

# The agency, references and contexts in the oeuvre of the ceramist Henriette Ngako (1943-2021)

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## ABSTRACT

A significant part of the South African ceramic art history is not the outcome of original scholarly research and writing but, for lack of primary sources, derived from published material in craft publications, the press, and books of public interest. The latter texts typically reflect personal observations rather than citing and contextualising explanatory statements by the ceramists. In this absence of the ceramists' own voices, observations by others tend to assume the status of being definitive of the ceramist's output. This article illustrates the hackneyed earlier observations on the life and oeuvre of the ceramist Henriette Ngako (1943-2021) who was of the Batswana cultural group. Ngako created compositions of stacked, fanciful human and animal forms. Calling on new research findings, some of the claimed influences at play in Ngako's oeuvre are questioned whilst others are contextualised. The article asserts that Ngako exercised agency in breaking with the Batswana cultural tradition of pottery to create novel forms that were unlike any works in the oeuvres of her peers and for which she captured the attention of collectors and gallerists.

**Keywords:** Henriette Ngako, ceramics, Batswana cultural pottery tradition, revisioned aesthetics, stacked figure compositions, patronage.

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# Introduction

With a few exceptions pertaining to individual studio pottery and ceramic art practitioners, the documented history of twentieth century South African ceramics tends to be abbreviated overviews of praxes and oeuvres. Texts were mostly written for craft publications,<sup>1</sup> as art reviews for the press, features for lifestyle magazines, and books for public interest.<sup>2</sup> Whilst the authors of texts might well have conducted in-depth interviews with the ceramic practitioners, their purview would not have been to gather exhaustive data, contextualise the information they gleaned, or present the information as scholarly findings. Transcriptions of those interviews have also not been preserved to allow for a re-examination of data. The few scholarly enquiries related to twentieth century South African ceramics, by contrast, present sound insights but usually with the focus on individual practitioners.<sup>3</sup> Two scholarly texts (Watt 2017; Watt 2020) establish an evolutionary history and a contextual history without the intention of being encyclopaedic. However, the record of South African ceramics practitioners and the contexts that shaped their studio outcomes remain incomplete.



FIGURE **Nº 1**



Henriette Ngako, undated. Photographer undocumented. Courtesy of Tineke Meijer.

This can be illustrated by considering the oeuvre of the ceramist Henriette Ngako (1943-2021) (Figure 1) who regularly featured in twentieth century texts which, regrettably, lacked in substantive information about her life and oeuvre. Ngako is acclaimed for her oeuvre of stacked zoomorphic and humanoid figures which is unique in the corpus of South African ceramics with the further distinction that Ngako breaks with traditional indigenous pottery convention even as she reflects an unmistakable indigeneity in her works. Her works were received by exhibition reviewers as ‘vibrant, complex, multi-layered and multifigured sculptures’ (Marais 2012:23), ‘unusual combinations of animals and humans’ (Wessels 1998:7). It was also claimed that the works would often feature ‘baleful two-headed, semi-human beasts carrying a cargo of creatures’ with some showing ‘multiple-headed quadrupeds often [sharing] the same three-dimensional body’ (Anon 1994:23). Some of the figures of the compositions are easily identifiable as wild and domesticated fauna but are more frequently zoomorphic, even to the point of being fanciful (Figure 2). Human and humanoid figures are typically combined with zoomorphic additions (Figure 3). The figural compositions are coherent structures with elements supportive of and complementary to one another and united as a whole, speaking of deliberated composition.



FIGURE **N° 2**



Henriette Ngako, *Untitled*, undated. Figural composition of a bird with open wings and the addition of zoomorphic figures. Earthenware, decorated with oxide stains and acrylic paint. Measurements unknown. Courtesy of Tineke Meijer.



FIGURE **Nº 3**



Henriette Ngako, *Untitled*, undated. Humanoid form with zoomorphic additions. Earthenware, decorated with oxide stains and acrylic paint. Height approximately 33 cm. Courtesy of Tineke Meijer.

