) states that white artists "as members of a settler elite, looked to local cultures as a means to indigenise their engagement with modernist ideas appropriated from Europe, as well as to validate their own position as a dominant minority in a colonial setting". Peffer's stance ties in with that of Sally Matthews (2011:1) who presented the case that white South Africans who claim to be "African" exercise a rethinking and redefinition of their post-apartheid identity. Noting that there is resistance amongst black South Africans to this, she suggested (2011:12) an identity of "'inbetweenness' of white South Africans [that] involves a commitment by white South Africans to strive to find an appropriate way to belong in Africa and thus to aim at becoming African".

Steering clear of "African" as a description, Leeb-du Toit opts for "indigeneity" (2012a:65) in characterising South African ceramics that reflect an engagement beyond the convention of an own culture. One dictionary definition (www.en.oxforddictionaries.com) positions indigeneity as "[t]he fact of originating or occurring naturally in a particular place" which Manjusha Nair (2006:[Sp]) further explains as "born or produced naturally in a land or region; native or belonging naturally … used primarily to denote aboriginal inhabitants or natural products". For Francesca Merlan (2009:304), "indigeneity" connotes "belonging and originariness and deeply felt processes of attachment and identification and thus it distinguishes 'natives' from others". As Merlan rightly cautions, any claim to indigeneity can be challenged on the grounds of the perceived nature of the claimed inclusiveness. In my reading of the matter, "indigeneity" is particularly apt in considering ceramics which Leeb-du Toit (2012a:71–72) describes as new idioms of how individuals navigate the assumed boundaries of their original cultures while discovering and expressing their collective identity.

With reference to the oeuvres of the ceramists, Juliet Armstrong (1950–2012) and

Nicolene Swanepoel (1962–2016), Kim Bagley speaks of a "negotiating [of] contemporary South African experience and to present their version of African-ness" (2014:143) as expressed in the evidence of hybridity through specific styles, images, forms, materials and traditions. Wilma Cruise (2011:53) approaches the issue of presenting an identity in South African ceramics as a choice of a "multiplicity of symbolic references and multiple histories" that create and support the space within which a common heritage can be negotiated. Leeb-du Toit (2012a:65) uses the term "cross-cultural referencing" to characterise the practice within studio ceramics of the late 1970s which signalled "a distinct modernity which upheld individuation and indigeneity". Writing about Ian Garrett's oeuvre, which draws on multiple references inside and outside of Africa, Wendy Gers (2012:56) introduces the term "Afro-Contemporary Creolised African references". In 2014, Nina Shand invited a number of ceramists and ceramics art historians to contribute chapters for a review and positioning of South African ceramics with the provisional title "Clay Conversations".[3] At the suggestion of Gers (Garrett 2014), the various themes which would "challenge some restrictive and entrenched hierarchies" included "Afro-Baroque", "Afro-Modern", "Afro-Oriental", "Afro-Fantasy", "Afro-Narrative" and "Afro-Politic".

I doubt that there are South African ceramists whose oeuvres could be considered as distinctly and exclusively transcultural or transnational. As my further discussion will show, ceramists freely reference cultures other than their own even to the point of referencing multiple cultures in a single work or a series of works by means of materials, processes, forms, decorations and purpose. Their oeuvres also evolve through the exploration and development of multiple themes of which some might be concluded and others abandoned or re-emerging in derivative or overlapping form. I am therefore reticent to create a division of the transcultural and transnational in my discussion of ceramists whom I have selected to illustrate

[3] The project is poised to come to fruition, albeit in altered and abbreviated form with Gers and Elizabeth Perrill as guest editors, in a themed edition of *de arte*, the art history journal published by the Department of Art and Music, University of South Africa).

this theme.

5.2 CONSIDERING WHITE SOUTH AFRICAN CERAMISTS' PERSPECTIVES ON IDENTITY

The first and second generation of white South African studio potters alluded to their association with the country through the use of colours, textures and imagery of fauna and flora. The context for the decorative work was therefore a geographic environment. Noting such a visual and tactile presence in the oeuvre of Esias Bosch (Fig 50), the art historian Murray Schoonraad (1988:22) declared that Bosch's art was deeply rooted in Africa:

> His green glazes were once described as being reminiscent of the Knysna forests; his browns can be compared to the different hues of a newly ploughed field on the Highveld. All his colours are toned to look as though they are baked in the African sun. His art has the solidity of this great continent and his rich colours reflect this ageless land.

Tim Morris favoured motifs from nature (Fig 51) that included butterflies, birds, seeds, grasses and flowers (Clarke & Wagner 1974:122). For Cruise (2002:34), the ceramics of Digby Hoets "[take] on the colours of the veld; the grey-greens of the hardwood trees, the ochres, browns and washed out textures of a winter on the Highveld". Bryan Haden (2010) used imagery of the natural environment (Fig 52) of the family farmstead at Bonnefoi landscapes, veld flora and vlei weeds. Andrew Walford (www.studiopottery.co.uk) says he reflects the natural environment (Fig 53) of Shongweni in KwaZulu-Natal Province where his studio is situated and that "the natural colours on the pots … are reminiscent of reflecting afternoon sun and shadows on the cliffs". In describing his monolithic, landscape-textured vessels (Fig 54), the ceramist, Drury Brandt (1936-2020), advanced that he suggests rather than imitates or copies the landscapes and rockscapes of South Africa's mountain ranges (Brandt 2014).

Bosch deserves to be named as the first of the white South African studio potters

who adopted a form that directly relates to Africa.[4] For this, Bosch followed Michael Cardew's example of developing the form of a Gwari pot. Cardew's presentation of that was a two- or three-handled casserole (Fig 55) with a rotund belly of which the upper edge was, at times, decorated with a pinched design, a neck with a flared rim and a handled lid. In Bosch's version, the Gwari casserole is an open three-handled jar that echoes the same form of the belly with similar surface treatment of the edge and a neck with a flared rim (Fig 56). Another variation by Bosch was a three-handled jar with a cylindrical belly and an abbreviated neck with a flared rim on which the decorations were incised.

The ceramists who came to the fore in the late 1970s in South Africa (the majority of them white and many trained at tertiary level) abandoned Western convention and purpose. They grew to be less inhibited in borrowing forms, imagery and methods of production from African culture and, in doing so, spearheaded transculturalism and transnationalism in South African ceramics. Leeb-du Toit (2012a:66) named Davydd Myburgh as one of the first ceramic sculptors who referenced African culture and forms and specifically referred to his heads on poles and masks with beads and feathers which related to totemic African masquerades. As is evident in her selection of featured ceramists in *Contemporary Ceramics in South Africa*, Cruise (1991:30) is sensitive to mere copies of African forms which "insult in their superficiality while attempting to flatter their origins". Whilst the low-fired raku technique is not of African origin, Cruise saw the progressive use of this technique by South African ceramists as contributing to "an African identity" (1991:74) and, considering raku's association with ritual and alchemy, as "an appropriate metaphor for Africa as seen through Western eyes" (1991:74). Her choice of exponents of raku include David May, who reinterpreted traditional African masks, and Lesley-Ann Hoets, who created round-bellied pots associated with Africa but decorated them with motifs which are not specific to

[4] Esther Esmyol (2012:25) claims this distinction for Valmai Olsen Edwards and John Edwards of the Lucky Bean Farm pottery studio where they produced earthenware tiles decorated with "overtly … stylised African scenes and animals" in the early 1970s.

Africa. In her discussion of white ceramists using low-temperature firing, Cruise falls short in directly linking that technique to Africa but considered it within the repertoire of low-temperature firing which is associated with pre-industrial communities. She makes specific mention of how white ceramists adopted and expanded on the pit-firing technique, such as Donvé Branch-Vlok (1991:78) who fired fragile porcelain in this manner despite the high risk of breakage and Cilla Williams' (1991:80) use of oxides and sulphides to achieve tonal effects. In a variant of the technique,[5] Koos Barnard (Cruise 1991:82) undertook low-temperature salt-glaze firing in a gas-fired kiln.

The South African ceramists progressively called on African culture and material culture as context. Two ceramists who referenced African sculptural art and were featured in Cruise's book, are Lovell Friedman and May. In Friedman's oeuvre of stacked figures (Fig 57), Cruise points out features associated with African sculpture: carving, frontality, monolithic and imbued with symbolism (1991:108). David May created a series of masks (Fig 58) which Cruise believes are derived from but not copied from African masks (1991:74). May exhibited *Queenie II*, a totemic work in his *Kika*-series, at the 1999 APSA national ceramic awards exhibition. The work was an Africa-like mask assuming a female form and with exaggerated lips that appeared to be labia. It attracted the derisive commentary of "Hollywood meets Africa" and outrage for its perceived sexual reference but also praise by Benita Munitz, art critic of *The Cape Times*, for having "an impressive presence and a quirky character draw[ing] inspiration from the period (contemporary) and place (African continent)" (Munitz as cited by Bonthuys 1999:8). Cruise (1998a:8) treats the ceramics of the multi-media artist, Deborah Bell's 1998 exhibition "Displacements", as "pots-that-are sculptures" in which the pots support life-size sculptural forms of heads and figures. The pit-fired and

[5] Low-temperature salt-glaze firing as a technique was introduced to South Africa by the North American ceramist David Middlebrook in 1982 (Cruise 1991:82). Middlebrook presented a series of workshops and was also a resident artist in the Ceramic Section of the Fine Arts Department at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg where, according to Leeb-du Toit (2012a:67), he encouraged students to reference their own surroundings and local traditions in their work.

burnished pots alludes to traditional Zulu beer pots and the figurative work recalls African sculpture. Cruise elaborates that:

> as composite works [they] reach beyond a pastiche of African tradition. In the sculptures dichotomous concepts merge. African/European, vessel/sculpture, craft/art cease to be immutable opposites. In these works, at least, these endlessly debated oppositions become irrelevant.

The ceramic sculptor Eugene Hön produced works in which he investigated the cultural traditions of Africa and of other non-Western societies and usually drew on literature of African mythology for reference. The sculpture titled *Dija Nivana – Night Howler* flowed from a reading of African mythology in the books *Indaba My Children* by Vusamazulu Credo Mutwa (1964) and *The Famished Road* by Ben Okri (1991). As Karen von Veh (1995:23) describes it, "nighthowlers" were spirits in human form that created evil which in Hön's treatment of the theme equated with pain, dismemberment and menace.

Another ceramic sculptor, Ann Marais, spent her childhood years in East Africa and drew extensively on her memories of the patterns, motifs, forms, textures and colours in the African landscape as well as human activities and artefacts (Marais 2003a:18). She also recalled African material culture such as North African jewellery, West African textile designs, Zairean drums and, in particular, the African headrest (Fig 59) which served for Marais as a metaphorical link between past and present, the physical and metaphysical. A retrospective exhibition of the ceramist Ralph Johnson in 2004 included some of his works from the late 1990s which were inspired by North and West African metal jewellery and had a "distinctly recognizable African feel" according to Monica Ross (2004:25).

In a collaboration with the textile artist, Aboubakar Fofana of Mali, Katherine Glenday created vessels that represent the porcelain trade goods of the colonial-era Dutch East India Company, stained with traditional African plant dyes, such as indigo and oxides, and hence no longer fine but blemished. Gers (2012:56) read in these re-imagined trade route vessels a "migration of meanings". One further example of a direct reference to African material culture is that of Mervyn Geers

whose vessels recall the Fon vessels of Burkina Faso (Gers 2012:57).

Two ceramists who participated in APSA's "Altech Ceramics Triennial" in 2003 called on indigenous South African material culture, specifically basketry, for their entries (Marais 2003b:11). Querardien van Vliet's *Woven Textures* featured intertwined cattle horn woven in a circular pattern like that of a basket and Karen Kotze's *Nest of Bowls* similarly mimicked the craft of basket-weaving. The artefacts of Mapungubwe, South Africa's Late Stone Age culture, provided inspiration for vessels produced by the ceramist Carol Heydenrych (Heydenrych & Tiley-Nel 2012:21–23). She studied Mapungubwe's drinking beakers of which the sides taper to the top to finish in an everted rim with decorative features that include a basket weave pattern. Heydenrych also studied the gold rhinoceros figurine assumed to be a symbol of Mapungubwe royalty. This was created from gold beaten to a thickness of 0.5 mm which was then shaped and fixed by means of minute-size gold nails to a timber maquette. To represent both the Mapungubwe ceramics and the rhino, Heydenrych created vessels (Fig 60) from thinly slabbed porcelain with the sides appearing to be held together by the affixed tiny gold-lustred nail heads. The sides were incised with Mapungubwe's decorative ceramics motifs.

The same engagement with indigenous material culture has been noted in the oeuvres of the ceramists Swanepoel, Juliet Armstrong, Maggie Mikula, Michelle Legg and Kim Bagley (Bagley 2014; Cruise 2008, 2011, 2016a; Stretton 2012; Mikula 2004; Bauer 2004; Swanepoel 2009). These ceramists not only called, in judicious manner, on the physical and symbolic features of traditional pottery but, importantly, also the cultural and socio-political contexts of pottery production and usage. They adopted method, material, form and decoration to convey relevance and meaning or to make statements of identity and deliver commentary on issues ranging from social to environmental concerns. As I will demonstrate in brief summaries of these ceramists' oeuvres, the features associated with indigenous cultures were presented in familiar, subtle or exaggerated forms and with differing intents.

Armstrong is associated with the CSCVA at the University of KwaZulu-Natal where she was an associate professor who shared with her graduate students the academic pursuit of investigating traditional Zulu pottery[6] with particular attention to beer pot and drinking vessel forms. The forms include the *imbiza* for brewing and storing of beer, the long-necked *uphiso* for its transportation and the *ukhamba* and *umancishana* for serving beer. The *ukhamba* is typically blackened, burnished and decorated with incised motifs and raised conical nodules known as *amasumpa* whereas the *umancishana* are smaller and undecorated. *Amasumpa* has been considered as a more recent addition to the repertoire of Zulu pottery decorative features but its use has been progressive and is now distinctly aligned with Zulu culture (Bagley 2014:137–139).[7] It is thought that *amasumpa* might refer to cattle and the wealth that they represent in Zulu culture. Bagley (2014:141) investigated how Armstrong established both a personal identity and a broader South African narrative in the ceramist's series of works in bone china that referenced cattle skins (Fig 61), the protective skin apron known as *isibodiya* and *amasumpa*:

> Armstrong has been able to create a very distinctive aesthetic that has a readable regional association. This could be how Armstrong can be said to construct an 'African-ness' in her work. The work is motivated by personal circumstances but it has many levels of appeal: from its Zulu-cultural associations, the broader rural 'African' associations of animal skins, to its engagement with more universal themes of protecting others from ageing and illness.

When interviewed by Bagley in 2011, Armstrong made the emphatic statement that she "identified as African and that her work is African because of her particular insider use of certain cultural and aesthetic elements" (Bagley 2014:77).

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[6] In *isiZulu* (the Zulu language), the generalised term for pottery vessels is *izinkamba* (singular *ukhamba*). Elizabeth Perrill (2008a) provides a detailed and definitive description of these forms and their usage.

[7] Perrill (2008a:45) states that *amasumpa*, as a feature of Zulu pottery, has been overemphasised and cites Ian Calder's (1995) comment that early research on Zulu domestic vessels resulted in "a monolithic pottery tradition" within which the "so-called *amasumpa* style of decoration has been sanctioned as the 'traditional' Zulu ceramics".

