

2021 Internship Programme - Visit to Potters Work, Clay Hands and Macassar Pottery.
By Joan Adams July 2021

We were lucky to spend an afternoon being transported into the ceramic worlds of our three participating studios and their respective interns. Jenny and I set off on a stormy Cape Town afternoon to visit the studios of Chris Silverstone, owner at Potterswork and Natasha Viljoen, owner and teacher at Clay Hands, and on another occasion to Macassar Pottery, to see how their respective interns were getting on.



Our first stop was Potterswork, a production studio in Capricorn Business Park. Potterswork currently has a creative team of 25 consisting of fettlers, kiln specialists, mould-makers, slip-casters and artists, all from the surrounding communities. They all work together to produce beautiful hand-made and hand-painted products.

This is where Millisa Minnis is currently doing her internship, originally from Parkwood. After matriculating from high school, Melissa worked in many different aspects of the service industry but never quite found a job where she felt she belonged.

In her new environment you just can't help but get the feeling that she has found her niche. Surrounded by a stable of artists and the creative buzz of a very organised studio, she seems to be totally at home and in charge. From airbrushing to slip casting, she is getting to grips with all the different aspects of a production business. We feel she is very lucky to be under the experienced eye of the team at Potterswork where many well-known South African ceramist found their beginnings - Lisa Ringwood, Tiffany Wallace and Willemien de Villiers followed later by Andile Dylvane, Madoda Fani and Theo Ntunwana, now prominent ceramicists in their own right. We can't wait to see what happens, watch this space... [Update (November 2021) Millisa now has a full time job with Potterswork!]





Visit to Clay Hands

Next stop on our journey was Clay Hands, a teaching and production studio, situated in the beautiful historic building that once was the Altona hotel in Woodstock, where we visited owner Natasha Viljoen and her intern Valeria Otero.

Natasha, a former graphic designer, is a third-generation potter and literally grew up in her mother's pottery studio. Following in the footsteps of her late grandmother, Valerie and mother, Lissa Classens.

She opened the Clay Hands studio in April 2018 after years of working and training at Earth Play Studio. Natasha is dedicated to holding, growing and maintaining the Clay Hands space and is deeply invested in supporting the innate creativity in others through offering studio space for people to learn to work with clay.

Born in South Africa, Valeria currently hails from Table View, but spent most of her formative years in Argentina. She returned to South Africa to finish school at Fairmount High School where she studied art as a subject. Throughout her life she has always been drawn towards a creative career, studying interior decorating and make up for film and television as well as ceramics. She has a quiet confidence about her which resonates with the studio she currently finds herself in. She is definitely in the right place and Natasha is the perfect teacher to help her build on her confidence to develop her skills and find her creative path.

Teaching ceramics requires empathy and reassurance besides technical skills. Valeria has these qualities so we look forward to seeing what develops between this duo. [Update (November 2021) Valeria has been hired as Studio Manager at Clay Hands starting 2022!]



Visit to Macassar

The last trip took Jenny and I to Macassar, situated off the N2, close to Strand and Somerset West. Macassar Pottery was started in 2012, as a transformative business to upskill and employ unschooled youth who live in the community.

This pottery business offers on-the-job training to help young people become employable and productive citizens. The challenges faced post COVID has led to the development of new products, producing a range for local retailers.

Johan de Meyer, founder of the pottery, was gracious enough to offer his studio as our third participating studio so this is where Talia Panther started her journey as our final intern.



Talia, originally from Pretoria, matriculated from Glen High School and then studied at the University of Pretoria, graduating with a BA/LLB.

Talia's love of clay started with pottery classes and has been so strong that she made the decision to change the path of her career and pursue the art of ceramics.

The challenges faced during COVID have led to a change in the order of business at Macassar Pottery but fortunately Johan has managed to secure some large orders from local South African retail chains. Unfortunately for Talia this has meant that she has started at a time when the production is at full capacity and so this has made it very difficult to accommodate the learning process. Sadly this has left her feeling rather frustrated.

Although Johan had the best intentions, the pandemic had other ideas and so we will go back to the drawing board and find a better fit for her to continue her journey.

We really look forward to working with Johan on another occasion as I am sure we will have more opportunities to do so in the future. Talia however will continue her creative journey in another studio.

We wish all three our interns and their respective studios the best of luck going forward .