For their commentary on Ngako's oeuvre, earlier authors were reliant on information provided by her two mentors, the studio potter, Elsa Sullivan (1935-2020) and the multi-media artist, Tineke Meijer. Ngako had a reserved personality and left it to Meijer in particular to speak on her behalf. Watt (2020) documented those mentors' insights into Ngako several years after she had all but ceased producing ceramics. Sullivan was consulted by the author in 2019 at a time when she was terminally ill. Meijer was consulted in late 2013 and early 2014, and again in 2019 and 2023. In 2013/2014, Meijer made a scrapbook with press cuttings and photos on Ngako available but most do not show publication data other than a year. Meijer also shared photocopies of certificates awarded to Ngako, her curriculum vitae, and a list of exhibitions from 1988 to 2002.

By re-examining published texts to expand on the claims and references made by the authors, and with information gathered from further correspondence and discussions with Meijer, new light can now be shed on the contexts that informed and shaped Ngako's oeuvre to position her relevance in the country's ceramics art history. The new narrative is particularly attentive of Ngako's Batswana cultural heritage which authors repeatedly cited.



Born in 1943, in Rustenburg in South Africa's Northwest Province, Ngako was reared in the company of her grandmother who made pottery in the Tswana cultural tradition for cooking, water storage and the brewing of beer for their own household. She spoke of having been taught those same skills by the elder Ngako (Meyer 2019). This is a credible claim. In a survey of indigenous Black cultural traditions of pottery, Lawton (1967:157-158, 163-164) notes that many Batswana women specialists<sup>4</sup> produced earthenware vessels,<sup>5,6</sup> for making and storing beer, for the storage of water, as containers for medicine, and for the cooking and serving of food.<sup>7</sup> Specific names were assigned to forms according to their function. Mabafokeng Hoeane (2020:2) refers to *Nkho ya metsi* as a ceramic vessel used to carry and store water for household use such as drinking and cooking. *Nkho ya bojwala* stores traditional beer whilst *Nkho ya dijo* is for the storage of foods. Ceramic vessels named *Dinkho tsa Badimo* are used during ancestral ceremonies to carry different offerings to the ancestors that include traditional beer, blood from sacrificed animals, cow dung, food, and water. Whilst employed by Van der Walt, Ngako made squat, rounded pots with wide mouths which are somewhat similar in appearance to smaller Batswana vessels. These were made at Meijer's studio.

After the death of her husband in 1982, and having to raise a daughter by herself, she relocated to Pretoria in the former Transvaal Province (modern day Gauteng Province) where she found employment in the ceramics studio of Willemien van der Merwe (Sullivan 2024; Doeg 2024). There she was tasked to make pots with the techniques of coiling and burnishing according to the indigenous cultural tradition of pottery. When Van der Merwe closed her studio, Ngako found employment elsewhere as a domestic helper. In 1985 she was recruited by Meijer who took her on as a student and shared her studio with Ngako in the suburb of Faerie Glen in Pretoria. Meijer made materials and facilities available, gave technical advice, shared reference material, and handled all the administration for exhibition entries. At that time, Ngako received additional support from Sullivan who had a studio nearby to Meijer's. She worked one day a week at Sullivan's studio where she could access materials and a kiln (Sullivan 2014).

Ngako's earliest collaboration with Meijer was in the making of 'patio pottery' suitable for the planting of low-growing, drought-resistant succulent plants (Van der Westhuizen 1986). Her planter pots (APSA 1986) featured at the 1986 Association of Potters of Southern Africa (APSA) national exhibition (Figure 4). It made her the first indigenous female black ceramist not associated with a collective studio<sup>8</sup> to feature in an APSA exhibition event.<sup>9</sup> These pots were created with a coiling technique which Ngako then embellished with pebble-like textured features around the mouth. They were fired to red hot and then removed from the kiln to be rapidly cooled in an environment filled with combustible material like paper or sawdust.

