

SPECIALIST

Andile in the studio at the Leach Pottery in St Ives, where he has made a series of large-scale stoneware vessels using the local Cornish clay. Three of them are on display at PAD London this year

ANDILE DYALVANE

TOM MORRIS meets the ceramic artist during his residency at Bernard Leach's workshop in St Ives, where he has continued to draw upon his Xhosa heritage while also taking inspiration from the Cornish landscape and the tradition of British studio pottery

PHOTOGRAPHS DEAN HEARNE



FROM TOP Andile in the first stage of the coiling process. During his residency, he has been using Leach Pottery stoneware clay – it is rich in iron, which gives it a red colour. He uses a piece of wood collected in the river next to the studio to create texture on his pieces, encouraging it to splinter to enhance the surface



I take these opportunities to experiment and explore new things. I like to find out what the environment has for me,' says the South African ceramic artist Andile Dyalvane. He is sitting in the studio at Leach Pottery, the St Ives workshop established by master potter Bernard Leach in 1920. As he nears the end of a two-month residency, Andile is reflecting on the body of work he has created here, with the din of seagulls and the patter of drizzle outside. 'It's always good to be away from your day-to-day base.'

A deep involvement with cultural context and vernacular ceramic traditions has underpinned Andile's career. With his stoneware vessels, which range from 30 centimetres to 1.3 metres tall, he draws upon his Xhosa heritage and tells all manner of narratives. They are symbols imbued with meaning.

These new works produced at Leach Pottery are no different: their crude textures are a homage to the dongas (washed-out ravines) in which Andile used to play as a child in the Eastern Cape. When the rains came, muddy gutters were created 'where we would play as boys, throwing the clay at each other'. The ceramic artist was born in Ngobozana, a village near Qobo-Qobo, and moved to Cape Town when he was 18 to attend art college. He then studied ceramic design at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University before co-founding a studio, Imiso Ceramics, with Zizipho Poswa in 2006. He has completed a number of residencies and likes to bring new narratives and techniques to his work.

In addition to working with the tenmoko and shino glazes typically used at the Leach Pottery, Andile has made these pots out of Cornish clay. 'For the first few coils, I had to get my fingertips to move in a different way,' he says. 'I usually take clay out of the bag for a couple of minutes to dry it before I use it. Here, it takes longer because of the humidity – it rains a lot.'

Leach's pottery has also provided inspiration in other ways: 'Next to the studio is a river, where they say all the seconds were thrown in Leach's day. I attempted to find some of the shards to embed them in the clay.' Andile used these and other objects to 'infuse my works with the energy of the past'.

This fusion of cultures has gone beyond pottery. During his residency, Andile has gathered other potters to participate in the ritual of iCamagu. It involves song, dance and the burning of herbs to cleanse the space in a practice of gratitude.

'It goes beyond ceramics: it's a spiritual collaboration,' says Trevyn McGowan, co-founder of Southern Guild gallery in Cape Town. 'South African designers are hand-led and narrative-rich, working with intimate stories and emotions.' Andile has collaborated with Southern Guild for a decade. This month, the gallery is showing three of his new pieces during its debut at the PAD London fair in Berkeley Square, W1. 'Andile immerses himself completely in a philosophical idea for a body of work,' says Trevyn. 'Everything is produced in this zone, like an athlete.'

Andile's rural childhood inspired his first solo show at Southern Guild in 2017. A collection shown at Friedman Benda in New York the previous year was entitled *Camagu*, after the gratitude ritual he practises. These pieces at PAD mark a fresh chapter for an artist so adept at storytelling. 'I put myself in my work,' he says. 'My work evolves constantly because I evolve constantly' □

Southern Guild: southernguild.co.za

PAD London runs from September 30 to October 6: pad-fairs.com