Mikula hailed from a family steeped in association with the Zulu community and culture. Her initial training was in commercial art at the Natal Technikon (now the Durban Institute of Technology) but she was mostly self-taught in ceramics. She travelled extensively in Africa and outside of Africa to become familiar with traditional material culture and to collect craft objects. Vanessa Bauer (2004) notes that, in the early 1980s, Mikula's vessels started to bear evidence of cross-cultural referencing in which Mikula recalled and interpreted iconography and cultural materials. This included African drums, the Yoruba weaving of Nigeria and Fulani weaving of Western Africa, neck rings of various African cultures and Zulu earplugs, headrests and pottery.

In a radical break with ceramics tradition and convention, Mikula incorporated non-ceramic materials, such as threads, metal and shells, in her vessels (Fig 62) which she further decorated with sgraffito, inlaid and painted slips and oxides to achieve her desired form and a design of pattern, colour and texture (Bauer 2004:62, Hayward-Fell 1983:7). What must be noted is that Mikula worked in a small scale which Andrew Verster (2004:11) describes as "tiny" and "intimate" yet with a "monumental" impact. The former curator of the Durban Art Gallery, Jill Addleson (2004:14), was adamant that Mikula steered clear of copying indigenous African art but that she elaborated on it and echoed elements thereof. Mikula could do so, writes Verster (2004:8), because she "got under the skin of Africa and understood its thoughts from the inside". Bauer (2004:72) too was left in no doubt that Mikula created a visual language that "engaged with solving the question of 'being' in South Africa".

Legg is a graduate of the Technikon Witwatersrand and the University of Johannesburg where she was awarded a master's degree for her treatment of ceramics which incorporated the hand-building technique of indigenous rural ceramics in which she also referenced European lace. Legg is strongly associated with *amasumpa* whether in its typical use within the geometric patterning on traditional Zulu pottery or as a pronounced and exaggerated feature even to the extent of the *amasumpa* itself becoming the vessel. In the series *Woman Warrior*,

Legg presented forms traditionally associated with women (fragility, caregiver, provider of sustenance) but surrounded the forms with aggressive and even menacing spike-like *amasumpa* (Fig 63) to denote the protection of womanhood.

Swanepoel and Bagley also referenced cattle to establish their association with South Africa but did so without emulating Armstrong in form or specific meaning. Swanepoel graduated with a National Diploma in Ceramics Design from the former Witwatersrand Technikon and a master's degree from the University of Johannesburg. The theme of her dissertation (2009) was "Representations of Cattle as Cultural Markers: Towards South African Identities" and, in the supporting exhibition, she displayed 70 heads of Nguni cattle. The heads established the historical economic and social role of cattle in black culture but also stood as metaphor of the protracted struggle for recognition of black identity. As Cruise (2011:50) points out, the Nguni cattle bred by indigenous black farmers was a hybrid race which, despite its proven hardiness, was scoffed at by white authorities. Only in 1982 was the Nguni given official recognition as a cattle breed. Swanepoel created the earthenware heads using a plaster mould and individualised them with various treatments of the ears and eyes. Onto the heads she applied variations of colour and pattern with additional transfer images (Fig 64) that reflected South Africa's history from earliest colonial times to the Nationalist era.

Bagley graduated from the CSCVA and relocated to Britain where she obtained a Ph.D. from the University of Brighton. Her thesis focused on the representation of Africa through modern and contemporary ceramics which she supported with her own practice in which she created three series of installation works. One series used Nguni cattle forms which Bagley (2014:188–189) admitted were neither anatomically accurate nor strictly Nguni in appearance and another series that evolved from the ear tags used to identify cattle. The figures and objects are presented as relational outside, but yet cognisant of cultural specificity and, more purposefully, to explore group dynamics and values including that of identification, movement and interaction. The *Ear Tags*, states Bagley (2014:194),

were considered as symbolic markers of regional identity and nationalism but also recalled the apartheid-era's use of the *dompas* identification document for blacks that restricted their mobility and became a means to enforce racial segregation (Fig 65).

5.3 CONSIDERING BLACK SOUTH AFRICAN CERAMISTS' PERSPECTIVES ON IDENTITY

Recognition by the twentieth century ceramics fraternity of the works of black exponents was at first negligible and also gave scant attention to the manner in which black ceramists were negotiating and expressing their identities. It was also only from the late twentieth century onwards that academic enquiry acknowledged that such identities could have been purposefully shaped by external parties.

The review in *National Ceramics Quarterly* by Rosemary Lapping (1987) of an exhibition of ceramics and textiles hosted by the South African National Gallery in 1987 was formal acknowledgement that black pottery and ceramics should claim recognition and credit beyond what were garnered to date. Lapping pointed out that, despite the lack of materials and technology to which their white counterparts had access to, the "works produced by the African people have a ring of integrity that almost always equals that of their Western counterparts, and at times even exceeds it" (1987:8). She further noted that these potters and ceramists evolved creative and even novel responses to mundane objects and everyday stimuli. She cited, as an example, Bonnie Ntshalintshali (1967–1999) of the Ardmore Ceramic Art studio who used bisqued earthenware, poster paint and a broken china cup to create the sculptural work *Candelabra* to depict a tree against which dogs were leaping and barking at birds. Lapping stated that Ntshalintshali "intuitively and spontaneously understands the feeling of shape, form, content and colour".

In similar vein, *National Ceramics Quarterly* reported on "Emhlabeni – from the earth", an exhibition hosted by the Art Galleries and Fine Art Department of the

University of the Witwatersrand in 1993 where contemporary versions of pots and figures recalling traditional styles were displayed to illustrate their "continuity" (Anon 1993b:15). The works were executed by "traditional potters" including Rebecca Matibe, Noria Mabasa (Fig 66), Nesta Nala (1940–2005) and Ntshalintshali. The review noted that changes from traditional styles could be read in the use of new materials as well as the manner in which the potters reflected influences. Nala's oeuvre is discussed elsewhere in this chapter. Matibe made pots for both her local community and the urban collector market. Presumably to illustrate the latter option, the exhibition featured her pot that had a shape reminiscent of both a Western-style flower vase and a traditional Venda vessel. Mabasa's featured ceramics were presented as derived from the Venda *matano* figurines but in enlarged scale, dressed in suits and uniforms and coloured with enamel paints.

A review by the art critic of the *China Post* (Anon 1993c:2) of the South African entries at the 1992 International Invitational Contemporary Exhibition of Ceramic Art hosted by the Republic of Taiwan, gives further insight into the range of expressions pursued by potters and ceramists of the time. The critic noted the diversity that ranged from the application of traditional decorative designs to typically Western forms and "rural pottery" in which traditional production methods were married with contemporary designs. Notice was also taken of the lively colouring and fresh and compelling narrative content in a synthesis of the traditional, modern and post-modern.

At the 1998 APSA biennale, the absence of rural-based black indigenous potters was noted by Cruise (1998b:10) who then urged that those potters should be "sourced and courted" by a mediator into participating in exhibitions. The 2002 APSA "African Earth Exhibition" purposefully sought to bring together the work of APSA's members with that of the known and unknown rural traditional potters of South Africa (Doeg 2002:11). Black traditional potters and those working in adapted forms were however not dependent on APSA exhibitions for their exposure or for receiving acclaim for their work. The ceramics of the ELC Art and

Craft Centre at Rorke's Drift had, by then, already received wide exposure in local and international exhibitions and was actively promoted by gallerists such as Klaus Wasserthal (1927–2012), Helen de Leeuw (1917–2006), Rose Korber, Philip Todres and the Haenggi Family. Mabasa featured prominently in publications on South African art such as Gavin Younge's *Art of the South African Townships* (1988). Ntshalintshali shared the overall winner award with Hayward-Fell at the 1988 national ceramics exhibition (Brown 1989:31) and, in 1990, was named joint-winner with her Ardmore mentor, Fée Halsted-Berning, of the prestigious Standard Bank Young Artist Award. Nala won the first prize at the FNB Vita Craft competition[8] in 1995 and was the award winner in the vessel category at APSA's national ceramics biennale in 1995.

The ceramics art historian, Elizabeth Perrill, posits that the early 1980s was the period in which key figures in the white ceramics community in KwaZulu-Natal "were changing their perceptions of what ceramic art could be, at least within the white art world" (2008a:99). This was, in part, driven by the Natal Society of Arts and the South African Institute for Race Relations (SAIRR) (Perrill 2012:50) and, in part, by the ceramics academic community with Armstrong as the leading figure. Perrill described the SAIRR as a liberal organisation engaged in racial co-operation with the promotion of black art as one of the vehicles to achieve that. Perrill explained that, in the apartheid-era, the SAIRR's art centres "[honed] marketable Zulu arts and crafts … to make Zulu artwork popular items of white urbanites' interior decor and gifts sent home to expatriated relatives" (2014:23). It was at this time that Armstrong and her colleague, Ian Calder, "developed a series of topical research projects in fieldwork and interventions with potters and ceramists of rural communities in northern KwaZulu-Natal" (Calder 2012:67). Ian Garrett was one of their students and his 1997 MA dissertation focused on Nala. Nala was also extensively investigated by Perrill for her 2008 Ph.D. thesis and

[8] As Perrill (2008a:124) notes, the FNB Vita was one of the first awards to embrace the democratic multi-cultural South African society of the mid-1990s: "The title 'FNB Vita' is a double-entendre on the term vita – a biographical sketch [in this case of the nation] and a fresh start or new direction following a powerful emotional experience".

also featured in Perrill's subsequent publications (2008a, 2008c).

The timing of Cruise's research of traditional studio pottery (1991:122–137) overlapped with that of Calder and Armstrong and their students. Cruise broadened the awareness of the potters of Venda (Matibe, Ma Thomas and Phophi Maligana), Swaziland (La Gumedze) and KwaZulu-Natal (Miriam Mbonambi and Bina Gumede). Investigation of contemporary practices of traditional pottery continued in the twenty-first century. Traditional potters of the North West Province were introduced by Dineke den Bakker (2002:5) who set out to identify the leading figures and describe their practices and expressions. With the specific objective of exploring the continuation of traditional pottery practices, John Steele (2005) researched the rural indigenous potters of the Eastern Cape Province. Steele introduced, amongst others, the matriarchal figure, Mathabo Sekhobo, who descends from a line of traditional potters and, in turn, passed on the knowledge and skills to her own daughter and other community members.

For the reason that their biographies and oeuvres have been extensively and authoritatively covered, I will only present brief summaries of Nala, Ntshalintshali and Clive Sithole and highlight their relevance in the understanding of how they expressed cultural and personal identities in their oeuvres. The other twentieth century black potters and ceramists, who attract my more detailed attention for their fit in the discussion of the manner in which they negotiate their cultural legacies and modernity, are the potters of the ELC Art and Craft Centre at Rorke's Drift, Austin Hleza, Ntate Molelekoa Simon Masilo and Henriette Ngako. Apart from the pottery of the ELC Art and Craft Centre at Rorke's Drift, the academic focus on the others in my selection has been scant and even superficial. These biographies are for the purpose of establishing contemporaneity (place and time) as context for their practices and for the reception of their works.

5.3.1 Nesta Nala

Garrett (1997), Perrill (2008a, 2015) and Armstrong (2012) provide the definitive accounts of the life, production technique and oeuvre of Nala with Cruise (1991),

Suzette Munnik (1995), Sue Greenberg (1996, 2006) and Nina Shand (2019) contributing additional insights. For the major part, my summary of Nala draws on the writings of Garret and Perrill.

Nesta Nala (1940–2005) resided at Oyaya in the Thukela valley in KwaZulu-Natal. She was a member of a dynasty of potters having been taught by her mother Sipho (1914–2003) who, in turn, was taught by her mother, MaSikhakhane, and the latter was taught by Nala's great-grandmother, Nthombi MaKhumalo. In a perpetuation of this lineage, Nala shared her knowledge and skills with her daughters Bongi, Jabu, Thembe, Zanele and Nonhlanhla. Her pottery evolved from the making of *utshwala* vessels in the traditional manner of hand-building, pit-firing and burnishing. These vessels were bartered or sold by Nala and her mother within the local community.

In 1972, the Swedish missionary, Kjell Lofroth, arrived in Eshowe where he encouraged local crafters to produce wares for the export market under the auspices of the Vukani Project. In approximately 1976, Lofroth commissioned Nala to fashion small vessels for the tourist trade to be sold via Vukani and at the African Art Centre in Durban and Pietermaritzburg. Armstrong (2012:69) notes that Lofroth specifically asked Nala to produce works of a suitable size for transportation in a tourist's suitcase and that guided her in making "minute replicas of the customary *ukhamba*, finely crafted and finished to fit into the palm of one's hand". Nala and other crafters also directly engaged with Vukani as well as with Jo Thorpe, who was closely involved with the African Art Centre, to discuss what items would appeal to the market.

Greenberg started to promote Nala's work in her Durban-based gallery in the mid-1980s and, according to Perrill (2007:25), encouraged her to sign her works.[9] The demand for her work by other galleries prompted Nala to increase the volume of her work and to refine her burnishing technique to make the surface more

[9] Armstrong (2012:69) states that Lofroth encouraged Nala to add her name to her works in about 1984 but Garrett (1997:3) attributes this to the arts advisor, Jannie van Heerden.

luminous (Perrill 2008a:121).

Until 1976, Nala's output primarily constituted Zulu domestic wares (Garrett 1997:7) but after that she created works that Garrett considered could be categorised as either addressing the collector's market or the tourist market (Garrett 1997:45) (Fig 67, 68). At the time of Garrett's research in the late 1990s, Nala appeared to have focused nearly exclusively on the collectors' market (Garrett 1997:46) on which Garrett later reflected (Perrill 2007:26 citing correspondence with Garrett in 2007) that Nala resisted pressure from dealers to produce more and faster and that she would not compromise on the quality of her work. Garrett (1997:55) explains that works produced by Nala for the tourist market were often innovated forms based on Western ceramic prototypes such as vases and salt cellars with decorations that allude to a Zulu cultural identity. Those works were downsized and the surfaces were not blackened. Works for collectors were true to the cultural aesthetic standards of Zulu culture even when somewhat larger in size than those actually used in domestic settings which Garrett (1997:55) thought served to add to their visual impact. In these works, Nala displayed her mastery of construction and decoration.

Nala's rise to fame came after her participation in the 1994 "Cairo Ceramics Biennale", the award of the first prize at the 1995 First National Bank Vita exhibition, first place in the ceramics category at the "Jabulisa: The Art of KwaZulu-Natal" exhibition and, in 1996, the first prize in the vessel category at APSA's ceramics biennale. Nala represented South Africa at the Smithsonian Institution Folklife Festival in Washington, DC in 1999 and, with that, "went from regionally acclaimed potter to international representative of a national tradition" (Perrill 2015:278).

Nala created a distinctive style of decoration with some of those elements being "unique within the context of Zulu ceramics" (Garrett 1997:16). Her use of decorative cords which she plaited, twisted or wove and onto which she added impressions could, suggests Garrett, have been influenced by the features on Late Iron Age vessels of which the archaeologist, Len van Schalkwyk from the Ondini

Museum at Ulundi, showed her fragments in 1983 (Fig 69). Whilst Greenberg (1996:15) claims that Nala's exposure to the Late Iron Age artefacts was the single most significant influence on her work, when interviewed by Perrill in 1998 (2007:25) Nala made it clear that she did not replicate the Late Iron Age decorations, but "I use the old designs and then add on new ideas and designs continually". As Perrill (2008a:126) puts it, these specific decorations can therefore be treated as "the most or the least 'traditional' of all of Nala's innovations".

