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Bearing fruit in Big Apple

Eastern Cape artist gets major international break

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AS a small boy, he would dig up the clay found in the river banks in Ngobozana Village unaware that his hands were moulding more than childish sculptures – they were building a career that would take him to New York and a solo exhibition at a top gallery.

Andile Dyalvane, who grew up playing in rivers, herding cattle and hunting in Qoboqobo, near Stutterheim, has now joined an exclusive list of 15 international artists – the only African – to be represented by the Friedman Benda gallery.

His exhibition, *Camagu*, Xhosa for “I see and hear with gratitude”, opened last week.

The affable artist speaks easily about his journey from being a village boy to becoming an artist known around the world, explaining that he always loved art but entered the field of ceramics almost accidentally.

“I could draw and had a passion for it, but I did not really know that much about art,” the 37-year-old, who after school embarked on a journey to find what form of art suited him best, said.

Once introduced to clay, he said: “Ceramics became the obvious choice – it came naturally and reminded me of the time I played with clay at the river.”

From there, a career, which has seen Dyalvane exhibit at various South African galleries and attend many international design indabas, was born.

The New York exhibition, which opened Thursday, is the highlight.

“Four years ago, my wife and I uttered the words, ‘I see a solo exhibition in New York’, and we left it at that . . . and now we are here,” Dyalvane said.

The exhibition was facilitated by Southern Guild, which represents Dyalvane on various inter-

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national platforms.

Dyalvane said the Friedman Benda gallery had been head-hunting in Africa for people considered to be the best representatives of design on the continent – and chose him.

To his delight, sketches he had not had the means to turn into physical pieces caught the attention of art scouts.

“They wanted ideas that pushed boundaries. They saw ideas I had never realised.”

Of the show, Dyalvane said he hoped it would “bring an awareness of what African designers can do. We are unique and we need to share our people’s stories”.

Owner of the Imiso Ceramics Gallery in Woodstock, Cape Town, Dyalvane studied at a number of South African institutions, including NMMU’s predecessor, the Port Elizabeth Technikon.

Friedman Benda’s website describes Dyalvane’s exhibition as “populated by intricately shaped open and closed vessels, hanging and standing lamps, shelves, and screens, all of which bear incisions, stampings, and other marks.”

“Inspired by ancestral practices and motifs, the incised symbols that detail each work act as homage to the significance of scarification rituals in the Xhosa culture.”

“Traces of these traditions appear in his ceramic forms, where he uses bolts and typewriter keys found in markets to create elaborate surface impressions.”



BRIGHT FUTURE: Andile Dyalvane and one of his large-scale works