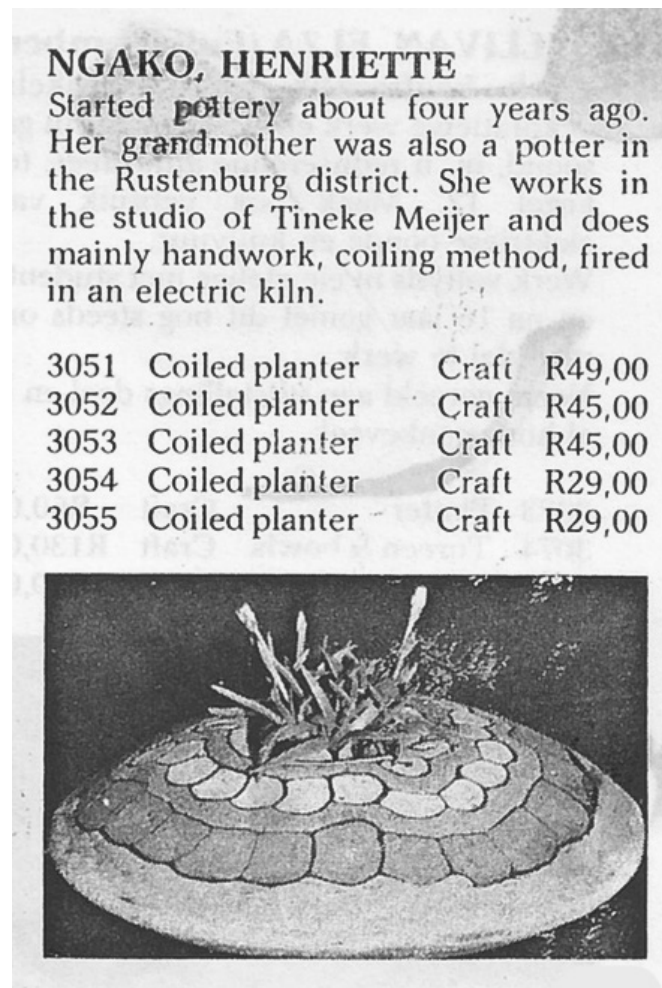


FIGURE **Nº 4**



Henriette Ngako, catalogue image and data, 1986. Association of Potters of Southern Africa (APSA) national exhibition. Courtesy of APSA.

Meijer had the opportunity to view works by the ceramist, Bonnie Ntshalintshali (1967-1999) of the Ardmore Ceramic Art studio and afterwards encouraged Ngako to follow Ntshalintshali's example and produce stacked figure compositions (Meijer 2023a; Wessels 1998:7). The first four of these works to be exhibited were her entries for the 1989 APSA National exhibition. One of the works received a merit award and was acquired for the permanent collection of the Pretoria Art Museum (Meijer [sa]). In her exhibition review, Jerice Doeg (1991:4) saw nothing that could be considered as contrived in these works, noting 'a natural, flowing form which tells you "this is Africa", its shapes, its patterns, its colours and its creatures' and that they highlight the 'special and unique qualities peculiar to our African environment'. The ceramist, John Shirley (2005:11) described these works as 'steeped in Africa'. The art historian and curator, Nessa Leibhammer (2025:3) is of the opinion that Ngako probably referenced some objects from the African continent in her works. Leibhammer makes specific mention of Yoruba beaded crowns from Nigeria and

decorated vases from the Hausa of North Africa. Ngako might well have seen examples of those in the photocopies of books and magazines that Meijer (2023b) made for her while she was doing research in the library of the University of South Africa. Ngako also had access to Meijer's own collection of art books (Meijer 2023c).