Garrett (1997) is critical of any view that Nala was a "traditional potter" or, rather, of the positioning of Nala as a "traditional crafter" and her oeuvre as a continuation of "traditional Zulu pottery". One example of such a narrow view was that of Munnik (1995:125) who, in praise of Nala, wrote that her work "resonates with the heartbeat of tradition". To counter this narrow positioning of Nala within "tradition", Garrett (1997:26) states:

> Associations with tribal ethnicity, historicity and cyclical perpetuity however make it inappropriate, and obscure many idiosyncratic elements in Nala's work. Findings suggest that Nala can be viewed as an artist working with the received traditions of her cultural heritage but choosing to express herself across cultural boundaries with creative integrity.

To this, Perrill (2008a:126) adds the further qualification that Nala was perceptive of "white *expectations* of what tradition *should* look like" and could creatively innovate to that end.

5.3.2 Clive Sithole

Perrill (2005, 2008a, 2012b) is the definitive source for a narrative and appraisal of Clive Sithole. Susan Sellschop (2009) provided additional information on his early years and initial exposure to ceramics. In the writings of both, the roles and influences of women in the shaping of his oeuvre become evident. Born in 1971 in Soweto, Sithole is the son of a Zulu jazz musician father and a Sotho seamstress mother. Following the death of his father when Sithole was aged six years, his mother remarried and moved to Kgorong in Lesotho. During the one

year spent there, his paternal step-grandmother, Alina Masoetsu, who was a potter, taught him to fashion small cattle figurines and busts. He completed his schooling in Johannesburg and won a bursary to study at the London International School of Fashion Design in Johannesburg.

During a visit to Phuthaditjhaba in the Free State Province, Sithole was introduced to Philimone Lerata, a graduate in fine arts at the former Natal University. Lerata was then producing wheel-thrown ceramics. Abandoning a career in fashion, Sithole relocated to Durban where he joined the Babumbi Clay Project headed by Cara Walters at the Bartel Arts Trust (BAT) Centre in Durban in 1997 where he was taught production techniques. Part of the training entailed the making of slip-cast mugs with stencilled lettering, painting tribal scenes onto bisque-ware and painting sculptural objects. He progressed to slab-building teapots and jugs which attracted the attention of Leeb-du Toit who encouraged him to attend courses in ceramics presented by Armstrong in 2000 and for which he earned a certificate in ceramics. Sometime earlier Sithole saw the works of Nala displayed at Greenberg's Bayside Gallery at the BAT Centre. Greenberg introduced him to Nala at her homestead and she agreed to teach him the traditional pottery techniques which remain the foundation of his own work. Two other women from whom he drew inspiration were Mikula and Magdalene Odundo. He briefly worked in a studio on Mikula's farm where he became familiar with her work and her collection of African material culture. He would eventually build his own such collection with special attention to the Zulu, Turkana, Rendille, Borana and Ethiopian cultures (Fig 70). It was also at Mikula's home where he met Odundo whose work he had long admired.

Sithole's works started to feature in APSA's exhibitions from 1997 onwards but it was the winning of the merit award in the 2000 First National Bank Vita competition that firmly established him as a significant figure in South African ceramics. His entry for that event was purchased by the Johannesburg Art Gallery which, in itself, was a major accolade. He was selected for participation in the 2002 "Vessel" exhibition staged by the Axis Gallery in New York where Nala too

was represented.

At the turn of the century, Sithole was already developing his own forms based on traditional Zulu vessels (Fig 70). In those he referenced cattle in their full forms, as heads or as horns which Perrill (2008a:184) considered as "a personal and a broader social exploration of what it means to be an 'authentic' Zulu man". Sithole (Van Wyk & Sithole [Sa]:73) explain his use of bull motifs as "symbols of masculinity in Zulu culture, whereas pottery is a feminine occupation. I mend [sic] the male and female sides together, not separating them". About the use of cattle horns (*izimpondo*) as a stylistic motif, Perrill (2008a:185) further explains that it was an age old design created by Zulu women in their ceramics which was innovated in the works of Sithole to the point where these motifs constituted a trope and his personal iconography. Between 2004 and 2005, Sithole explored the themes of headrests and stools in African material culture which, along with references to cattle horns in the vessels, were created for his "Iqhaza" solo exhibition at the BAT Centre (Perrill 2005:[Sp]). Another innovation on traditional Zulu ceramics was not to repeat the usual radial symmetry of decoration that made the views from all sides the same but to compel the viewer to navigate the work in the surround to see in full the decorative theme spanning the vessel (Fig 71). In a next phase of exploring form but still calling on Zulu material culture, Sithole developed elongated forms for which he referenced the wooden Zulu milk pail (*ithunga*). These vessels with their soaring necks are indeed reminiscent of Odundo's works but, as Perrill (2008a:192) noted, echo the symmetrical Zulu vessel style.

5.3.3 Bonnie Ntshalintshali

Though it does not take away any credit from the achievements of Bonnie Ntshalintshali (1967–1999), the role of Halsted-Berning in her development as a ceramic sculptor cannot be underplayed. Halsted-Berning graduated at the former University of Natal and then enrolled for a two-year course in specialised ceramics under Armstrong. At the university, she became familiar with Middlebrook's unconventional approach to ceramics that included working with

materials that fell outside the ambit of ceramics. She also briefly joined the Caversham Mill pottery studio of David Walters in 1983. After her retrenchment in 1985 from the Natal Technikon where she taught, Halsted-Berning moved to Ardmore Farm to develop a studio, the Ardmore Ceramic Art studio. Her personal influences were eclectic and included Persian carpets, Delft tiles, Turkish art, English Chinaware and South African indigenous craft.

Gillian Scott (1998) wrote the most comprehensive history of Ardmore, its founding figures and its output and I use that publication as my principal source on Ntshalintshali. When Halsted-Berning was looking to recruit a studio apprentice, she found one in Ntshalintshali, daughter of her domestic employee Janet. Ntshalintshali, of Zulu descent, contracted polio at the age of six but nevertheless attended school which, because of financial constraints, she could only attend up to the eighth grade. Then followed a period of piecemeal jobs that included picking tomatoes and gleaning mealies.

At first, Ntshalintshali assisted Halsted-Berning in painting ducks made with a commercial mould and later egg cups and coffee mugs. On her own, Ntshalintshali fashioned and painted small animal and bird sculptures, candlesticks and candelabra that preceded her larger hand-moulded sculptural ceramics. Because the studio's kiln had a limited size, Ntshalintshali constructed her works in parts and assembled those after the firing to achieve the height that she sought. The early sculptures reflect her Catholic schooling and faith. Biblical narratives were reinterpreted and she incorporated references to indigenous traditions and Western consumerism. One example is Ntshalintshali's *Last Supper* (Fig 72) in which she depicts Jesus and his disciples at a table on which traditional Zulu food (a goat's head and *putu* maize porridge), popcorn, Coca Cola and a Western-style beer are served. Three tableaux of wedding scenes, created at different times, illustrate Ntshalintshali's strong association with Zulu culture but also her interface with Western culture. *Lobola* (1998) depicts the bride in a Western wedding dress, surrounded by the bridal dowry of cattle. *Traditional Zulu wedding* (1991) depicts figures dressed in traditional Zulu clothing with

animals and objects associated with such an event (a goat, gifts of blankets, *putu* porridge). *The wedding* (Fig 73) was sculpted in the same year but shows the bridal couple and their attendants in Western dress for a Christian ceremony with the traditional goat bearing wedding gifts on its back. These and her other works were painted in bright coloured commercial paints and then varnished.

With her entry of *Noah*, Ntshalintshali was named as co-winner alongside Hayward-Fell of APSA's 1988 national exhibition. In 1990, Ntshalintshali and Halsted-Berning were awarded the prestigious Standard Bank Young Artist Award. It was the first time that the award was allocated for work in ceramics. The award granted participation in that year's Standard Bank National Arts Festival after which their exhibition was featured at galleries across the country. Ntshalintshali was artist-in-residence at the University of Natal in 1990 and 1992 and exhibited a ceramic sculpture at the Venice Biennale in 1993. Her output decreased when her health declined after she became infected with HIV.

Nala, Sithole and Ntshalintshali claim an association with the Zulu culture but that is manifested in divergent manners in their oeuvres and, in the case of Sithole and Ntshalintshali, might be so visually subtle as to escape notice. These three ceramists exercised their agency in referencing non-Zulu sources and presenting those as they saw fit. They produced work under different circumstances with Nala and Ntshalintshali working in differing rural settings and Sithole in an urban environment. Nala's oeuvre evolved around pot forms, Sithole's forms translate the pot into the vessel and Ntshalintshali focused on figurative ceramic sculptures. Nala engaged with the market via craft outlets, galleries and direct contact with buyers. Sithole actively engages with the art world via exhibitions, contact with gallerists and his involvement with the fraternity and affairs of Ceramics Southern Africa. Ntshalintshali had the benefit of the honed marketing skills and the extensive art world contacts of Halsted-Berning. What they have in common is a familiarity with market demand and to meet that without compromising principles or quality in an idiom of their personal choice, neither restricted by tradition or custom nor dictated by the market.

5.3.4 The ELC Art and Craft Centre at Rorke's Drift

The recruitment of the Molefe family hand-building potters for the ceramic wing of the ELC Art and Craft Centre at Rorke's Drift, stated Calder ([Sa]a), "advanced the Swedish Mission's idea of indigenous authenticity". Authenticity, however, does not equate with the strict adherence to a specific cultural expression. Differing views were expressed on what the pottery culminated in. Sarah Hosking (2005:57) considered it a "composite globalised identity" whilst Tim Maggs and Val Ward (2011:152) approached it as an interweaving of African tradition and Scandinavian Enlightenment. Garth Clark and Lynn Wagner (1974:144) had a more simplified summary in that the pottery was a "harmonious marriage of tribal culture and Western technology". Freddie Motsamayi's (2012:24) assessment was forthright in considering that Rorke's Drift pottery serves as "examples of 'invented traditions', that is, new forms of African expression intended mainly for Western patrons". Leeb-du Toit (2012b:77) describes it as a "slippage between the contemporary and the 'traditional'" as it straddled the familiar Western-style studio pottery and the presumed-to-be traditional pottery of the Zulu culture. Calder and Berit Sahlström (2004:[Sa]) stressed the influence of Scandinavian late modernist ceramic design that melded with the indigenous pottery tradition or, more specifically, as "[c]onvergences of indigenous African and introduced Nordic systems of knowledge and pedagogical discourses". Nordic design can be summarised as having unpretentious form, determined by man and not machine, with tradition as a foundation for innovation, the blending of old and new materials and a link between the past and present (Ryan [Sa]).[10] This is evident in both the practice and works of the potters of the ELC Art and Craft Centre at Rorke's Drift: a continuation of indigenous material culture practice with evidence of interpreted and revisioned influences but purposefully created for outsider reception.

It is valid to ask whether the potters were in any way guided in their designs

[10] Gers offers a more concise definition of Nordic design as one of simplicity, functionality, brevity and sobriety (2015:268).

beyond their introduction to Western pottery materials, technology and production methods. Leeb-du Toit (2012b:78) states that Marietjie van der Merwe, who served as instructor, was thoroughly informed about local and international market preferences and guided the potters in painting their works with figurative images and geometric motifs in slips of blue and earth colours. Leeb-du Toit however does not offer any insight into whether Van der Merwe coached the potters according to the dictum of Peder Gowenius (a founding member of the centre) that promoted individual expression flowing from "an innate naivety and conceptualism" (2012b:79). According to Hosking (2005:33), the potters were shown books and magazines that exposed them to pottery forms outside of their culture and convention whilst they were also familiar with commercial Western ceramics. Gers (2015:268) is more specific about this and notes that Van der Merwe showed the potters images of Pueblo Indian and Nigerian pottery, further stating that the women potters were especially attracted to the Nigerian style of pottery. Gers reads the adoption of Pueblo and Nigerian formal and decorative elements in the outcomes of the women potters (2015:269).

As "tourist art", the twenty-first century pottery of the ELC Art and Craft Centre at Rorke's Drift reveals forms and decoration intended to meet buyers' tastes and budgets: "Africanesque", useful and affordable even if, judging by what I witnessed in 2014, they were of fragile construction and bland in appearance. The purposeful re-orientation towards the tourist market, to tap into that source of revenue, is not a slur on the history, aesthetics or ethos of the studio. As in the earlier works, the more recent works illustrate an entanglement of the maker and the made, relevant to a new context of time and circumstance. As such, the newer works must be understood and appreciated in terms of what Eric Silverman (1999:64) described as the communication of "an open-endedness of identity that, although traditional, is particularly salient at the confluence of modernity and tradition".

As a collective and as individuals, the potters defied tradition and convention, subverting Western perceptions and expectations of traditional pottery. The works

recalled but did not copy traditional forms and assumed some Western ceramic features. The potters had the liberty to invent and interpret forms and decorations. They claimed identity as artists rather than as crafters and were recognised as such. Their works entered the canon of mainstream South African art – all of this in the era of oppressive apartheid rule.

In the discussion in Chapters 3 and 4 and also in this chapter about the oeuvres of individual black ceramists and the studios and co-operatives that supported black ceramists, I illustrated the roles played by instructors, advisors, sales agents and patrons. These parties influenced, to some lesser or greater extent, the output of the ceramists, specifically for those works to appeal to a Western sense of aesthetics. I am not questioning the sincerity of these role players for their support for black ceramists but I do point out that a distinction must be drawn between facilitating the development of an oeuvre and the prompting of the outcome of an oeuvre for the purpose of meeting market demand. Considering the latter and specifically as regards works that reflect indigenous culture to any degree or in any nuance, I pose the question whether the role players make themselves guilty of cultural brokering. Bernadette van Haute addressed cultural brokering in her study of figurative West and Central African tourist art sold at South African markets. She described the tourist art to be "copies or replicas that imitate traditional forms of art" (2008:21–22). Of relevance in Van Haute's study is that she identifies the trader or middleman as the cultural broker who, because of a familiarity with consumer demand, dictates what enters the market (2008:27–28). Though the oeuvres of my selection of ceramists and ceramic studios (with the exception of the later output of the ELC Centre for Art and Craft at Rorke's Drift) do not equate with tourist art, the role players who promoted their works do not stand all that far apart from the cultural brokering by traders and middlemen in the tourist art business. They all mediate the output or form and decoration and position those works in the market by their selection, availability, assigned relevance and monetary values.

The black ceramists whom I feature below, all gained recognition in the South

African ceramic fraternity and the broader art world. They lack, however, dedicated academic studies of their lives and oeuvres. Details of those can only be found in an abbreviated format. I call on those sparse sources and introduce additional facts to present more comprehensive profiles for them and to contextualise their oeuvres.

5.3.5 Austin Hleza

My research found a single published interview (in the online Learn and Teach Magazine) with the eSwatini ceramist, Austin Hleza (1949–1997), which adds to the abridged details provided by Steven Sack (1988), Cruise (1991) and Gers (2015). Though known within the APSA fraternity as a potter and for his figurative ceramics, Hleza never attracted special attention in the *Sgraffiti* magazines other than a photo feature of him demonstrating the throwing of tea pots (Anon 1977b:12–15) and cursory mentions that he participated in APSA exhibitions such as his entry of a front-end loader (a construction vehicle) in terracotta for the 1984 national exhibition (Hayward-Fell 1984:11, 13).

