

‘David Walters and Friends – UKHAMBBA’
William Humphreys Art Gallery, Kimberley.

10th Anniversary Exhibition opens 31st July 2012.

‘**Pottery is a central art,**’ said Paul Gauguin, and he hadn’t encountered South African ceramics! Nowhere else can the evolution of fired clay from useful ‘pot’ to iconic ‘art pieces’ be seen more clearly.

The Zulu **ukhamba**, for example, has transformed over two thousand years from utility beer pot to its current culturally significant, beautifully hand built and rounded smoke-fired form. And these pots, which are made only by women, hold importance far beyond their obvious use as beer vessels, since they are a medium for dialogue with the ancestors.

There are many examples of art in clay, and hundreds of pots made by contemporary ceramic artists can be seen on this exhibition, transforming the most basic of materials into varied and interesting objects. This passion for creativity comes clearly from the heart, using skill and elemental materials like clay, water and fire. And many of these objects are art for everyday use – made with skill and love to add texture, quality and meaning to simple everyday pleasures like drinking tea or eating off a handcrafted plate.

South Africans are earthy people and our clay artists are without dispute some of the most creative and diverse in the world. More than thirty potters from all over the country have been invited to take part in this exhibition, and will be celebrating the opening of the very first purpose-built ceramics display in a National Art Gallery, the Bonnie Ntshalintshali Ceramics Wing.

David Walters, Franschhoek.