Her exhibition achievements illustrate the recognition given to South Africa's black artists during the last years of the Nationalist government and the early years of a democratic and fully inclusive South Africa. This era saw the revision of the policy of the Nationalist government to hold indigenous black artistic expressions in disdain as 'traditional craft'. Ngako won her first recognition with a highly commended award at the 1989 APSA national exhibition. Other awards followed in quick succession (Meijer [sa]), including a joint first prize at the 1990 Southern Transvaal regional exhibition, a first prize in the sculptural category at the 1991 Northern Transvaal regional exhibition and the Mollie Fisch Memorial Prize for the best handwork at the 1992 APSA biennale.

Outside the APSA fraternity, Ngako received national and international recognition. In 1992, she received a merit award at the *International Invitational Exhibition of Contemporary Ceramic Art* hosted by Taiwan's National Museum of History.<sup>10</sup> The museum acquired her entry, *Prayer for Africa* (Figure 5), for its permanent collection. Ngako featured in the Goodman Gallery's *Joy of Making* exhibition in 1993, and in the following year the gallery hosted her solo exhibition. She was the 1993 recipient of the senior bursary for visual arts from The Foundation for the Arts and was the artist-in-residence at the 1995 Grahamstown Festival (officially, the Standard Bank National Arts Festival). Ngako was selected for the 1996 group exhibition hosted by the Groundswell Contemporary Art Gallery in London and the 1998 group exhibition presented by the Longhouse Reserve Gallery in New York. She was one of the South African artists selected to feature in the South African pavilion at the Hannover Expo in Germany in 2000. Her most prestigious accolade, gained at an APSA exhibition, was being named as joint winner of the Premier Award at the 2002 *African Earth Exhibition*. The last exhibition of her works, alongside those of Meijer, was held in 2016 when their 30 years partnership was celebrated in the *Ceramics and Glass* event, hosted by the South African Association of Arts, Pretoria.

Her life and career history in the subsequent years speak of poverty and inactivity (Sullivan 2019). For a number of years, Ngako ceased all production because she had to take on the rearing and education of her grandchildren after the deaths of their parents. She briefly resumed her work in 2014 but that was cut short when the power cables for her small kiln were stolen.<sup>11</sup> She was granted the Tim Morris Bursary Award for her entry at the 2015 *Gauteng regional exhibition* (Shirley 2015:23) but those funds were used to alleviate her impoverishment. She then ceased production of ceramics. By 2019, she was in poor health. She passed away from COVID-19 complications at the Jubilee Hospital in Themba in mid-2021.



FIGURE **Nº 5**



Henriette Ngako, *Prayer for Africa*, c. 1991/1992. Earthenware, decorated with oxide stains and acrylic paint. 35 cm x 33 cm x 59 cm. The artwork was constructed in two parts with the upper part measuring 33 cm x 17.5 cm x t 43 cm, and the lower part measuring 35 cm x 33 cm x 22 cm. The upper part features the face of a monkey (probably a reference to a mandrill) in a focal cartouche on its front side, surmounted by a bird, zoomorphic double-headed figure ascending on the side, and two additional faces in cartouches on the left and rear. The lower part serves as a pedestal and is decorated with rearing zoomorphic figures. Granted an Award of Merit at the International Invitational Exhibition of Contemporary Ceramic Art, hosted by the National Museum of History, Taipei, Taiwan. Collection of the National Museum of History, Taipei, Taiwan, ID 82-00336. Courtesy of the National Museum of History, Taipei, Taiwan.