The relevance of Hleza in South Africa's ceramic history does not emerge clearly in the writings of Cruise and Gers. In Gers's summation (2015:246), he was "[a] traditionalist at heart [exploring] the tension between 'traditional' rural and modern urban [eSwatini] society with a sense of humour". Cruise's (1991:112) view was that his works constitute "an enduring record and unwitting commentary on an aspect of [eSwatini] existence" which he delivered "without a sense of irony or criticism". Admittedly, neither of these authors had an intention of providing a detailed personal history and assessment of Hleza's oeuvre but included him in their overviews of South African ceramics. Sack (1988:105) provided a synoptic biography of Hleza and a detailed catalogue of his South African and international exhibitions and commissions. Sack's inclusion of Hleza for "The Neglected tradition: Towards a new history of South African art (1930–1988)" exhibition was a recognition of his significant contribution to the corpus of twentieth century South African art even if Hleza (and his fellow black artists) were not fully represented in "the 'official' histories and art museums" (Sack 1988:7). For the

exhibition, Sack selected a truck and trailer fashioned in earthenware (1988:48) to illustrate Hleza's oeuvre.

eSwatini is a mainland enclave surrounded, for the greater part, by South Africa and sharing a smaller border with Mozambique. It is an absolute monarchy rooted in traditional and customary law. Its socio-economic viability is strongly influenced by a consistent dependence of its labour force on work opportunities in South Africa and that neighbour's socio-political turmoil during the apartheid-era spilled over into eSwatini. Hleza was born in the community of Mpulazi in the western part of eSwatini. His parents separated soon after his birth and his mother remarried and moved to the neighbouring South African province of Mpumalanga. Hleza was left in the care of his grandmother and saw his mother once or twice a year and only met his birth father who was a mine worker in South Africa when he was probably 12 years old and in his last year at primary school. The family situation was a familiar feature of the era when parents relocated to centres of employment with their children left in the care of other family members. He started school at Mpuluzi and, despite his grandmother's urging to leave school after his third year of education because of a lack of funds, he persevered and finished his high school education with a Junior Certificate from the Mater Dolorosa High School in Mbabane. Hleza recounted (www.learnandteachmagazine.com) that he paid for his school education with money he earned for afternoon and weekend garden work for a white family who also gave him accommodation in the servants' quarters. When his benefactors returned to South Africa, he was left without the means to fund further school education but was accepted for training as a potter at the Danish Pottery Development Centre near Mbabane where, said Hleza: "I made plates, cups and saucers … And I made pots, pots and more pots". During the three years of pottery training, he attended art classes in the evening to study drawing and printing.

At the urging of his girlfriend that he should find a "proper job", Hleza worked as a clerk at the eSwatini post office from 1973 to 1975. He then sought employment

at a gold mine in Limpopo Province where his hopes for an office job on the grounds that he had an education were dashed. Instead, he was sent to work underground which he found distasteful and he resigned after his third shift. On his return to eSwatini in 1976, he was appointed as an assistant manager in the ceramics department at Mantenga Handicraft Centre at Ezulweni which was a project of the Swaziland Economic Development Corporation (SEDCO).[11] The ceramics department was managed by Bill van Gilder who was the former manager at Kolonyama Pottery in Lesotho. Hleza also worked alongside Van Gilder's successor, Chris Green, who was appointed to that post in 1978. Whilst at Mantenga, Hleza lectured at the eSwatini National Handicrafts Training Centre and also worked as a part-time ceramic sculptor for Faragher's Pottery. It was towards the latter part of 1982 that Hleza started to make his ceramic sculptures of vehicles and, at the urging of Mordechai Brodie, a former manager of the craft centre, he resigned from the pottery studio to set up his own studio. According to Gers (2015:246), the studio was in the back of the craft shop of Jenny Thorn at the Tishweshwe Craft Centre but Angus Dorie (1983:8) recorded the studio to be on Thornton's farm. In Dorie's account, the studio was built by Hleza, the Canadian potter, Kirk Creed, and the American potter, Bill Gossman. Creed and Gossman left eSwatini, leaving Hleza as a sole operator at the studio. Hleza returned to SEDCO in 1987 but soon afterwards gained a lectureship at the National Handicraft Centre. In the following year, he visited Johannesburg to periodically work at the studio of the ceramist, Barry Douglas, with whom he featured in two-man exhibitions at the Potchefstroom Museum and the Beuster-Skolimowski Gallery in Pretoria. At this time, he befriended the multi-media artist Bhekisani Manyoni (whose oeuvre includes ceramic sculpture) at the Katlehong Art Centre.[12] Hleza's last studio was an old Volkswagen Combi which he set up on

[11] SEDCO was a subsidiary body of the Zurich-based Economic Development in East and Southern Africa (EDESA) that supported developmental projects in eSwatini, Lesotho, Botswana and Kenya.

[12] Bhekisani Manyoni was a student at the ELC Art and Craft Centre at Rorke's Drift where he was trained in graphic art, weaving and pottery and also employed until his appointment at SEDCO in 1973 as a lecturer in printmaking. He joined the Katlehong Art Centre in 1979.

the main road between Manzini and Mbabane in eSwatini. His last known collaborative work in pottery that stretched over a four-year period was with Hennie van Vuuren at the multi-racial Waterford Kamhlaba United World College of Southern Africa, Mbabane.

Hleza recounted how he and his childhood friends fashioned their own clay playthings such as small human figures, cars and animals. Clay bulls were a particular favourite and they made them fight one another resulting in their quick breakage because the clay was unfired. Hleza's ceramic oeuvre is strongly associated with the cartoon-like articulated vehicles (Fig 74) which he sculpted in clay from 1982 onwards using clays of different colours which were, in part, stained with oxides (Cruise 1991:191). They ranged from passenger to industrial vehicles. Cruise (1991:21) considered the vehicles "an enduring record and unwitting commentary on an aspect of [eSwatini] existence" but Brodie (Gers 2015:246) denied that they were intended as a "social protest against the increase of traffic in [eSwatini] or some other ironic commentary on life". Brodie insisted that, because the clay vehicles proved to be popular, they were rated as valuable sources of income for Hleza's studio and prompted the making of more. Green (2019) recounts that Hleza purposefully produced these works to make money whilst studiously avoiding the production of typical traditional pots for the tourist market. Even if produced in numbers for the tourist trade and to satisfy the demand of collectors, the clay vehicles were feats of construction in that they incorporated fine engineering details.

More so than the clay vehicles, I consider Hleza's figurative sculptures as reflective of twentieth century eSwatini society. They include depictions of craftsmen (a sandal-maker), men playing a traditional board game, a child working on a personal computer, men in traditional costume performing a dance, the passengers in an overcrowded taxi bus with their worldly belongings precariously stacked on the roof and the forlorn figures of old men in tattered clothing (Fig 75). Scenes of eSwatini social life are also depicted on his thrown wares (cups, goblets, lidded jars, lidded bowls, etc.). These sgraffito illustrations

show cattle, village life and dancing figures drawn in similar style to his linocut and woodblock illustrations which similarly reflect on both the traditional and modern of eSwatini. A photograph in Gers's book (2015:246) shows Hleza applying sgraffito decoration to a large platter at the time of his employment at Mantenga. The central cartouche depicts three figures in traditional costume whilst the rim is decorated with features of village life. Sgraffito was also used for the decoration of lamp bases and other large forms, such as storage jars and large bottles, which Hleza threw at Mantenga. According to Green (2019), Hleza was reticent to produce works with his sgraffito decorations depicting eSwatini culture and society in great numbers and had "strong reservations about his images falling into the 'standard craft decoration'" associated with Mantenga and also because he was protective of the style, images and themes that he had developed for his linocut works.

The thrown forms in stoneware which Hleza produced at Mantenga were in the idiom of those produced by studio potters and production potteries of the same period in South Africa. Throwing was usually assigned to employed production potters whilst the glazing and decoration were reserved for the studio managers or other skilled staff. One example of a jug thrown and decorated by Hleza features the distinctive combed decoration (Fig 76) introduced by Van Gilder at Kolonyama which he later copied at Mantenga. The jug's form is a near exact copy of one thrown and decorated with a poured ash glaze by Van Gilder.

For Rolf Huysmans (2011:1), Hleza's pottery and prints "reflect the fractured society in which he lived: half rural, half urban". This emerges in Hleza's own statement (www.learnandteachmagazine.com) that he wished to escape from urbanised life and settle in the more rural community of Bhunya which lies a short distance south of Mbabane. He envisaged the development of pottery and other craft making with which villagers could support themselves rather than abandoning their rural community lifestyles: "You see, I don't think people should leave their villages when there is so much to be done in the community … I want to take my children with me. Already they are getting used to living near

towns. This really worries me. I believe town life is not healthy".

Hleza could draw on the skills and technology associated with Western pottery production to create his thrown works and call on the fashioning of his childhood plaything figurines to create his figurative ceramics. Through these, we come to know about eSwatini society at the twentieth-century crossroad of traditional and urbanised life. There was an acknowledgement by Hleza of the economic power of European society for the promotion and purchase of his work but, in opting not to produce pottery in the traditional style of an indigenous culture, he refused to pander to Western expectations of traditional black craft and black craftspeople. It cannot be denied that Hleza's oeuvre speaks of hybridity at many levels and in its many meanings but that does not detract from the authenticity and integrity of the works.

5.3.6 Ntate Molelekoa Simon Masilo

Ntate Molelekoa Simon Masilo (1936–2018) was of Basotho descent, born and raised in the community of Ficksburg until he moved to Johannesburg in 1953 at the age of 17. In an interview conducted by the Netherlands-based iZarte Gallery (www.izarte.nl), he recounted that he first tried to make a living by operating a "fish-and-chips" shop in Katlehong but poor health forced him to abandon that enterprise. As a child and teenager, he was exposed to the pottery practice of both his grandmothers and an aunt. Drawing on that, Masilo joined the Katlehong Arts Centre in 1982 where he received instruction from Clyde Carstens and, in 1986, he was appointed as an instructor in ceramics at the centre. It was at the centre where Masilo developed and refined his signature style ceramics which he imbued with Basotho cultural references. One of his forms was based on the traditional Basotho snuff holder (*koma*). Originally a gourd or horn with a stopper, Masilo's interpretation thereof was a rounded earthenware pot with a spear-decorated lid, pit-fired and burnished (Fig 77). Vuyisile Mshudulu (2018) noted a consistent Basotho cultural referencing in Masilo's oeuvre. Though the forms might have evolved into contemporary renditions of traditional pottery and material culture, they held signs and symbols through which Masilo traced and proclaimed his

roots.

Recognition as a skilled and innovative ceramist came early. In the 1980s, the FUBA Art Gallery in Newtown hosted Masilo's first solo exhibition. The Artspace Gallery selected him as one of the ceramists[13] to feature in its 2008 "Oppitafel" event that sought a "fusion of lighting design with ceramic art work" (www.artthrob.co.za). In 2009, Masilo was amongst the group of ceramists[14] selected by the Department of Trade and Industry for its South African Handmade Collection at Decorex. The collection was intended to promote the country's "national craft industry" amongst international investors (Anon 2016b). Further national recognition came in 2015 when the Department of Arts and Culture named him as a "Living Legend" in a programme that honoured citizens for their contributions to the arts, culture and heritage (www.thepresidency.gov.za) and, in the same year, the Gauteng Region of Ceramics Southern Africa awarded him honorary life membership. In 2016 and 2018, Masilo participated in the "Living Human Treasures" exhibitions that formed part of the national Heritage Day celebrations and another distinction was his inclusion in the 2016 programme of the Kara Heritage Institute which hosted events to showcase African tradition, culture and heritage (www.kara.co.za). Masilo was given national recognition when one of his *koma* works was adopted into the Corobrik Collection. Masilo was commissioned in 2018 to produce a work for the Adelaide Tambo Ceramics Collection.[15] His work featured in *Craft South Africa* (Sellschop et al 2005:81) where he was put on par with the ceramists Garrett, Legg, Lynley Watson, Clive Sithole and Ngako for their interpretations of "[t]he archetypal African aesthetics of rounded pots" and the inspiration drawn from the "warmth of the colour and …

[13] The other ceramists participating in the 2008 'Oppitafel' were Poorvi Bhana, Deon de Lange and Muziwandile Gigaba.

[14] The 2009 Decorex ceramists were Hennie Meyer, Andile Dyalvane, Catherine Brennon, Clive Sithole and Meshack Masuku.

[15] The collection is the initiative of Tselane Tambo, daughter of Adelaide Tambo (1929–2007) who was a political activist and wife of a former president of the ANC, Oliver Tambo (1917–1991). Other ceramists who received commissions for this project are Nick Sithole, Andile Dyalvane, Madoda Fani, Ardmore Ceramic Art, Mabasa, Jabu Nala and Clive Sithole.

satisfying form" of those pots.

5.3.7 Henriette Ngako

Sellschop, Wendy Goldblatt and Doreen Hemp (2005:82) wrote about Ngako that she hand-built round pots that later developed into sculptural mythical creatures but the authors did not contextualise the development of her ceramic forms. Ngako is of Tswana descent. Born in 1943 in Rustenburg in South Africa's North West Province, she grew up in the company of her grandmother who made traditional pottery for cooking, water storage and the brewing of beer for their own household. After the murder of her husband in 1982 and having to support a daughter by herself, Ngako moved to Pretoria where she found employment in the studio of Willemien van der Walt where she was tasked to make traditional pots with the coiling and burnishing techniques. When Van der Walt closed her studio, Ngako found employment as a housemaid but was then tracked down in 1985 by the multi-media artist, Tineke Meijer, who took her on as a student and to share a studio in Pretoria. At this time, Ngako received additional support and guidance as well as substantial funding from the studio potter and teacher, Elza Sullivan, at whose studio she worked one day per week and where she could access materials and a kiln (Sullivan 2019).

Ngako's earliest collaboration with Meijer was in the making of "patio pottery" for drought-resistant plants (Van der Westhuizen 1986:[Sp]). Meijer later developed her interest in the northern Ivory Coast's Senufo mythology into a series of figures in ceramic wall panels, sharing her knowledge of mythology with Ngako (Anon 1994:22–23). This was presumably the incentive for Ngako to break away from making pots to sculpting the totemic figures in which she referenced Tswana myths and beliefs that she learned as a child (Doeg 2002:15).

The intricately patterned totemic sculptures of animalistic figures or of unusual combinations of animals and humans (Wessels 1998:7) became a distinctive feature of Ngako's oeuvre (Fig 78, 79). Marais (2012:23) describes the sculptures as complex, multi-layered and multi-figured with "symbolic content and narrative

character … in lively interpretations of Tswana beliefs, legends, myths and traditions". Jerice Doeg (1991:4) saw nothing that could be considered as contrived in these works noting "a natural, flowing form which tells you 'this is Africa', its shapes, its patterns, its colours and its creatures" and that they highlight the "special and unique qualities peculiar to our African environment". John Shirley (2005:11) agreed that her works are "steeped in Africa".

Ngako regularly featured Tswana namings for her works which was a clear act of signalling her identification with her own indigenous culture. The titles are also descriptive of characters, beliefs and customs in Tswana myth and lore: *Kgosigodi ee ipelang* (The Happy Queen), *Dimakatso* (Fantasy Bird), *Ramolodi* (Whistling Animal), *Makhanana* (Tsonga Woman), *Kgosana* (Headman), *Re tlhatlagane* (Standing on Top of Each Other), *Ke o khukhutha* (I Carry a Heavy Load) and *Setlhare sa khutso* (Tree of Peace) (Meijer [Sa]).

