



Zulu Artists to Exhibit World Renowned Ardmore Ceramic Art at South Africa House, London - 9-12 June 2009

For immediate release - Ardmore Ceramic Art, one of South Africa's greatest creative success stories, will be exhibiting their latest work from the studios in KwaZulu-Natal at South Africa House on Trafalgar Square, London, from the 9th to the 12th of June 2009. This exhibition features more than 150 recent and exciting pieces created by Ardmore's leading artists such as Mickey Chonco, Punch Shabalala, Sabelo Khosa, Jabu Nene, Wiseman Nxumalo and Somandla Ntshalintshali.

Ardmore is South Africa's première ceramic studio. Most of the 80 artists live in the rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal seeped in tradition, where music, song and dance prevail. After two successful London sales held in 2004 and 2007, Christie's labelled Ardmore "a modern day collectable". Collectors around the world love Ardmore's distinctive style – a fusion of African, Western and Eastern form and design embellished with sculptural African fauna and flora and painted in a kaleidoscope of colour.

Ardmore's talented artists create with passion and freedom and many have intuitively found their own style. The decorative collectibles have an elegant charm as has the work of the realists who are inspired by nature. The exotic naturalists add an artistic fantasy to their painting. Then, there are the free spirits whose sculpture and painting is expressive of their imagination and is without inhibition or apology. Lastly, the 'Storytellers' incorporate the human figure as they sculpt and paint Zulu cultural and social events.

A percentage of Ardmore sales is contributed to The Excellence Fund, a non-profit organization that also receives donations from many people worldwide. The Excellence Fund assists the artists to advance their education and skills training, and provides health care. In the current economic situation marked by rising unemployment and health care costs, the role of the Excellence Fund is critically important.

The artists are proud of their achievements and are known amongst their community as the "isgwili" (fortunate ones).



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Important pieces from the Exhibition:



Giraffe Handled Urn, Sculpted by Sabelo Khosa, Painted by Punch Shabalala, h: ?cm

Sabelo Khosa is one of Ardmore's leading throwers and sculptors. This elegant Giraffe handled urn, shows exceptional form and design and has been exquisitely painted by founder painter, Punch Shabalala. Punch's painting style has a somewhat Eastern feel and her work is labelled "Decorative Collectable". Punch shows infinity patience with intricate decoration, sometimes filling her subject matter with bead and basket-like pattern. Punch is the most prolific Ardmore Triple A winner for excellence and quality.



Chicken Candlesticks, Sculpted by Betty Ndaba, painted by Virginia Xaba, h:39 cm.

Virginia Xaba's exceptional drawing and painting skills won her the Nivea Young Artist Award in 2008. Her work relies on following nature's patterns while she brings both depth and movement to her art through delicate shading and detail of fur, feather and scale. Betty Ndaba, an up-and-coming sculptor, made these charming rooster candlesticks, which were painted by Virginia.



Locust Candlesticks, Sculpted by Sfiso Mvelase, Painted by Roux Gwala, h:42cm

Sfiso Mvelase is one of Ardmore's top satirical and invertebrate sculptors. In these candlesticks, he has captured the true characteristics of locusts - their bulging eyes and segmented abdomens. Roux Gwala compliments the sculpture with realistic colour and he portrays the translucency of the wings with finely detailed painting.



Bird Vase, Sculpted by Somandla Ntshalintshali, painted by Winnie Nene, h:50cm

This whimsical and elegant vase is reminiscent of European form and yet Somandla Ntshalintshali expressively brings it to life with birds about to burst into flight off branchlike handles. Winnie Nene has painted this vase with sensitivity and understanding using celebratory colours.

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Notes to Editors:

Exhibition Details:

South African High Commission
South Africa House
Trafalgar Square
London WC2N 5DP

Tuesday 9th June: 11am – 5pm
Wednesday 10th June: 12 noon – 6pm
Thursday 11th June: 12 noon – 6pm
Friday 12th June: 12 noon – 6pm

History of Ardmore:

In 1985, Fée Halsted started teaching her first student, Bonnie Ntshalintshali, on the Ardmore farm in the Champagne Valley of the KwaZulu Natal Drakensberg. Five years later, in 1990, Bonnie and Fée jointly won the prestigious Standard Bank Young Artist Award. They had broken boundaries in the expressive use of clay in South Africa and were the first ceramicists in a collaborative effort to win the award. In 1993 Work by Bonnie Ntshalintshali was exhibited at the Venice Biennial.

News of their success spread fast and many young women started coming to Ardmore to ask if they, too, could learn how to make and paint clay. This was of great help as, while Fée and Bonnie had a year-long preparation for the Standard Bank exhibition in Grahamstown, they needed to keep their shelves filled with saleable ceramics. Since then, Fée has established a second studio – now at Caversham in the Natal Midlands – and has trained, mentored and inspired over 100 artists, many of whom have become internationally recognised.

About the Excellence Fund

The Ardmore Excellence Fund is a Section 21 Company that was established to support the Ardmore artist community. Six percent of all sales are transferred directly into this not-for-profit Fund that is used to:

- Empower artists by increasing the opportunity for artistic training and development of management, marketing and leadership skills.
- Assist with health care and help artists with the frequent calls made on them by their extended families.
- Operate and continue with the development of the Bonnie Ntshalintshali Museum which served both as a teaching venue for students and as an attraction for tourists and collectors.