According to Doeg (2002:15), Ngako references the stories about Batswana customs and mythology that she was told as a child. Another exhibition reviewer, Ann Marais (2012:23), sees ‘symbolic content and narrative character [...] in lively interpretations of Batswana beliefs, legends, myths and traditions’. The ‘stories’ to which Ngako was exposed likely refer to folklore (*thutaditso*) which Matiakgole Kganyago (2012:2) defines as ‘any beliefs, customs and traditions passed on from one generation to the other by people’. Folklore is transmitted as oral literature (*ditlhangwa*) ‘whether spoken, recited or sung whose



composition and performance exhibit to an appreciable degree the artistic characteristics of accurate observation and ingenious expression' (Kganyago 2012:3). Folktales (*dianela-lebôpô/dikinane*) are held as truthful narratives usually about non-human characters that include animals, with or without human attributes, and pertain to events in the remote past 'in a world which was different from or other than the present one' and are accepted on faith (Kganyago 2012:3). There are two groupings in the folktales (*ditlhangwa*): *dianela-lebôpô/dikinane* speak of how some animals came to look as they do currently while in *dinaane tsa batho* the characters are humans with animals involved at times (Ramagoshi 2024). Myths (*dika-hisetori/dinoolwane*) relate to 'a period considered less remote when the world was much as it is today' and are held to be truthful, secular accounts of 'migration, wars, and victories, deeds of past heroes, chiefs and kings' (Kganyago 2012:11-12). There is no record of Ngako personally relating any of her works to specific Batswana customs or mythology, but Leibhammer (2025:6) holds the opinion that Ngako's referencing of a Batswana world of mythical beings, totemic animals and ancestral presences is compelling. As further confirmation of this, Leibhammer (2025:8) points out that 'Ngako's sculptural works are comprehended in the round, and without any specific direction, beginning or end' and as such 'present continuous surfaces, occupying a conceptual space which is cyclical, alluding to the infinite, echoing an immortal realm of spirits'.

Ngako regularly featured Setswana namings for her works: *Kgosigadi e ipelang* (*The proud queen*), *Dimakatso* (*Fantasy bird*), *Ramolodi* (*Whistling animal*), *Makhanana* (*Tsonga woman*), *Kgosana* (*Headman*), *Re tlhatlagane* (*Standing on top of each other*), *Ke go khukhutha* (*I carry a heavy load*) and *Setlhare sa khutso* (*Tree of peace*) (Meijer [sa]). Meijer (2023a) explained that the works were not preconceived and that the titles were not linked to specific Setswana folklore or sayings. When a work was completed, Ngako would assign a title that was descriptive or reflective of it. In some texts, such as the catalogue for the 1989 APSA National exhibition, authors erroneously described Ngako's stacked figures as 'totems', probably equating them with multi-figured totem poles such as those created by Canada's First Nation peoples. It is more correct to describe the works as totemic to indicate an association with a subject of respect or reverence. The Batswana culture does indeed feature totems which mostly relate to indigenous fauna (fish, buffalo, hare, crocodile, wild hog, baboon, buffalo, monkey, guinea fowl, hippopotamus, porcupine, hyena, lion, elephant, snake, and birds). Based on the characteristics and behaviour of such a figure, a clan will adopt and revere it as its totem (Ramagoshi 2024). The Setswana namings for totems include *seanô* (object of reverence), *serêtô* (object of honour), *seila* (object of avoidance), and *sebôkô* (object of praise) (Schapera 1994:6). Ngako might well have had the intention to select Batswana totems for their attributes and presented those in totemic arrangements (Figure 6) but not as totem structures.



FIGURE N° 6



Henriette Ngako, *Untitled*, undated. Stacked zoomorphic figural group. Earthenware, decorated with oxide stains and acrylic paint. 32.5 cm x 22 cm x 17 cm. Collection of Riaan Bolt Antiques, South Africa. Courtesy of Thakatha.