Meijer has been credited for encouraging Ngako to develop her sculptural work and for her introduction to the APSA exhibitions (Doeg 2002:15). It is worth noting her exhibition achievements to illustrate the recognition given to South Africa's black artists during the last years of Nationalist government and the early years of a democratic and fully inclusive South Africa. At the 1989 APSA national exhibition, she won her first recognition with a highly commended award. Other awards (Meijer [Sa]) followed in quick succession, including a joint first prize at the 1990 Southern Transvaal regional exhibition, a first prize in the sculptural category at the 1991 Northern Transvaal regional exhibition and the Mollie Fisch Memorial Prize for the best handwork at the 1992 APSA biennale. Outside of the APSA fraternity, Ngako received national and international recognition. In 1992, she received a merit award at the "International Invitational Exhibition of Contemporary Ceramic Art" hosted by the Republic of Taiwan's National Museum of History.[16] The museum acquired her entry, *Prayer for*

[16] Three black ceramists were amongst the 25 South African ceramists invited to participate in the exhibition: Ngako, Peter Mthombeni and Joel Sibisi. The other ceramists were Christine Smith,

Africa, for its permanent collection. Ngako featured in the Goodman Gallery's "Joy of Making" exhibition in 1993 and, in the next year, the gallery hosted her solo exhibition. She was the 1993 recipient of the senior bursary for visual arts from The Foundation for the Arts and was the artist-in-residence at the 1995 Grahamstown Festival (officially, the Standard Bank National Arts Festival). Ngako was selected for the 1996 group exhibition hosted by the Groundswell Contemporary Art gallery in London and the 1998 group exhibition presented by the Longhouse Reserve Gallery in New York. She was one of the South African artists selected to feature in the South African pavilion at the Hannover Expo in Germany in 2000. The most prestigious accolade gained at an APSA exhibition was her naming as joint-winner of the Premier Award at the 2002 "African Earth Exhibition".

Her life and career history in the subsequent years speak of poverty and inactivity (Sullivan 2019; Ngako 2019). For a number of years, Ngako ceased all production because she had to take on the rearing and education of her grandchildren after the deaths of their parents. She also could not call for support on Meijer, who had health problems at that time, nor on Sullivan who retired in 2012. Ngako briefly resumed her work in 2014 but that was cut short when the power cables for her small kiln were stolen. She was granted the Tim Morris Bursary Award for her entry at the 2015 Gauteng regional exhibition (Shirley 2015:23) but those funds were used to alleviate her impoverishment and she has not produced any works since then. My most recent enquiry in 2019 revealed that she remained inactive as a ceramist, that her health was deteriorating and that she was occasionally dependent on Sullivan for financial assistance.

In my opinion, the one work that embodied Ngako's treatment of indigenous culture but with which she also claimed a voice as social commentator, was the installation piece *Guardians*. This ceramic work that comprised female totemic

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Scott, Rae Goosen, Barbara MacGillivray, Delise Reich, Doris Schmitz, Angela Kirsten, Bruce Walford, Sue Meyer, Martie Meyer, Katherine Glenday, Ena Maartens, Angelique Kirk, Cilla Williams, Leora Lewis, Rhe Wessels, Martha Zetler, Hyme Rabinowitz, Barbara Jackson and Nelius Britz (Anon 1992:7).

figures keeping watch over the tomb[17] of black prisoners of war who died during the 2nd Anglo-Boer War, formed part of the "Skrapnel" (English: *Shrapnel*) group exhibition in which Ngako featured along with the multi-media artists Koos van der Watt, Jan van der Merwe and Chris Gous. Van der Watt's intention with the exhibition was to commemorate the end of the war that was fought from 1899 to 1902 between Britain and the Boer states of the Republic of Transvaal and the Orange Free State. The exhibition opened in 2000 in Ladysmith and was afterwards featured at the Klein Karoo National Arts Festival in Oudtshoorn followed by its display at the Potchefstroom University. The collection of works was then moved to the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria. There is no record of whether Ngako's specific focus was on the enlisted blacks who fell in the war or the black prisoners of war nor did she offer any insight into the party with which they were aligned. The work must therefore be considered to be generic as regards their identities and alliances. Blacks served in combatant roles on both sides in the war and, as non-combatants, they were caught up in the destruction of social life that the warring sides wrought. No accurate statistics exist for the number of these blacks killed in action or as a consequence of the action. Nosipho Nkuna (1999:[Sp]) cited Bill Nasson (*Abraham Essau's War*, 1991) that the bodies of the blacks who fell in the Cape Colony were dumped in unmarked graves. If not killed in combat, blacks suffered disease and starvation in the rural areas or faced the perilous conditions of the British concentration camps. The number of blacks who died in the concentration camps are thought to be in excess of 25 000 (Kessler 2017:149–150; Pretorius 2019). Ngako must be credited as the first black South African ceramist (perhaps even the first black South African artist) to reflect this history.

Ngako decorated the five female totemic figures in earthy colours and added ethnic motifs. In his review of the exhibition, Diek Grobler (2002:3) considered the work to have multiple archetypal symbols associated with water, the earth, the

[17] The tomb was described as an "ancestral grave" by Elizabeth Kruger (2002:25).

woman as mother and the forefathers. There is much irony in the fact that Ngako's work made a turn at the Voortrekker Monument which is considered to be the hallowed symbol of Afrikaner Nationalism and where the victory over black adversaries by the pioneer Voortrekkers during the Great Trek era is celebrated. Within the monument is a cenotaph which is the symbolic resting place of all the pioneers who died during the conquering of South Africa's interior. The cenotaph is inscribed with the words "Ons vir jou Suid-Afrika" (English: We for thee South Africa). Without intending it to be so, the tomb constructed by Ngako and which is the focal point of the installation, echoed the cenotaph as a memorial to the fallen but instead of generic wording that celebrates Afrikaners, she incorporated three photographs of crudely fashioned grave markers for black prisoners of war.

Ngako's works are distinctive within the corpus of twentieth-century and contemporary South African ceramics. They stand outside of traditional Tswana craft, bear no semblance to any traditional pottery and do not emulate the work of any other South African ceramist. The sculptural forms are her personal inventions onto which she layers cultural references and meanings, addressing both the past and the present.

I have demonstrated in this chapter the initial and later forays by ceramists to reflect their association with South Africa and Africa. For some, this was a recall of specific features and values of their cultures translated into contemporary expressions. For others, it was a mediation of identity within a multicultural setting in which features of the own and other cultures were either sampled or revisioned in such a manner as to accrue new aesthetics and meanings.

In Chapter 6, I investigate how the South African ceramists of the twenty-first century have resolved their engagement with issues of a South African and "African" identity and how that emerges in what I consider to be themed categories within the ceramic genres.

CHAPTER 6
The twenty-first century – liberated identities and new dialogues

For this chapter that deals with my research and findings on twenty-first century South African ceramics, I am guided by statements made by the ceramics aestheticist, Philip Rawson, and the ceramics art historian, Paul Greenhalgh. Rawson (2006:209) believes that ceramic works echo "the cultural world of similarities and contexts which the pots themselves inhabit" and that any new ceramic work must be considered as an echo of the echoes of earlier works. Greenhalgh (2006:165) states that in the "continual crossovers and correspondences between ceramics and other media and the interdisciplinary nature of clay activity there are core practices and usages within the ceramic heritage that give it meaning and guarantee its continued existence and prosperity". These statements are not contradictory. Rawson and Greenhalgh both acknowledge that ceramics have the capacity to transmute without loss of their heritage even as they create a new legacy. I find evidence of this in the twenty-first century South African ceramics.

I highlight four contextual issues that bear influence on the ceramic presence. Firstly, issues of training and skills development as well as the challenges of materials and technology were largely resolved by the start of the twenty-first century. While formal training opportunities for ceramists remain extremely limited, South Africans continue to avail themselves of being taught at ceramic studios under the guidance of teachers who profit from formal training. Secondly, as Mark Pennings (2006:127) notes, ceramics shift aesthetic allegiances. Several South African ceramists produce works of which the basic forms are usually associated with one genre (for example, utilitarian) but in new interpretations translate to the characteristics and applications of another genre (for example, sculptural). The blurring is reciprocal. Thirdly, ceramics are not exclusively associated with clay as a medium but accommodate and combine with additional materials, processes and technologies. As Wilma Cruise (2003:3) states, the medium does not dictate but is "merely the tool by which the artist wrestles with

his/her particular demons". To this, Gordon Froud (2012:6) adds that "the role of the artist as visual thinker becomes more important than the sacredness of the material or medium being used". Fourthly, ceramists have become increasingly less dependent on the promotion and sales of their works by galleries. Using various social media options and participating in art and lifestyle expo events, ceramists are self-promoting and widening their potential customer base. Sadly, such promotional activities are seldom accompanied by notes with critical information on context, materials, processes and measurements or where the works fit into an existing or developing oeuvre. With most of the galleries that promoted ceramics in the twentieth century having closed their doors, individual ceramists compete for the valuable but limited exposure of boutique galleries, such as the Kim Sacks Gallery and Craft Store in Johannesburg and Southern Guild based in Cape Town, where the gallerists promote specific aesthetics. Southern Guild, for example, is particularly active in promoting contemporary works at design shows that reflect Africa "as the birthplace of mankind" and "the essence of humankind" (Smith 2018). Some production studios now operate their own retail outlets, usually at locations that attract tourists, and sell their oeuvres at inflated prices to absorb the associated rental and income sharing costs.

I will not discuss each of the genres that characterise twenty-first century South African ceramics in detail because, within each, there are numerous variations of form and expression. I opt to present an overview of themed categories and, within those, to profile ceramists and the contexts of their oeuvres. The selection for profiling is not based on the eminence of the ceramists in the national or international art world but for the manner in which they motivate or notably expand the visual vocabulary of ceramics.

6.1 THE CERAMIST AS COMMENTATOR

Towards the end of the twentieth century but particularly in the twenty-first century, several South African ceramists have addressed issues such as the exploitation of natural resources, the protection of animal rights, displacement, disempowerment, discrimination, human rights, social responsibility and violence.

The expressions of such sentiments and values are subtle or stated in very direct (even confrontational) manners by means of symbolism or in a literal fashion. The ceramist, Evette Weyers, for example, is an activist campaigning against fracking for natural gas deposits in the Karoo region and addresses the issue in sculptural ceramic works. *Targeted* was the title of Lynette Morris-Hale's 2009 exhibition in which she strung a collection of white female figures on the gallery walls to represent, amongst others, violence against women. One figure bore a target on the front of her dress and another held a handgun. The figures were given treatment that recalled rag dolls which, in Daryl Houghton's (2017:9) assessment, emphasised a sense of vulnerability (Fig 80).

Wilma Cruise (2007) has repeatedly, but in varied approaches, considered and presented "[t]he body as text … in the area of the subliminal and the subconscious, resisting order and structure". In the body of work titled *Nicholas – October 1990* (1991–1993), Cruise addressed the politically motivated assassination of her husband's nephew Nicholas at the hands of three members of the far right organisation, Orde Boerevolk. The series of works comprised 11 life-size figures of which *Three Shades (the Bully Boys I, II and III)* stood central. These three figures were presented incomplete and naked bar their sexual organs that were sheathed in cast metal as if to turn their maleness into weapons (Cruise 2007). The second series, *Claybodies*, was created between 2002 and 2003 and addressed initiation and circumcision practices in South Africa. Initiates are subjected to extreme physical privation and even risk the loss of life. In both series, the figures lack arms and faces making them incapable of any means of expression and emphasising their state of helplessness. It also signalled, stated Cruise (2007), the impotence she experienced in failing to convey the true nature of experience.

In an artist's statement, Lucinda Mudge (2017) explains that she uses humour, irony and mockery to pose questions about society and social relationships which she admits can arouse unease for the viewer. In an earlier interview (Hunkin 2016), she was more specific: "My themes are fear and paranoia vs. beauty. My

message: Understanding human anger and violence by reflecting on our [South African] history" (Fig 81). Her works are presented as vases with visual and textual observations of South African social life. The vase serves as a "canvas in the round" as the immediately visible is a reminder that much else remains hidden. She describes her oeuvre as "intentionally anti-art elitist" and that she does not relate to "art speak" (Mudge 2017) which is probably the justification for producing vase forms that are crude in their form and finish. My own opinion is that aesthetics cannot be negated in favour of content even when the work is conceptual. In this, I follow the dictate of the Canadian ceramist, Robin Hopper, (2000:243) that aesthetic appraisal is cognisant of "form, proportion, function, surface, color, process, intent, and content, not necessarily in that order" to which I add that any one of those aesthetic features does not subvert any of the others but is integral to the whole.

The ceramist, Charmaine Haines, is not noted for delivering social commentary in her works. The exception to that is a series of three works titled *La femme Fatale* (Fig 82) included in her 2019 exhibition "Finding the narrative". The works address the body image as portrayed and promoted in Palaeolithic archaeology (the Venus of Willendorf),[1] anthropology (the "Hottentot Venus" Saartjie Baartman)[2] and social media (Kim Kardashian).[3] Haines (2020) explains that the three figures depicted on vessels that serve as "specimen jars" – with rounded bottoms to emulate the exaggerated derrière associated with the characters – celebrate a femininity that is both tragic and empowering: "They have a common focus in that all three women are defined by their shape and it's their shape that

[1] The Venus of Willendorf is a carved limestone figurine tinted with red ochre that dates to about 30 000 BCE (the Old Stone Age of Europe).

[2] Saartjie Baartman (1789–1815), also named as Sara Baartman, was one of two Khoikhoi women who were presented as freak show attractions in Europe for their pronounced buttocks. After her death, a body cast was made to be displayed along with her dissected brain, skeleton and genitalia in the Museum of Man in Paris. Her remains were repatriated to South Africa in 2002 for burial.

[3] Kim Kardashian is a media personality and "social influencer" known for posing in the nude with emphasis on her buttocks with no apparent justification other than to attract public attention. The pop culture journalist, Brian Moylan (2014), described it as a publicity stunt void of meaning or, as he wrote: "Kim Kardashian's ass is nothing but an empty promise".

has defined their destiny … they've become objects of intrigue and curiosity".

Born in Myanmar, reared and educated in Uganda and Kenya, and having earlier lived in Malaysia and Britain, Ann Marais (2020) states that she understands and lives the status of "otherness" and conflicting issues that pertain to immigrants all over the world. She addressed this in 2010 in her sculptural work, *Everyman* (Fig 83). The figure that portrays a man in a supplicant pose stands as a symbol for the universal longing of mankind, in particular those unable to control their political destinies, for the basic necessities of life. Though completed and exhibited in 2010, the sculpture has gained in relevance and meaning when considering the worldwide migrant crisis of recent times.

