

n nature's mould

By Tom Parnell

CLOURFUL, creative and sometimes creepy – descriptions of the first solo exhibition by ceramicist Maria Alvarez Echenique which is already turning heads. The display at The Stables Gallery in Dollis Hill – entitled *Dreams in a Grain of Sand* – features ceramic sculptures influenced by the poetry of Gilgamesh, Blake, Dante and Neruda.

Art college graduate Maria explores the notion of nature and our responsibility to the environment through highly imaginative sculptures which both powerfully and delicately express form and shape.

She says: "My ceramics have been born of a combination of different techniques in a constant formulation through the possibilities of clay."

"Most of my recent work has connections to and inspirations from nature and has been related to environmental issues such as climate change."

A strong link to painting, especially in the use of organic earthy colours, in combination with abstract elements of tone and texture interlinked to the form, is often part of the final character of the pieces.

Maria says: "My recent use of casting techniques through the repeated head shape, combined with other varied representations in a deliberately ambiguous way, has resulted in a greater engagement of the viewers."

"My work in progress is an extension of the heads series but built around the theme of dreams while retaining aspects concerning nature."

The exhibition continues until April 20 at The Stables Gallery and Arts Centre in Gladstone Park, Dollis Hill Lane, Dollis Hill. It is open from 11am to 5pm, Thursday to Sunday.



Pictures by Shane Dempsey SD55938



Alvarez Echenique finds her inspiration for her unusual sculptures in poetry and environmental issues