

ALL FIRED UP!

Art Notes

Marianne Meijer



AN EXHIBITION curated by Jenny Stretton, director of the Durban Art Gallery's permanent collection, is now on show at the gallery, in the Durban City Hall.

Titled *All Fired Up: Conversations Between Kiln and Collection*, the display's aim is to rekindle public interest in ceramics.

Having long outgrown the title "pottery", contemporary ceramic art is a fusion of art and science, as its practitioners devise ever more innovative ways to formulate new clays.

Stretton explains that the new exhibition is a conversation between kiln and collection, creating a platform for the ceramacists. Other than being approached to show their own work, each artist was asked to make a selection of works that inspired them in the Durban Art Gallery's permanent collection, which are shown alongside their own work.

The chosen ceramic artists are either lecturers at the University of Kwazulu-Natal in Pietermaritzburg and The University of Technology in Durban, or recently graduated students.

Visitors to the exhibition have expressed great admiration for the works, which are on show in the circular gallery, which always has a special atmosphere.

Participating artists are Juliet Armstrong, Kim Bagley, Ian Calder, Astrid Dahl, Carla da Cruz, Leanne Frisinger, Raksh Gobardan, Carol Hayward Fell, Isaac Nkosinathi Khanyile, Fahmeeda Omar, Mhairi Pattenden, Clive Sithole, Georg Hendrik Stroebe, Sharon Weaving and Martha Zettler.

Fantastic

Stretton should be congratulated, as seldom has the Durban Art Gallery shown such a fantastic ceramic exhibition. The focus is on the beauty of the work – functionality did not count in this case.

It is Stretton's belief that ceramics have a special role to play "because ceramic art is three-dimensional and has more claim to the immediate dynamics of society than other visual art forms: it intrudes, demands space – almost as people do, and can alter its form as one circles it".

She adds: "South Africa is at a point in its post-liberation history at which the political and social scummage has thrown out ideas, scenaria and ready-made credos. What we need are vessels to contain them and this exhibition has options aplenty."

The exhibition is accompanied by a book of the same title, containing several interesting essays by Elizabeth Perrill, Tony Starkey, Ian Calder, Juliette Leeb-du Toit, Juliette Armstrong and Valerie Leigh – all noted in the ceramic/art world.

It was a brilliant idea from Stretton to ask the ceramacist to select their favourite works in the Durban Art Gallery collection, which gives all viewers a chance to see these excellent ceramic

A special word of thanks is due to previous Durban Art Gallery directors Jill Addleson and Carol Brown, who selected most of the



works now in the permanent collection.

Another highlight, for me, in the publication *All Fired Up*, is an article by Starkey which sets out the history of ceramics at the

Durban University of Technology with some photos and noted names dating from 1914 to today.

Take some time and have a good look at the best show of ceramic art Durban has seen in years!

Clockwise from above left:

Nathi Khanyile's *Izimpende*.

Astrid Dahl's *Winter Aconite*.

Carol Hayward Fell's *Black Stallion with His Dog*.

Detail from a very imaginative work by John Nowers.

Bone china and porcelain by Martha Zettler.

A work by Hendrik Stroebe.