The reach and impact of socio-political commentary via ceramics was already evident in the last decade of the twentieth century with one example being that of Gail Neke's *Eugene TerreBlanche and his two sidekicks* (Fig 84). Neke's work was her expression of anger at South African politics that was fuelled by her personal involvement with an anti-apartheid organisation where she saw evidence of torture (Neke 1992:6). The work that portrayed the right wing figurehead Eugène Ney Terre'Blanche (1941–2010), leader of the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (the English translation is Afrikaner Resistance Movement) and two followers was purchased by the National Gallery and displayed in its "New Acquisitions Exhibition" in 1992. Six hammer-wielding supporters of Terre'Blanche breached the gallery's security, smashed the three figures and further threatened to destroy the gallery (Crampton 2003:218). Neke afterwards used the actual broken pieces to construct a new installation work of an outsized mallet standing upright, surrounded by the empty ceramic boxes that previously held the heads of Terre'Blanche and his followers. A more recent example comes from the oeuvre of Julie Lovelace who added decals, lustre, on-glaze and lettering to a found "political ideological propaganda plate" (Lovelace 2014:54) commemorating Mao Zedong (1893–1976), a former dictatorial leader of the People's Republic of China. Zedong was depicted with bloodied tears flowing from his eyes and underneath that a text in upper case letters read "I DID IT MAO

WEI" in reference to both Mao and the Chinese artist and human rights activist, Ai Weiwei (Fig 84). The title refers to the song *I did it my way* that was composed by Paul Anka and popularised by Frank Sinatra (1915–1998). The lyrics of the song tell of a man in his old age who reflects on how he met the challenges of life whilst holding onto his personal integrity. The plate was included in the "Dinner for 101" exhibition staged at the Castle of Good Hope in Cape Town in 2013. Marais (2018b:22–23) recounts that, when a group of visiting Chinese tourists objected to the work, it caused a minor political incident resulting in the temporary withdrawal of it from the exhibition. Following the exhibition, Lovelace installed the plate on one of the pylons supporting a bridge in the central business district of Johannesburg. The pylon was in the immediate vicinity of the old Chinese cultural centre and the site was chosen as a "repurposed space" to protest the earlier attempt by the Chinese tourists to censor the work.

6.2 THE VESSEL AS SCULPTURE

On their own, the ceramic vessel and the ceramic sculpture have progressively challenged conformity whether of form, function or meaning. The vessel embraces concept and sculpture addresses spatial form. The sculptural vessel explores and balances the liminal space between vessel and sculpture. Sculptural vessels were produced by South African ceramists later in the twentieth century but often veered towards being sculpturally-ornamented vessels. In twentieth-century South African ceramics, the aesthetic engagement of vessel and sculpture was successfully resolved by ceramists, such as Drury Brandt and Madoda Fani, the former utilising the open form of the vessel and the latter opting for a closed form of the vessel.

The oeuvre of Drury Brandt reflects his close experience of nature and the life values he extrapolates from that. This is translated to his selection of materials and his preference of gestural techniques with which he creates monolithic sculptural vessels. The vessels suggest features of the landscapes and rockscapes of the mountain ranges in the Karoo, Magaliesberg, Drakensberg, Cederberg and Swartberg. In those works I have noted (Watt 2014a:[Sp]) fissures, cracks, folds,

ridges, scratches, furrows, rough edges, stressed surfaces, overlapping planes, crevices, erosion and grain (Fig 86). The forms are not elegant structures but jut, lean, expand, contract and abruptly terminate. I pose the question whether the works must be considered as landscaped objects or landscapes by themselves.

Brandt's initial training started in 1987 when he attended classes at the studio of Digby Hoets and attended workshops presented by the British ceramists, John Gibson, John Maltby, David McDowell and Richard Phetean, in South Africa, Wales and England. In 2001, he was the resident artist at the Tallaght Community Arts Centre on the outskirts of Dublin, Ireland.

Brandt (2005) states that he avoids anything that is "too slick, stylized, boring and too predictable" and opts for work that "when on being viewed from different perspectives surprises, draws one in and intrigues". He creates texture by stressing his clay, adding clay in layers, incorporating clay shavings, rolling clay over found surfaces, by not trimming edges, peeling off surfaces, thumbing on additional clay and applying markings (Watt 2014:[Sp]). Even prior to construction, Brandt might apply coloured slip glazes to the slabbed wet clay. He accentuates cracks with the use of manganese and iron oxides. In her review of Brandt's practise, the ceramist Lynette Morris-Hale (2004) considered the spontaneity of his method:

> I could hear the voice of the clay – it was allowed to flop, it was allowed to crack, it slouched, it wobbled, it tore, it twisted and finally it allowed itself to be decorated by dribbled and splattered glazes, under glazes and oxides … [but] what he allows to happen to his work is the result of conscious decisions.

Compared with Brandt's style of making, Madoda Fani is particularly attentive of precision of form and intricate decorative detail offset with smooth surfaces. Born into the Xhosa culture and belonging to the Tshawe royal clan, Fani calls on his heritage of traditional pottery for both process and form in creating his sculptural ceramics. The forms transcend a contemporary version of traditional forms even to the point where it is difficult to find any vestige of that other than noting that the works are hand-coiled, pit-fired or smoke-fired and burnished as would

traditionally have been done. Fani predominantly works in large and towering scale to create curvaceous organic forms with intricate overlapping carved surfaces for which he draws inspiration from the female body shape, Xhosa material culture (such as beer pots and milk pails), cattle, insects and even Japanese samurai armour (Fig 87).

Fani's involvement with ceramics came about by chance when, in 1998, he assisted a ceramist friend in the painting of designs onto teapots. He then enrolled at Sivuyile Technical College (now the Gugulethu campus of the College of Cape Town) in 1998 for a three-year fine arts course but abandoned his studies because of a lack of funds. Andile Dyalvane recruited him for the production team at the Potter's Shop in Kalk Bay where he initially only painted designs on the wares produced by the staff and later also produced his own forms. By invitation, Fani attended the Siao D'Art Festival in Burkino Faso in 2000 where he met the South African ceramists Ntate Molelekoa Simon Masilo and Ian Garrett whose oeuvres inspired him to master smoke-firing and burnishing techniques. Under the mentorship of Kim Sacks at her teaching studio in Johannesburg, Fani acquired coiling skills and was taught the burnishing technique by Jabu Nala, daughter of Nesta Nala (1940–2005). Then followed the opportunity to share a studio with Nic Sithole, another of the acclaimed ceramists specialising in coiling, smoke-firing and burnishing. Fani was reunited with Dyalvane and Sithole for a residency at Artists in Residence Vallauris, France in 2013. That residency, says Fani, was particularly beneficial in making him aware of ceramic trends in Europe and in teaching him to produce work under pressure whilst maintaining the standard of technique which he has set for himself (Marais 2017:12).

Fani's objective is to create works that are distinctly and unquestionably a unique style (Marais 2017:12). He describes his style as a continuation of tradition but with evolved, stylised forms that "are recognisable of Africa without being specific to Africa" and will appeal to a twenty-first century audience (Fani 2019).

6.3 TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY LIFESTYLE CERAMICS

The utilitarian ceramic wares produced by South Africa's studio potters in the twentieth century appealed to consumers who rejected mass-produced industrial forms and associated themselves with a "country living" lifestyle even in their urbanised settings. As a lifestyle fashion that bordered on being faddist, this was promoted by the voluminous production of utilitarian wares by studio potters, production potteries and "hobby potters" which, in effect, blunted the reading of meanings of the wares. Repetitive forms and decorations and the frequently poor quality of design and manufacture dampened consumer interest in such wares towards the end of the century. To rekindle the interest, the twenty-first century ceramists had to reconsider their designs and re-orientate their wares, presenting those as an "urban alternative" in a contemporary idiom.

I notice this in a shift of focus towards the experiential rather than the aesthetic values sought in utilitarian wares. The American aestheticist, Yuriko Saito (2007: location 1495), argues that aesthetics reside not only in what the object is but it also flows from how we experience (look, own, use) it. The semiotician, Roland Barthes (1950–1980), earlier described this as "meaning which overflows the object's use" (Barthes & Howard 1988:188) with the object "readily [offering] itself to several readings of meaning". Vincenzo di Nicola (2018) promotes the "slow movement" lifestyle that is not about the dematerialising of the world but rather about repopulating it with materials that invite objective, subjective and relational experiences.

One of many twenty-first century South African exponents of revisioned utilitarian wares is Esra Bosch, daughter of the studio potter, Esias Bosch (1923–2010). In 1985, she joined her father and brother, Anton Bosch, at their studio in White River. Her range of functional and decorative ceramic wares includes large platters, bowls, vessels, vases, oil lamps, cupboard knobs and tiles (Fig 88). Decoration is done with brushwork, stencils or slip-trailing. To some degree, she perpetuates the style and decorative elements of Esias Bosch's work (Watt 2014b:[Sp]). The irregularities in shape and variations in the additions of feet and

pedestal bases make works within the same form individualistic.

The ceramist, Clementina van der Walt, introduced a range of utilitarian works in her oeuvre for which she draws inspiration from the Japanese aesthetic of *Wabi Sabi* and translates it into an African idiom. The *Wabi Sabi* aesthetic accepts and celebrates the taking of pleasure in imperfections in works that aspire to rustic simplicity (Oppong 2018). The wares are hand-built or cast and then altered. The forms are asymmetric, irregular and austere in monochromatic pastel colours that recall Van der Walt's favoured Karoo landscapes. Each stands different to the others and all stand in stark contrast to mass-produced utilitarian wares. Van der Walt (2016) explains that her intention is "to seek the sacred in the ordinary". Another ceramist of note for his production of utilitarian wares is David Walters. Walters produces his signature range of plain porcelain wares or as bespoke wares for boutique restaurants. The ceramist and craft promotor, Susan Sellschop (1941–2017), recognised his style as unmistakably minimalist which Walters defends: "the obvious function belies the abstract forms – and the experience of the food from the hand of the chef is enhanced by the subtle evidence of the hand of the maker, without the malign intervention of surface decoration" (Walters 2016).

6.4 THE CERAMIST AS INSTALLATION ARTIST

A clear distinction must be drawn between ceramists who create collages of their works to present as installation art and those ceramists who purposefully, and with a clear objective in mind, set out to create an installation. It is my opinion that only three of the twenty-first century South African ceramists meet the latter criteria in full: Wilma Cruise, Hennie Meyer and Eugene Hön.

For *The Cradle* (2011–2012) installation that formed part of "The Alice diaries" exhibition, Cruise created a field of 1 067 ceramic babies, each figure approximately 30cm in length and all individually deformed to signal helplessness (Fig 89). The installation was an "oblique commentary on homogenised culture" (Lindeque [Sa]) but also to sound an alert about "unfettered human reproduction, drowning out all other life forms" (Marais 2018a:21).

In physical scope, the "Ukusela Ekapa" installation by Meyer surpasses Cruise's. As part of the Cape Town 2014 World Design Capital celebrations, Meyer created 10 000 cups known as *ikomityi* in a black unfired clay. The cups were randomly handed out to people on the street in the city. Each recipient had to squeeze a cup so that an impression of the hand remained and the recipients also incised their names and ages on the bases of their cups. The vessels were then fired and partly glazed and afterwards taken to Robben Island, site of the incarceration of Nelson Mandela, where the cups were arranged in the number 46664 which was Mandela's prisoner number. The installation was afterwards moved to the grounds of the Castle of Good Hope in Cape Town where, at its close, the cups were not returned to the participants but randomly distributed to serve as "a symbolic handshake from a stranger" as if "[s]omeone, somewhere in the urban landscape, shared an experience" (Rodgers 2016).

Another of Meyer's ceramic installations was *veelvoud/multiple* (Fig 90) presented at the 2008 Klein Karoo Kunstefees. Fascinated by multiples and negative spaces, Meyer referenced the jug as a domestic object and as a repetitive element in an expanded view. Whilst the traditional utilitarian function of the jug is destroyed in the installation, it assumes a new value as a distinctive object (Cruise 2018b:32). The 620 identical jugs covered an area of 180 cm^2. In a further innovation and to challenge the perception that an installation work is static and fixed, Meyer rearranged the vessels on each of the nine days of the arts festival to depict a different word in the Afrikaans language: "kolk" (whirlpool), "deining" (swell), "haai" (shark/hallo), "rooigety" (red tide), "parade" (parade), "bloei" (bleed), "blom" (to flower), "uittog" (exodus) and "gesellig" (cosy).[4] The arrangements were also photographically depicted on adjacent display panels. The installation arrangement *kolk* was acquired by the World Ceramic Foundation in South Korea for its permanent collection.

Hön presented his *Rat Installation* at the "Ceramics Alumni UJ – The End of an

[4] English translation of the titles supplied by Meyer (2020).

Era (1966–2010)" exhibition in 2010. Comprising 95 slipcast ceramic rats in poses ranging from submission to aggression, the figures were grouped together to form a carpet with the weapon-like tails representing the tassels of the carpet. Onto this, Hön projected images of historically significant prayer rugs, kelims and carpets representing various cultures and religious groupings. As a metaphor, the installation addresses culture wars arising from conflicting values of traditional and conservative versus progressive and liberal. In an artist's statement, Hön (2010) refers to "conflicting views on … abortion, bioethics, drugs, euthanasia, homosexuality, pornography, sex education and sexuality".

Hön's installation, produced in collaboration with the motion graphics specialist, Lukasz Pater, titled *"and the ship sails on…"* (Fig 91) was selected for "Terra Nova – Critical Currents/Contemporary Ceramics", the 2014 Taiwan Ceramics Biennale. The title refers to the film by the same name by Federico Fellini (1920–1993) in which the film director addressed the passage of time, history and change which Hön then reflected on in terms of the state of ceramics. The installation is a hybrid of ceramic sculpture, drawing, digital printing, publication, animation and projection with the intent to "embody aspects of the craft of ceramics in its use of symbols, colours, shapes and textures" (Hön 2013) and "reiterate[s] the significance of the crafts as a liberated tool in celebrating surface decoration both stylistically and conceptually" (Gers 2014:160). The ceramist purposefully set out to revisit decoration as central to ceramic practice. The installation consists of four symmetrical stylised decoy ducks created with slip-cast and glazed with a high gloss white. Onto this, an animation of a five-clawed Chinese dragon is projected. The ceramist (Hön 2014) presents the dragon as a symbol of China's cultural heritage and the impact of cheap Chinese imports on global markets which, he argues, is "the single most important influence on the demise of ceramics and the handmade worldwide". The projected dragon grows in presence until it looms large over the decoy ducks and transforms the bodies into brightly coloured peonies to suggest spring and a reinvented utopia.

6.5 COMPLEX IDENTITIES IN TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY CERAMICS

Twenty-first century South African ceramists continue to explore and express their identities in a society that, on the one hand, retains and celebrates a multi-cultural character but, on the other hand, can be divisive along ethnic, social and political lines. Rather than address the "rainbow nation" as a collective identity with shared values, ceramists call on their personal histories and experiences that shape their individual identities and outlooks. Pretentious references to culture and society that were too often the hallmarks of ceramics of the previous century have made way for more deliberated metaphors. Ceramists are exploring conjunctions of materials, forms and decorations and express that with such subtlety to escape immediate recognition or in such a striking manner as to arrest our attention. Within the revisioned and new forms, the ceramists embed meanings and identities that take cognisance of the context of the making and presentation even more so intrinsic to the appreciation of the aesthetics.

The oeuvre of Watson Nyambeni, for example, must take into account varied traditional and modern influences. As a child, Nyambeni became familiar with the making of traditional hand-coiled pots through his mother and other women, and, as a pastime, he made clay figurines of cattle and chickens. In his mid-twenties, he relocated to Johannesburg in search of employment. At first, he worked as a gardener and "house boy" for a Jewish family in Orange Grove, Johannesburg. In 1981, he was offered employment as a studio hand by Digby Hoets who then groomed him over the years to become the studio factotum. As can be read in his ceramic works, Nyambeni has strong ties with the Christian religion and, specifically, the Ukhukanya Christian Church of which he is currently the pastor of a congregation in Midrand, near the Hoets studio.