According to Meijer (2023d), she and Ngako shared a ‘deep spiritual bond’ and had many discussions about their beliefs. She also confirmed Ngako’s close association with the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) in which she served as a lay preacher and that Ngako attended the annual Easter pilgrimage to the church’s headquarters at Zion City (Moria) in Limpopo Province, which attracts in excess of one million congregants. The ZCC was founded in 1924 in South Africa and membership now exceeds six million. It is an independent African church with a doctrine rooted in the Protestant Christian faith but with respect for traditional African religious beliefs, in particular, the belief that ancestors have the power to intercede on behalf of humans (South African History Online [sa]). It has not been documented but it is likely that Ngako followed traditional beliefs along with practicing Christianity as accommodated within ZCC doctrine. Her association with Christianity is illustrated in crucifixion scenes on small panels (Figure 7) and an installation depicting Noah’s ark surrounded by free-standing figures of animals, reptiles and birds (Figure 8). Ngako’s reflection of her Christian faith in some of her works is similar to that of Ntshalintshali’s (Figure 9), with the exception that Ntshalintshali followed the Catholic practise. Both presented their own interpretations of Biblical narratives. Ngako also created works addressing the theme of ancestral spirits that figured in the Batswana belief system. One of those figural compositions, *Forefather spirits* (Figure 10) is of a three-legged bird with human forms riding on its back. Another, *Spirit of the ancestors* (Figure 11), depicts a seated humanoid form surrounded and surmounted by zoomorphic creatures.



FIGURE **Nº 7**



Henriette Ngako, *Christ on the cross*, undated. Earthenware decorated with oxide stains and acrylic paint. 30.5 cm x 24 cm x 5.5 cm. Collection of Riaan Bolt Antiques, South Africa. Courtesy of Thakatha.



FIGURE **Nº 8**



Henriette Ngako, *Noah's ark with free-standing figures*, undated. Earthenware, painted with acrylic paint. The ark measures 48 cm x 32 cm x 21 cm. The figure of Noah is shown emerging from the roof (on the left of the ark's roof in the photo) to verify the return of the dove. The dove was released to search for dry land but found none and therefore returned to the ark. Collection of Nicolaas Bester, South Africa. Courtesy of Thomas Kriel.



FIGURE **Nº 9**



Bonnie Ntshalintshali, *Christ under a rainbow*, undated. Mounted on stacked animal figures. Terracotta, painted with craft paints. 68.9 cm x 44.5 cm. Corobrik Collection, South Africa. Courtesy of Ceramics Southern Africa.



FIGURE **Nº 10**



Henriette Ngako, *Forefather spirits*, 1992. Earthenware decorated with oxide stains and acrylic paint. 40 cm x 39 cm x 39 cm. University of Pretoria Museum Collection, 464581. Courtesy of the University of Pretoria Museum Collection.





FIGURE **Nº 11**



Henriette Ngako. *Spirits of the ancestors*, 1992. Earthenware decorated with oxide stains and acrylic paint. 50 cm x 32 cm x 31 cm. University of Pretoria Museum Collection, 474648. Courtesy of Javett–UP Art Centre, Pretoria.

It has not been previously documented that Ngako also assisted Meijer in the making of cement murals that featured indigenous culture motifs and South African fauna and flora including such themed panels that were created for the South African embassy in Berlin (Meijer 2023e) (Figures 12, 13). Throughout her career she also produced lidded boxes, candle holders, bowls, jugs, and free-standing forms (Figures 14, 15, 16).



FIGURE **Nº 12**



Tineke Meijer and Henriette Ngako, *Untitled*, 2003. Carved cement panels with geometric motifs, South African embassy in Berlin. Courtesy of MMA Design Studio, South Africa.



FIGURE **Nº 13**



Henriette Ngako, Tineke Meijer and Marinda du Toit at the Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin, 2002. Courtesy of Tineke Meijer.



FIGURE **Nº 14**



Henriette Ngako. *Lid of box with lizard motif*, undated. Earthenware decorated with oxide stains and acrylic paint. 19 cm x 29 cm x 12.5 cm. Formerly in the collection of the author. Courtesy of the author.



FIGURE **Nº 15**



Henrietta Ngako, *Candle holder surmounted by two birds*, undated. Earthenware decorated with oxide stains and acrylic paint. 30 cm x 23 cm x 21 cm. Formerly in the collection of the author. Courtesy of the author.





