

# Son of African



Africasso Thabo Vase,  
Andile Dyalvane 2014

# Soil



Non Vessel Exclusive Collection Andile Dyalvane

Award winning ceramic artist Andile Dyalvane draws upon a rich palette of African tradition, balancing artistry, entrepreneurship and soul. Here, he talks *Creative Feel* through some of his collections and other projects.

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"Son of African Soil" *Creative Feel*, May 2015.

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**Creative Feel:** Would you describe yourself as an 'African' artist?

**Andile Dyalvane:** Yes, my heritage, expressions, upbringing and birth are factually rooted in the African, Xhosa culture and traditions. The sources of my work are drawn from those very real African highlights in my living, from African artefacts, ancient practiced traditions and fractal patterned messages, to who was inspired by some of those aesthetics, and relaying the African elements in what I create.

**CF: Your latest collection...**

**AD:** ...is a very spiritual collection called the Non-Vessel Collection. The initial idea was to create sculptural works from the imagery and motifs from the five-year-old 'Views from the Studio' Collection. This was inspired by the current gentrified Woodstock skyline and harbour dockyards, with juxtapositions of residential halved industrial scabs – as observed from where the gallery and studio is based. (Imiso ceramics, of which Dyalvane is a founder, is based at the Biscuit Mill in Cape Town).

The Non-Vessels collection was first explored as works made tangible within a residency period in the New Yinnge District, Taiwan, Taipei (*Terra Nova Exhibition*) in April 2014. It is inspired by the idea that vessel forms need not be represented as functional only, but rather as sculptural gestures, with form as its focus. The idea stretches further, suggesting the Non-Vessel contents be left up to the imagination... perhaps time is captured in the making and sealing of each piece, or perhaps part of the essence of the kiln gods (ancestors), who blessed the clay firing of these pieces, remains willingly present inside...

Imaginings of the contents could be as far-fetched as individuals wish for them to be.

For me, this is an unlearning of the expected vessels, into the freedoms of spirituality. In a time where searching for an African identity through design has highlighted a need to return to African traditions, beliefs and practice, to translate them into futuristic design concepts that can be appreciated, transmitting those core African ideals, values, views and principles to the next generation(s).

**CF:** Spirituality seems to be an important value in your work...

**AD:** Spirituality is what connects me to clarity; when seeing becomes a partnership between my source, ancestors and their god relations and myself. The ability to give over to not knowing, but trusting what my work will become, and practicing by setting it free is an everyday lesson. Those who view my work more often than not feel the connection through design or knowledge that every piece is handmade detail by defining detail.



Andile Dyalvane

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Non Vessel Collection, Show Stopper by Andile Dyalvane 2014



Non Vessel Exclusive Collection White, Andile Dyalvane

**CF:** What ideas informed the ‘Scarified’ and ‘Africasso’ collections?

**AD:** The Scarified Collection touches on the ancient tradition of body scarification still practiced today, pun intended. Africa is filled with textures and feeling in the crafting of masks, cloth, eating utensils, musical instruments and building methods. This collection highlights a practice that’s communicative purpose had its reasons – spiritual, clan identification, beautification, medicinal and tribal status.

The flesh of my clay is scarified with one or many linear curved designs that join with patterned motifs applied with found objects such as bolts and nuts picked up in the Woodstock area.

The collection gives a sense that signifies the merging of old traditions into new environments.

The Africasso Collection took flight with a request to take part in the *Picasso in Africa* Standard Bank national exhibition in 2006 at the Iziko National Gallery of Art in Cape Town. I had been sketching with pastel chalks and charcoal on paper, and this opportunity gave the platform to showcase my work on ceramics. The link between Picasso and myself is that he was inspired by African figures and

artefacts during the cubism era and apart from drawings, also created works in ceramics in Valauris, France. This collection brings those similarities to light, that Africa was and is a source of inspiration for great and influential works.

**CF:** Did the Taipei residency impact on your way of working, the subject matter, and if so, how?

**AD:** Before heading to Taipei’s Yinnge district to work at the New Taipei Yinnge Ceramic Museum in April 2014, I had been playing with the idea of simplifying the Views Collection imagery even further. The sharp angles and patterns of cranes mixed with the structural curves of the spaghetti highway fly-overs tempted me to explore further, while the bare structural skeletons of buildings dilapidated in surgery in Woodstock, enticed me to act on my interests and appreciation for architecture.

The invitation from Wendy Gers, curator of the museums 2014 Ceramic International Biennale provided a platform for exploring the relation between ancient medium and current globalization and how a universal language through design is created with common cultural links. I found the very structural red bridges and contrasting lush green natural environment in Taipei



Scarified Medium Once, Off Vessel



Views From the Studio Collection, Andile Dyalvane 2013

intriguingly familiar – where I come from in rural Eastern Cape mixed with where I live in Cape Town. The thick smog, humidity and masked scooter drivers (masks and outfits matching to look fashionable) along with the promotion of positive communal attitudes, musical refuse trucks and happy funeral tents, were informative of a culture of optimism which encourages greater possibilities. The ceramic gardens showcased the spirit of play and learning very well, which gave comfort for exploring what I had in mind.

**CF:** You're currently being exhibited as a part of an exhibition of leading African design in Germany...

**AD:** Southern Guild Foundation for the past seven years has internationally hosted and continues to promote works by a selection of South African designers. I am one of them. This presented the opportunity to travel under the gallery umbrella to Basel, Switzerland to showcase at the Design Miami, Basel design fair in 2014. Vitra House noted my 'Docks Table' there, and commissioned it for this year's Africa design focused exhibition.

The 'Docks Table' was inspired by the Views from the Studio Collection, yet with a touch of personal history in

that my father, as a migrant worker from the Eastern Cape, worked at Globe International (no longer exists) as a welder in those very dock yards, an aspect of my upbringing that had him absent for most of my younger life, experiencing his presence only at Christmas time.

**CF:** What projects do you have coming up?

**AD:** An exploration in collaboration with Gone Rural of Swaziland and Swazi Ceramics this April, launching a collection of conceptual and functional works at the end of May appropriately during House of Fire's Bushfire festival in Swaziland, which will then go on to 100% Design JHB in August. June is Design Miami in Basel, Switzerland showcasing an exclusive retake on the Dock Table. July Santa Fé, New Mexico for the launch of a new narrative expansive Leather Collection inspired by all current collections. July-August sees a workshop and exhibition in California at the Palo Alto Art Centre and September to October I am attending a residency at the Wu Xing Design Studio in Taipei, Taiwan which allows me to explore my sketch book ideas.

Participating in the Imbadu Collective is another passion, making 'paying it forward' real through design **CF**