Nyambeni only produces works when he is inclined to do so and when his work duties permit. The ornamental ceramic figurines and candle holders which he hand-builds are raku-fired. His preferred themes for the figurines are animals, birds and Biblical personages which are often presented as a montage (Fig 92). Animals, such as in the clay or carved wooden figurines (*matano*) of crocodiles,

pythons and goats, and human forms feature prominently in Venda traditional religion and folklore. The figurines are used in the pre-marital initiation rites of Venda girls to teach them cultural values and appropriate behaviour. Christianity adopted imagery as commentary on the nature of the divinity and to illustrate the Christian way of life, for instance, birds represent human souls, ducks represent gossip, and the heretic is the hyena, etcetera (Gray 2013). Nyambeni, however, explains (Watt 2014c:[Sp]) that he uses animal and bird figures to convey their associated Christian values but not with the customary values as assigned in the Christian religion. He explained to me (Watt 2014c:[Sp]) that, in his lexicon of symbols, the tortoise is the unbeliever because he withdraws from the truth, the peacock is too proud to acknowledge God, the giraffe with its feet on the ground but head in the air is confused about good and evil, and the monkey leaping about vacillates between belief and unbelief.

Nyambeni is dismissive of the ceramics art world, producing works on occasion and with no interest in participating in exhibitions unless coaxed to do so. At first glance, the works could be considered naïve or, as Runette Kruger (2011:15) proposes, to resemble "the works of so-called 'outsider artists'" such as the sculptors Helen Martins (1897–1976) and Jackson Hlungwani "who created works in a highly personal style based on their religious beliefs and visions". I approach Nyambeni's oeuvre as a three-dimensional ceramic biography of his exposure to traditional Venda pottery, the Christian faith, familiarity with modern studio materials and methods, and the reception of his work in the South African ceramic art canon.

The ceramist, Kim Sacks, synthesises elements of the Danish and African ceramic traditions in her personal style of crafted vessels to express a layered identity. After gaining a diploma in textile design from the Bok Street Art School (now the School of Art and Design of the Technikon Witwatersrand), she studied at the Danish School of Craft and Design in Copenhagen. She also travelled extensively in the Middle East, North and South America and Africa to explore different ceramic practices and folk art. Her cultural roots, the encounters with foreign

material cultures and her personal aesthetic values are echoed in her vessels.

Sacks brands herself as a crafter of vessels of which Cruise (1991:30) wrote that the "vessels arise out of a European sensibility that has tapped in at a subliminal and emotionally-charged level to Africa". Cruise saw the European influence in the restraint, control and sense of design with which Sacks creates her stoneware and porcelain works on the wheel or with the pinch technique with the forms afterwards altered. The African influence emerges in the surface decoration that evokes African landscapes (Fig 93). Sgraffito scratch marks and textured surfaces are trademarks of Sacks's oeuvre. At times, she wedges different types of sand into the clay to produce specific effects during the firing. Another technique is to layer scrapings of rock onto the vessel surface which, with firing, creates the effect of a weathered African landscape. Another decorative technique is to incorporate wire into the surface that will sinter during the firing.

Sacks (2019) states that her vessels are simultaneously a reflection on her indigeneity which she describes as "being of the place" and of all that she has assimilated: "I am in tune with a drum beating in Africa". So successful is Sacks in extrapolating Africa in her merging of form and concept that the artist, poet and playwright, Matsimela Manaka, rejected a meeting with Sacks on discovery that the works were created by a white Jewish woman (Sacks 2019).

Nic Sithole, son of a Zulu father and Swazi mother, was introduced to formal ceramic studio practise in 1982 when he was employed as a studio hand at the pottery school of Helen Stein in Springs. Having mastered throwing techniques there, Sithole freelanced as thrower or held employment as jigger and jolley operator in production studios that included Liebermann Potteries and Claybright Ceramics. In 2006, he started working with Colleen Lehmkuhl (1959–2019) in her Pottery Studio in Bryanston where he was introduced to hand-built Zulu and Venda pots by Michelle Legg. Inspired by those, Sithole learned the traditional methods of coiling, smoke-firing, burnishing and waxing to develop a personal style that was more innovative than replicating. A form associated with his oeuvre is one that recalls a traditional pot but upscaled and translated as a rounded

calabash. The decorative features are usually subtle such as in his application of rows of stamped impressions that are offset with highly burnished planes.

Sithole was commissioned in 2013 to produce a vase form for the Adelaide Tambo Collection (Fig 94) that would, stated the curator Andile Magengelele, fit "a new aesthetic in post-apartheid South Africa" (Oxford 2013). It is lamentable that, despite a presence in South African ceramics that spans nearly three decades and during which time he has won numerous exhibition awards, Sithole has yet to gain attention and recognition in academic writings.

In 2015, a mere four years after graduating from the Durban University of Technology, S'bonelo Tau Luthuli presented his first solo exhibition "*Ihubu Lengabadi*/Song of the soil" that raised the bar for the revisioning of "traditional" forms and how those forms can engage with the metaphysical, ideological and material. Lynette Morris-Hale (2015:18) states that his works display a "ceramic disobedience to cultural traditions" and, for Cruise (2014:[Sp]), Luthuli "embrace[s] concepts that reach beyond the limits of the material of clay". His statement that he "produce[s] mainly Zulu ceramic pots" (Morris-Hale 2015:10) conceals that, whilst he draws on African material culture, he boldly challenges and subverts associated convention (Fig 95). The vessels reference but no longer serve utilitarian functions but have become simultaneously expressive and contemplative (Pissara 2017:7). On the one hand, the vessels reflect how Luthuli defines himself as belonging to the Nguni culture and, on the other hand, how he situates himself in the broader South African society: "My depiction draws its content from religious, political, traditional practices, heritage, customs and aspects of the dynamics of life in general" (www.thejournalist.org.za).

Luthuli reimagines "traditional" forms and alters the shape and size to make them meaningless as Zulu utilitarian vessels. The surface decoration can be a play on geometric Zulu patterns, such as exaggerated chevrons, or introduce drawings, writings and marks of a personal iconography (Cruise 2014:[Sp]). Luthuli (www.thejournalist.org) explains these surface details as a recall of ritualistic incisions and scarification on the body "preceded by an agreement, which is

spiritually anchored, between the living and the ancestors".

In another deviation from tradition, the vessels are named. The namings are provocative as in *Mis-education, We, the Black Jews, Blacked out through White Wash, Whose Culture? Story to Tell* and *Stolen Legacy*. In Cruise's (2014:[Sp]) review of the work entitled *Styles, Schools and Movements*, she identifies Luthuli's anger at the continued disdain for workers who are skilled but lack formal educational qualifications. Cruise further notes that the message is enforced by "the pot appear[ing] precariously balanced on its foot acting as visual metaphor for the imbalance of white and black experiences".

Andile Dyalvane found a vocabulary in ceramics for the narratives of his Xhosa ancestry and heritage as well as for making statements about his own identity and how and where he situates his oeuvre in the ceramics art world. His works, states Dyalvane (2019), are a by-product rather than a representation of himself, meaning that the works encapsulate and express an urban persona in the context of a past and present history. Dyalvane's oeuvre speaks of a commitment and investment in his African identity. The works translate African tradition, belief, practice and material culture in design concepts that appeal to an international audience as is evidenced by his successful exhibitions in the United States, Germany, Dubai, the Republic of China and South Africa.

Dyalvane hails from the rural community of Ngobozana in the Eastern Cape Province. He relocated to Cape Town in 1995 and the following year enrolled at Sivuyile Technical College for a National Diploma in Art and Design. A brief tenure at the Potter's Shop exposed him to the challenges and opportunities of a ceramic production studio. He continued his studies at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University where he earned a National Diploma in Ceramic Design in 2003. It was during this second stint of tertiary training that Dyalvane paid special attention to traditional indigenous material culture that includes wooden stools, storage vessels (such as milk pails and beer pots), Nguni baskets, meat platters and headrests which he translated into new forms using contemporary materials and processes (Marais 2008:8). Dyalvane's acclaimed solo exhibition in

2003 at the prestigious Irma Stern Museum in Cape Town propelled him to the forefront of contemporary South African ceramics. In partnership with Zizipho Poswa, Abongile Madabane and Mlamli Mayosi, he founded Imiso Ceramics as a design-oriented studio in Cape Town in 2005. Beside the awards won at the regional and national exhibitions of Ceramics Southern Africa, Dyalvane was the recipient of the Design Foundation Icon Award in 2015 and, in 2018, was named as the Feature Designer of the Year at 100% Design South Africa. He was selected as one of the Top 200 Young South Africans by the *Mail & Guardian* newspaper in 2011 and as the Artist of the Year by *VISI* magazine in 2009.

Ritual body scarification (*ukuqatshulwa*), as practised in Xhosa culture, is repeatedly recalled in Dyalvane's surface decorations. Gary Cotterell (2016:[Sp]) explains scarification as the "channeling [*izihlwele*] of ancestral guides to protect individuals against manifestations of negative entities/energies", to identify with a clan and to indicate status within a clan. Dyalvane references scarification with one or many linear or curved lines that cut deep into the clay body. The lines which, at times, are accented with a blood-red glaze might join up with patterned motifs or with impressions made with found objects such as bolts, nuts (Anon 2018b:50) and typewriter keys. The decorative features and vessel form combine to create "a loud silence" (Marais 2008:11). Perrill (2018:103–104) has also noted Dyalvane's use of a pellet of clay that is inserted into the cut to reference the traditional Xhosa application of healing substances to scarring.

Kerstin Pinther (2019:343) hailed Dyalvane for his "conceptual approach to design, one based on Xhosa culture and aiming to create new forms by a kind of 'metabolic process' or material morphosis". This is not a mere reference to his revisioning of African material culture but gives recognition that Dyalvane works in an urban design idiom in which tradition is balanced with contemporary expectations of aesthetics. Marais (2008:10) agrees, noting that "his pieces portray a contemporary, chic, urban expression typical of a 21st century, international studio ethos". Dyalvane (2019) describes his practise as "meditation, mediation, translation and communion". This can be explained in examining his vessel titled

uTyityilizi (Fig 96) that forms part of his *iindonga* collection. The Xhosa word "*iindonga*" refers to an area of soil erosion which South Africans know as a "donga". *Uku-tyibilika* means to slide and *tyityilizi* indicates a place to slide. It evokes Dyalvane's childhood memory of sliding down the slopes of dongas to collect clay whilst tending to his father's cattle. The form of the vessel therefore resembles a slippery slope with the neck also recalling a cattle hoof print impressed in mud. The upper part of the vessel is decorated with feint lines to evoke scarification and a multitude of letters that do not spell out any word. The letters were created using the keys of a vintage typewriter found at a flea market in an urban setting. Seen in its whole, the vessel recalls an African legacy (dark, textured earth and scarification) but also a merging with the modern and the "other" (Western technology and Roman lettering). It also, in my personal observation, positions Dyalvane as having to negotiate a firm foothold somewhere between the past (tradition) and the present (innovation).

6.6 THE ECLECTIC CERAMIST

The oeuvre of Ian Garrett reflects his relationship with traditional processes and forms that range from twentieth-century and contemporary African material culture to archetypes of European, Eastern and North American vessels. He admits to an inevitable influence of the traditional Zulu pottery tradition which was the theme for his MAFA degree in ceramics awarded by the University of KwaZulu-Natal in 1997. That research paid specific attention to the practice of Nesta Nala (1940–2005) from whom Garrett learned directly and that enabled him to integrate the knowledge and experience, specifically of construction and firing, into his own student work. Those earlier works attracted both criticism and praise. Suzette Munnik (1995:27) was of the opinion that the works were "merely a glamorized reproduction of the real thing" whilst Lindsay Scott (1997:31) noted that Garrett had modified form and decoration of traditional Zulu pots to the extent that the vessels fitted the category of the "contemplative object". Garrett rejects the perception that African ceramics are "ethnically inclusive" (2008:46) and that "outsiders are usually encouraged to participate, if only in the

largesse of perceived cultural superiority" (2008:45). The fact that he studied traditional Zulu ceramics and lives and works in an African locality is not sufficient reason to brand his work as "African". He views his participation in exhibitions in Korea, the Republic of China, the United States, Australia and Britain, where he participated as a ceramist in his own right, as evidence that his works successfully challenge assumptions about race, culture and national identity.

What must be noted is that Garrett adapts traditional technique to the urban environment in which he works and that the forms are not replicated but are significantly altered with the surface designs covering and emphasising form. The vessels are individually built by coiling and pinching. At the leather-hard stage, they are scraped down to refine the form, wetted and smoothed for decoration. Garrett's preferred tool to create textured lines is the edge of the shell of a White (sand) mussel. The selected surfaces are burnished to a lustrous shine after which the vessels are pit-fired or saggar-fired to achieve either a carbonised black or soft terracotta colours. Garret (2008:47) describes his decorating as "pattern making" for which he uses textural contrast, the interplay of positives and negatives and constructs of symmetry to build rhythmical pattern repetitions. The decorative lines can be manipulated to create visual tension or to harmonise with the form. The patterns, which Garrett (2008:47) describes as a unique "vocabulary of pattern motifs", are cryptic references to various ancient or contemporary cultures and the natural environment (Garrett 2020b). This is evidenced in the vessels he created for his *Colony* series (Fig 97) with the forms recalling pillow-shaped cuneiform tablets and the inscribed texts replaced with motifs suggesting a community of primitive life forms (Garrett 2020b).

It is my view that Garrett's oeuvre stands distinct from that of any other twenty-first century South African ceramist. No parallels exist for his eclectic referencing of multiple cultural or historic ceramic traditions or for the distinctive forms and decorations that he has developed. The references and meanings which he calls on have grown to be so subtle as to be "ambiguous, elusive and liminal" leaving

space for the viewer to find an own interpretation and meaning (Garrett 2020b). That, along with imaginative and design-driven forms, I suggest, are the true hallmarks of the transnational vessel with a South African provenance.

South African ceramics have not seen an evolutionary leap in forms and meanings but rather a steady progression in the innovation thereof in the first two decades of the new millennium. This progress can be measured by the degree of maturity, mastery and sophistication with which design, form, content and meaning are now addressed and presented. That there remains ample scope for South African ceramists to explore and develop new forms within familiar or new genres and with new materials and processes even to the point of blurring the boundaries of ceramic art, is beyond question. (There has, for example, yet to emerge South African ceramists specialising in 3-D ceramics printing or "recyclable ceramics").[5]

The ceramics art historian, Bill Rodgers ([Sa]), makes two important points in his statement that "[c]eramics … resists uniformity and is steeped in individual narrative". The first point is that ceramics invite innovation and the second is that innovation derives from the ceramist's reflection of and on context. Contemporary contexts from which narratives are derived, as I have illustrated in this chapter, are open-ended and multifarious.

[5] For example the *kulhar* teacups created by Sian Pascale from river mud. These low-fired cups are traditionally used in India to serve spiced chai tea on the go and when the tea has been drunk, the cups are thrown down to dissolve back into the soil. The project is aimed at reviving a tradition which had been recently eroded by the use of plastic. Pascale's cups are embedded with flower and vegetable seeds which will be released from the smashed clay to germinate.

CHAPTER 7
Conclusion

The central question raised in the thesis is whether the history of twentieth and twenty-first century South African ceramics, as hitherto presented, has been cognisant of the contexts that facilitated its development and the manner in which these contexts influenced the ceramists' outcomes. The allied issues are those contexts which should be considered as relevant, how individual ceramists negotiated those contexts and whether their oeuvres therefore serve as narratives of that entanglement.