FIGURE **Nº 16**



Henriette Ngako. *Bird form jug*, undated. Earthenware decorated with oxide stains and acrylic paint. 35 cm x 30 cm. Collection of Berna van Copenhagen-Kriel, Pretoria, South Africa. Courtesy of Thomas Kriel.

To promote Ngako's work, the multimedia artist, Koos van der Watt featured five female figures as part of the *Skrapnel* (*Shrapnel*) group exhibition in 2002. The exhibition theme was the commemoration of the end of the war that was fought from 1899 to 1902 between Britain and the Boer states of the Republic of Transvaal and the Orange Free State. Presented as an installation work with the title *Guardians* (Figure 17), it was Van der Watt's initiative to arrange Ngako's figures around a low rectangular structure filled with water to represent an 'ancestral grave' (Kruger 2002:25). Photographs of the gravestones of prisoners of war who died in the Black concentration camp at Greylingstad during the second Anglo-Boer war were floated on the water. Ngako must be credited as the first black South African ceramist, and possibly even the first black South African artist, to reflect this history. A media release issued at the time of the exhibition noted that the female 'totems' were reflected in the water, 'asserting their presence and at the same time evoking the suggestion that like the female, water is the origin of life and the source of a new beginning' (Die Voortrekkermonument Erfenisterrein Kunstgalerie [sa]). In his review of the exhibition, Diek Grobler (2002:3) considered the work to have multiple archetypal symbols associated with water, the earth, the woman as mother and the forefathers. Elizabeth Kruger (2002:25) stated that the figures not only stood watch at an ancestral grave but were also the guardians of the future. The symbolism and meanings



of this installation must be considered as externally construed because Ngako did not create the original five figures with any such intent or meaning. First put on show at three other venues, the collection of works finally moved to the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria. Whilst Van der Watt's works for the exhibition were afterwards moved to a nearby military museum, Ngako's installation remained on display at the Voortrekker Monument for some time but was then handed over to an unknown third party. The current location of the five figures and their state of preservation are not known (Meijer 2023f; Luus 2024).



FIGURE **Nº 17**



Henriette Ngako, *Guardians*, 2002. Earthenware decorated with oxide stains, acrylic paints and photographs, measurements unknown. Depicted in Pretoria News Interval, 18 January 2002. This archival photograph is the only known image of Ngako's installation for the Skrapnel exhibition. Photo by Dudu Ztha. Courtesy of Independent Media, South Africa.

There is no record of a personal account by Ngako of her materials and processes to create the figural compositions, but Meijer (2023a) was a source of such information. The clay was stoneware. Hollow forms were created with coiling and modelled features were added. The works were first fired at a low temperature in an electric kiln. For surface decoration, Ngako made use of oxides, on-glaze stains, and craft acrylic paints that were mixed into a slip to be painted onto the work. After the final firing, a matt lacquer was sprayed onto the works that served to enhance the colours.

It must be questioned why Ngako, after gaining prominence as ceramic artist in the late twentieth century, faded from attention and memory. With the exception of the Tina Skukan Gallery in Pretoria, South Africa, Ngako's works appear to have been showcased as one-off events by gallerists with no evidence of long-term associations with her which would have contributed to a lasting presence and prominence into the twenty-first century.<sup>12</sup> This raises the issue of the exploitation of artists and crafters, particularly of those producing novelties with distinctive merit, to grab the attention of opportunistic collectors.

