

hot PROPERTY

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Having shaped a career by following her heart, celebrated local ceramicist Clementina van der Walt has devotees constantly clamouring to collect her work. A newly acquired space called Clementina Ceramics in the delightful shopping precinct at Woodstock's Old Biscuit Mill now features a selection of her one-off designs along with works of other contemporary ceramists. This teeny treasure chest also stocks the Clementina tableware for which she is most renowned and which remains a bestseller and firm favourite among tourists and South African expats alike.

'One of the slogans that I closely adhere to in my work is: "Seek the sacred in the ordinary"... Much of my ceramic work is focused on this theme; pieces that can be used in everyday life or for special occasions, and that invite contemplation and reflection on their meaning,' Clementina explains.

While her studio space, which she shares with curator and partner Albie Bailey, in the Colosseum building in the heart of the CBD, is more centred around art, with studio spaces rented out to other creatives, the shop at the Old Biscuit Mill aims to be more – though not entirely – utilitarian based. 'Something that concerns me is that the homeware stores have taken over the utilitarian market, seducing customers with cheap yet attractive tableware that's often well designed and of reasonable quality, but somehow it frequently lacks soul. There is a certain sterility to it, and its inexpensiveness allows it to be seasonally trendy and then chucked out and replaced with the next fashion,' she says.

'In the new store, we would very much like to showcase work that shows the mark and spirit of the individual; work that collectors and others would want to use, keep and cherish.' Some of Clementina's more recent works include a series called *Urban Soul* (showcased at this year's Design Indaba) in which she 'makes use of urban textures and patterns observed in the streets and then combines this with a sense of meditative quietness.' It's very much a reflection of her ongoing fascination with the Cape Town inner city, where she lives and works.

Clementina loves the idea of urban renewal, and the move to Woodstock, which she believes to be the new 'Soho of Cape Town', is thoroughly supportive of this. 'I also really, really love the city,' she says. 'For me, the challenge is to remain calm and centred in all the frenzy, so that there is balance. Also, my work is always changing; I seem to be on a constant search for meaning and identity, so what I am doing now is a reflection of the space I'm in, both physically and spiritually. But,' she adds, 'there is also a pitch, or style, that I think is consistent, so my current work is merely a development of what I have done in the past... although perhaps a bit more focused and less frenetic.'

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Words: Kirsten Hill Photographs: Adriaan Louw