I used a postcolonial theoretical framework to consider the ceramics of this era. In essence, postcolonial theory challenges the Western impact on the socio-political, economic, cultural and aesthetic features of colonised societies. I therefore positioned the rise and development of a South African ceramics history in the context of an era dominated by Nationalist politics that blatantly and purposefully promoted Western cultural values and aesthetics. I illustrated that the opportunities which arose from the mid-twentieth-century onwards for the production of pottery by the white citizenry directly relate to the advantages extended to them via an imposed socio-political dispensation and a pro-Western culture that manifested in education, training, employment, market preferences and promotional support within the art and craft world. As a result of political and cultural disregard, the earlier black ceramists had limited opportunities for professional training other than for menial tasks in places of employment. As independent ceramists and working in their own idiom, their works were relegated to the category of tourist art or treated as cabinet curiosities.

The brevity of the recorded history of most of the twentieth century South African ceramics and the omissions therein can be attributed to several factors. The printed coverage of ceramics was constrained to the publications of APSA, reviews and personality features in the press and a few books – which were admittedly not intended to be encyclopaedic or of academic calibre – that gave valuable but limited insights into the state of South African ceramics. In these, the

biographical details of ceramists seldom extended beyond the mention of their skills development and the influences reflected in their oeuvres. APSA's exhibitions were dominated by works of white ceramists and exhibition data for those, if any, were empirical and usually incomplete. The attention given to black ceramists by APSA was, at first, negligible and, outside of APSA, the academic attention was confined to treating black ceramics as ethnographic material. All of this combined to present a very selective, culturally and aesthetically biased and often shallow history within which the consideration of context was largely absent. I highlighted the role of the academic staff and students of the Centre for Visual Art at the University of KwaZulu-Natal who investigated indigenous traditional pottery practices from the 1980s onwards. The literature flowing from that greatly expanded the knowledge of indigenous pottery practices, named and introduced individual black practitioners and, albeit sparse in detail, gave insights into their contexts. In the same period, the works of these black ceramics practitioners were taken up in the mainstream collections of museums and they participated, albeit in limited fashion, in the APSA exhibitions. That attention to and recognition of indigenous pottery practices was one of the factors that prompted white ceramists to reference traditional material culture which, in turn, resulted in articles and academic writings that touched on the topic of cultural referencing. The twenty-first century has seen a small number of authors and academics critically engaging with South African ceramics but that, typically, with the focus on individual practitioners and, for lack of access and, I dare say, also a lack of interest, was only read by a small audience.

To expand the resource base, I took note of data available about ceramic works produced by sculptors in the early twentieth century (for example Sister Anna Vorster), multi-media artists (for example, Irma Stern and Dirk Meerkotter), black "crafters" (for example, Samuel Makoanyane and Hezekiel Ntuli) and those ceramists (for example, Ann Glaser) working outside or on the periphery of the ceramics fraternity who went unacknowledged in the earlier ceramics publications. In the process of collating resources and through my own research, I gathered data that enabled me to present more comprehensive biographies and

assessments of oeuvres for featured ceramists. I have also introduced additional role players whom I deem relevant in illustrating contexts.

Industrial ceramic wares aside, it is the introduction of studio pottery in the late 1950s in South Africa that is widely held to be the foundation era in the country's ceramics history. This reflects the prejudiced Western mind-set that consigned traditional pottery, which in South Africa had a much earlier presence, to the realm of craft. It is also ignorant of the ceramic artists who were active early in the twentieth century. Studio pottery dominated the ceramic output for at least three decades until the appearance of ceramic art. Because of its prominent presence and command of the public reception, I detailed the developmental history of studio pottery and assessed its impact. Esias Bosch, Hyme Rabinowitz and Bryan Haden are considered to be the pioneer studio pottery figures and their practices and oeuvres rapidly attracted a large number of followers. They, and their successor studio potters, were held to be slavish followers of the Anglo-Oriental school of studio pottery but the evidence shows that multiple and varied influences shaped their practices and oeuvres. What this style of pottery came to embody was that a practitioner could, with the use of natural materials and basic technology, produce forms to fit purpose so that the presence of the potter's hand could be read in the product and the product would be reflective of a lifestyle that shunned mass production goods. I do not contest the criticism that the studio pottery output came to be a bland repetition of forms and decoration, particularly at the hands of the abundance of "hobbyist" potters. What must be acknowledged is the success of the leading exponents of studio pottery to innovate form and decoration and, in so doing, elevate their wares from usable "craft" to collectable "art". Amongst those studio potters, I identify Bosch, Rabinowitz, Andrew Walford, Bruce Walford, Digby Hoets, the partnership of David Schlapobersky and Felicity Potter, Ian Glenny, Tim Morris and Elza Sullivan.

The second stage in the development of South African ceramics was the impetus to follow the lead set earlier in the USA and Britain to explore alternative materials, forms and decorations in a move away from studio pottery towards

ceramic art. The earliest documented South African exponents included Helen Martins, Thelma Marcusson, Marietjie van der Merwe and Hannatjie van der Wat. From the 1970s onwards, the pace in experimenting with ceramic art was set by the students of the ceramics departments at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and the Technikon Witwatersrand. What emerged were works, particularly in vessel forms, that not only challenged convention but confronted long-held considerations of aesthetics and values. The early ceramic art movement did not escape criticism. It was rejected by the "traditionalists" as parodies of pottery and lambasted from within its own support group for lacking in mastery of technique and finish in presentation. It did, however, liberate not only form and decoration but created the means for a new generation of ceramists to communicate via their works, their take on contemporary society and their issues of concern.

The thesis advances education and training as an important context for both the developmental history of South African ceramics and for the resultant expressions thereof. The earlier documented histories paid scant attention to the role players in education and training as well as to how they influenced ceramic outcomes. As regards the education for much of the twentieth century for black South African school pupils, I cited the writings of Elizabeth Perrill in which it clearly emerges that ceramics was purposefully taught as a craft in which indigenous material culture was referenced even to the point of advancing primitivism. I also cited Daniel Magaziner whose research addressed "art" training for black teachers in the same era that also promoted ceramics as a craft. Magaziner's writing points to the dismal lack of materials and technology for their training. Training in the production of Western-style ceramics was available for blacks employed by production potteries and, to a lesser extent, by studio potteries. A "free expression" in ceramics was encouraged at the ELC Art and Craft Centre at Rorke's Drift but I have cited evidence that the outcomes were guided towards meeting market expectations for a blend of indigenous and Scandinavian Modern aesthetics. Co-operatives and community art centres also offered training in ceramics for blacks. Though most certainly affected by restrictive government measures, the co-operatives and community art centres were not dictated to as

regards the outcomes. The contributions in the teaching of ceramics by Ntate Molelekoa Simon Masilo at the Katlehong Art Centre, by Ephraim Ziqubu and Bhekisane Manyoni at the Alexandra Art Centre and by Helen Sebedi who taught at both centres, have yet to be fully documented and assessed. All but cursory recognition has been given to Meshack Masuku who progressed from sweeping a ceramics studio to attaining a National Diploma (Ceramic Design) and a B.Tech (Ceramic Design) at Port Elizabeth Technikon and afterwards taught ceramics at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. The opportunities and support mechanisms available to blacks who practised ceramics in the twentieth century paled in comparison to what could be accessed by the white community. Whites had the means to attend any of a multitude of private pottery schools, enrol at technikons and universities and serve apprenticeships at production potteries or studio potteries. A number of those white apprentices developed into leading figures in South African ceramics and amongst them I count Chris Green, David Walters, Kim Sacks, Andrew Walford and Bruce Walford. The playing field for training at tertiary level was only levelled in the early 1990s when all the tertiary institutions were opened to all of the population groups. Of all the tertiary institutions offering training in ceramics in the late twentieth century, only seven continue to do so in the twenty-first century and their futures are not secure. I foresee that the co-operatives will progressively grow to be the principal training facilities in ceramics and will produce a new generation of free-thinking ceramists. Two examples of these co-operatives are Imiso Ceramics (founded by Zizipho Poswa, Abongile Madabane, Mlamli Mayosi and Andile Dyalvane) and Siyabonga Ceramics (founded by Madoda Fani, Siyabonga Fani and Chuma Maweni).

I have positioned the “traditional pottery” of South Africa’s indigenous black cultural groups as an intrinsic feature of the history of South African ceramics and emphasised that “traditional” does not denote that they are trapped in an endless repeat of forms, values and meanings. Their works bear evidence of an agency to reference a cultural heritage whilst borrowing from Western forms and design elements, using non-traditional materials and processes, conveying meaning and

social commentary through their works, claiming identification as the makers of works and directly engaging with the collector market. Closely aligned to this are ceramic works conveniently dismissed as “tourist art” and “airport art” for being mass-produced and made available outside of the formal art world. The roles of parties who have subtly or purposefully directed these ceramists to produce works that would appeal to the market are usually considered as benign and limited rather than critiques in more specific terms of cultural brokerage. I have questioned this in my discussion of the oeuvres of black ceramists where such cultural brokerage can be noted in various nuances.

Applying a postcolonial perspective, I found parallels in African Modernism for the manner in which South African ceramists sought to contest and establish identity and the means with which they attempted that. These parallels with African Modernism are admittedly not synchronous or exact. African Modernism gained traction in postcolonial African countries in the 1960s which was the time of the founding era of South African studio pottery during which ceramists were more intent on mastering materials, techniques and processes rather than considerations of identity or commentary. African Modernism was a means to contest the Western perception and positioning of African art by claiming and expressing postcolonial identities. This was achieved by abandoning or altering convention, referencing cultures other than the own and utilising materials and processes associated with non-African art or, in short, to resort to hybridity in which the artist filtered and communicated relevance. In this process, the African Modernist challenged binaries, interrogated colonial and postcolonial histories and delivered socio-political commentaries. Recognition of their artworks did not have to hinge on them being African or from narrating the “other” and the “exotic” of Africa. The various outcomes of African Modernism were initiated by formal and informal artist movements against the background of specific postcolonial circumstances but also the shared political and religious influences. Ceramics, usually produced in the oeuvres of African mixed-media artists, were addressed in the writings of the African modernist art historians. Whilst those art historians gave recognition to black South African modernist artists, none was

given to South African ceramists whose oeuvres must be considered as falling in the ambit of Modernism. This absence cannot be excused on the grounds that South Africa had yet to achieve a postcolonial status or because there was not yet a clearly identifiable group of modernists amongst South Africa's ceramists.

The matter of interrogating and expressing identity through ceramics in South Africa has hitherto only been examined in the biographies and oeuvres of selected individual ceramists (amongst them the Nesta Nala dynasty, Andile Dyalvane, Clive Sithole, Bonnie Ntshalintshali, Ian Garrett, Juliet Armstrong and Nicolene Swanepoel) for which their personal and very specific contexts were taken into account. I expanded on this by considering a broader range of the outcomes of South African ceramists in which they convey via aesthetics and content their "fit" in a multi-cultural society with distinctive socio-political challenges. A key feature of these works is the use of hybridity which, at first, was little more than a sampling of elements of indigenous and African material culture but later absorbed and reflected the values and meanings thereof. The earlier examples were criticised for being imitative but the ceramists were never considered to be guilty of cultural appropriation. Blatant cultural appropriation in the form of skewed presentations of indigenous cultures and lifestyles was evidenced in twentieth century South African production pottery but that has surprisingly not diminished their appeal for collectors and prices of those works continue to increase.

The thesis presents case studies of South African ceramists who, in the overlapping era, were already challenging Western modes and expectations of ceramic expressions and inherent in that were claiming postcolonial identities. Those expressions ranged from innocuous decorative elements depicting familiar environments to both subtle and pronounced socio-political commentary that was not suggested but embedded in the forms. In the twenty-first century, such expressions progressively shifted from being introspective to being perceptive of universal issues with ceramists fashioning their own narratives and communicating those via their distinctive aesthetics. I presented examples of

contemporary South African ceramists who reflect a sense of place and even "African-eity" in similes and metaphors in their oeuvres. I argued that this is not superficial or for the sake of collector appeal but flows from a bona fide familiarity and understanding of African cultures and the African ethos that permits interpretation and results in an expansion of the visual vocabulary.

It is because of the preponderance of white practitioners of ceramics and their firm presence in the art world in the later-twentieth century that more data about their engagement with identity is known. I have cited examples of twentieth-century white ceramists not only referencing South Africa's indigenous cultures but also African cultures with some ceramists having had the benefit of direct exposure to the latter. There can be no doubt that the twentieth century's white ceramists' education and training, their long-standing engagement with the art world, access to reference sources and, generally speaking, their more favourable financial standing contributed to their ceramic endeavours. One significant factor that added urgency to their exploration of identity was the challenge from 1990 onwards when South Africa was transitioning towards democracy, to position themselves and their oeuvres in that rapidly changing socio-political environment.

I do not see a continuation of the earlier angst-driven search to define and convey identity in twenty-first century South African ceramics. It is as though ceramists have settled into the "new South Africa" and shifted from expressions of "me and my world" to "me in the world". I read this in works that address universal issues such as human rights, population growth, political suppression, violence against women, gender discrimination and environmental concerns. Where the ceramists do reference indigenous culture, it is typically so subtle and transformed to the point of being cryptic so that only the informed viewer will be able to establish a direct link. These works can no longer be measured against their embracement of hybridity but must be considered in terms of being transcultural or even transnational. I posit that it is not the market demand for ceramic works that "speak of Africa" but an intimate familiarity with indigenous culture, the landscape and ethos of Africa that enable the twenty-first century ceramists to

create works that are recognisably of Africa. There is no artifice in these works. This is clearly evident in the oeuvres of Andile Dyalvane, Madoda Fani, Clive Sithole, Nic Sithole, Kim Sacks, Michelle Legg, Drury Brandt, Clementina van der Walt and S'bonelo Tau Luthuli. There are, admittedly, ceramic studios that have no inhibitions in pandering to the demand for the "African exotic" and, in doing so, create lampoons of Africa and its cultures.

I hold the view that the twenty-first century South African ceramists have attained a degree of mastery and maturity with which they not only push the boundaries of materials and technology but are also revisioning design and aesthetics. Materials and processes are no longer held to be sacred but that does not imply evidence of carelessness in the quality of craftsmanship. The classic genres of utilitarian wares, decorative wares and ceramic art have become elastic, even crossing over, and within those arise numerous variations of form and expression. One of the most exciting developments in South African ceramics is the engagement with installation art. An installation is not a mere physical space but a mental space in which the design, arrangement and presentation of the ceramics (or multi-media works incorporating ceramics) assume the qualities of a metaphor or a narrative. The example for this was set by Wilma Cruise, Hennie Meyer and Eugene Hön.

In this study, I have expanded the knowledge base of role players who contributed to the development of South African ceramics in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and, more importantly, presented the contexts within which their oeuvres developed. I emphasised that ceramic works, when considered only for their aesthetic values, depreciate in relevance when the context of their making is not taken into account. Knowledge and understanding of context transforms the ceramic work from being a mere object measurable by its aesthetics only to being a subject that presents as a narrative of entanglement of the ceramist with circumstances, influences and reception.

The contextual history of South African ceramics of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, as I have presented it in this thesis, must not be considered as conclusive. I have pointed out some of the alterities to the recorded history and

trust that it will trigger other researchers to add to the critical enquiry of South African ceramics.

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