The research, as presented, introduces new documentary material and corrects earlier writings in addition to the contextualising of factors and influences that shaped Ngako's oeuvres. It emphasises that Ngako's works are distinctive within the corpus of twentieth century and contemporary South African ceramics, stand outside of traditional Batswana craft, and do not emulate the work of any other South African ceramist. With no such evidence revealed in the works, the earlier claims that they referenced only Batswana folklore and belief cannot be substantiated. Via her mentor, Meijer, Ngako was exposed to other art forms and belief systems as practised in Africa. Through her participation in ceramic competitions and the preferences of gallerists and collectors in the selection and acquisition of her works, Ngako would have been steered towards creating works that met the market demand for her stacked forms. Her works must be viewed as personal inventions onto which Ngako layered non-specific references but probably her personal meanings, addressing both the past and the present as per her own views and perspectives. Ngako's works bear evidence of the agency of the Black ceramists of South Africa to reference and revision the forms of other cultural pottery traditions, with the option to use non-traditional materials and processes. The research corrects her earlier nominal inclusion in scholarly accounts of South African ceramics art history.

## Acknowledgements

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# Notes

1. The Association of Potters of Southern Africa (APSA) and its successor organisation, Ceramics Southern Africa (CSA), published *Sgraffiti* and *National Ceramics Quarterly* in quarterly editions. *Sgraffiti* was published from August 1973 (No. 1) to January 1987 (No. 47). *National Ceramics Quarterly* commenced publication in 1987 (No. 1, Winter 1987) and continued into 2014 (No. 108, Winter 2014). *Ceramix and Craft South Africa* was a short-lived publication from 1988 to 1990.
2. See Barrel (2023), Clark and Wagner (1974), Cruise (1991), Kerrod (2010), Zaalberg (1985), Bosch and De Waal (1988), Mikula (2004), Stevenson (2003, 2010), Van Wyk (2008) and Wright (2009).
3. See Bauer (2004), Farina (2001), Garret (1997), Hosking (2005), Motsamayi (2012), Perrill (2008), Stockenström (2014), Vurovecz (2008) and Weaving (2011).
4. Amongst the Bakgatla-Baa-Kgafela people of Botswana (who trace their origins to the Pilanesberg region in South Africa), the making of pottery is associated with specialised knowledge that is gifted to the potter by the ancestors (Koitsiwe 2019:251).
5. Lawton uses the naming of *dingkwana* for Batswana pottery.
6. Hoeane (2020:1) names Batswana pottery as *Nkho* (singular) and *Dinkho* (plural).
7. The Bakgatla-Baa-Kgafela classify earthenware pots according to their size and use. Koitsiwe (2019:251) recorded some of these as *Setsaga-nkgwana e tona* (big pot) for water storage and brewing beer, *Nkgo ya metsi* (pot for water storage), *Nkgwana ya ting ya bojalwa* (pot for traditional beer), *Nkgwana ya go ya nokeng* (pot for collecting water at the river), *Tsagana-e bidisetsa ting ya bogobe, e apaya mo isong* (pot for cooking porridge), and *Nkgwana ya sedimo* (pot for 'deities', probably referring to ancestors). *Nkgwana* (singular) and *Dinkgwana* (plural) are diminutives, meaning small pots.
8. Euriel Mbatha Damann, who was associated with the pottery workshop at the ELC Art and Craft Centre at Rorke's Drift, featured in an APSA exhibition event prior to 1986 (Calder 1986:5).
9. The first record of an indigenous male black ceramist to have his work accepted for an APSA event is that of Meshach Masuku who entered a jug for the KwaZulu-Natal region's 'domestic ware' exhibition in 1984 (Anon 1984a:9). The distinction of being the first male Black ceramist to have a work accepted for an APSA national exhibition belongs to Austin Hleza (1949–1997) of eSwatini for his terracotta sculpture of a front-end loader entered for the 1984 event (Anon 1984b:13). Hleza's entry was acquired for the prestigious Corobrick Collection.
10. Three black ceramists, Ngako, Peter Mthombeni and Joel Sibisi, were amongst the 25 South African ceramists invited to participate in the exhibition.
11. Ngako's last known signed work dates to 2016 (Figure 19).
12. On enquiry in 2023, the Goodman Gallery that featured Ngako in a group exhibition and hosted her solo exhibition in 1994, claimed not to have a single record in its archive that relates to Ngako (Goodman Gallery 2023).

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