

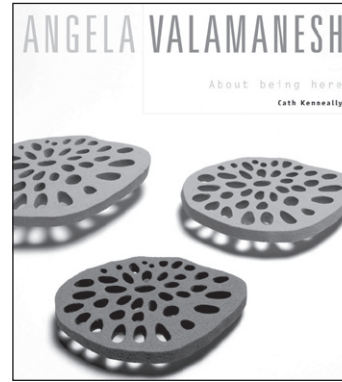
BOOK REVIEW **Angela Valamanesh: About Being Here** Cath Kenneally

Living and breathing art

Jo Vabolis



Ceramic artist Angela Valamanesh.



loved original fountain and pond in front of the South Australian Museum. The pod of glistening, black granite stems now seems completely at home in the North Terrace location.

Each SALA monograph differs in format to the others and this edition, like the work of the artist it celebrates, has an elegance that invites unhurried contemplation.

The clean layout allows the images of collected works room to breathe, and as well as the gallery there is a bibliography and curriculum vitae. This publication coincides with an exhibition of new sculptural ceramics by Valamanesh on show at Greenaway Art Gallery until Sunday.

Wakefield Press, RRP \$45

The South Australian Living Artists (SALA) Festival gives artists at any stage of their career the opportunity to open their studios and share their work with the public.

Each year, the Wakefield Press SALA monograph marks the success of one of South Australia's more established creators. This year's edition, by writer and radio broadcaster Cath Kenneally, is the 11th in a series that has previously featured Gerry Wedd, Kathleen Petyarre and Julie Blyfield.

Kenneally's extensive publication history includes novels, arts reviews and several collections of poetry, and her detailed and thoughtful approach to the work of ceramic artist Angela Valamanesh is well-suited to the subject.

About Being Here charts the inspirations and creations of Valamanesh's 30-year career.

Born Angela Burdon, the fourth-generation South Australian began her art practice with a focus on ceramics but now uses other media in addition to clay. Her "emblematic template forms" often present similarities between botanical and anatomical structures, and question the relationship between

our bodies and the earth through her choice of clay as "a common material that we are all connected to". Early groupings of unglazed vessels explore the possibilities of repetition through the introduction of subtle differences in size, shape and colour, with ridges and cuts adding soft movement. The serenity of these works is carried through to sets of body parts, cells and fossil-like objects in later collections that show a shift to creating "work

that suggests a multiplicity of life forms".

Collaboration with her artist husband Hossein Valamanesh has produced several high-profile public sculptural commissions. A memorial to the Irish famine (in Sydney's Hyde Park Barracks) uses bronze, sandstone, granite and glass to evoke a strong physical presence with a quiet core. There was initial resistance to another of their works, *14 Pieces*, which replaced the much-

BOOK REVIEW **Barbara Robertson: An Australian Artist's Life** Lorraine McLoughlin

Local writer and art historian Lorraine McLoughlin has self-published this detailed biography of Barbara Robertson, an accomplished South Australian artist who enjoyed brief international acclaim in her early years but never really found the recognition she perhaps deserves.

Unfortunately, the same might be true of this handsome book, given that it does not yet enjoy the backing of a major publisher. It certainly deserves to find an audience – it is diligently researched, eloquently written, and beautifully produced.

Robertson was born in Adelaide in 1921, the daughter of an internationally renowned

photographer, Eric Robertson. The family "lived in genteel poverty" and Robertson was able to study part-time at what is now the SA School of Art. Archibald Prize-winner Ivor Hele was an important influence on the young Robertson and although she never won the coveted prize, her work was hung in the final selection on more than one occasion, an achievement for any artist. In 1948, a generous patronage allowed Robertson to

move to Melbourne and attend the prestigious National Gallery of Victoria Art School.



McLoughlin includes some wonderful photographs in this chapter of the book illustrating the social fabric of Melbourne at the time.

After a brief flirtation with exhibiting in the UK, Robertson chose to live, work and teach in Adelaide for most

of her life. The 60 full-colour reproductions of Robertson's

work included in the book show the depth of her talent and her wide range of artistic and social interests including portraits and self-portraits; still-life studies; life studies; political issues of equality, poverty, and indigenous Australians; and some impressive religious art. This is a woman of immense talent and deep personal commitment.

Barbara Robertson: An Australian Artist's Life is a sensitive celebration of an artistic life and a wonderful insight into Adelaide's artistic and social history. – Diana Carroll

Available from the author at www.robertsonbiography.com \$49.50

POET'S CORNER Compiled by John Miles

Love Remembered

English winter.
Grey street in London.
Young man, young woman.
Holding her cupped hands
he warms them with his breath.
Two souls alone for a moment in time.
She feels included.
Treasured.
Even loved.
In a little while he'll peel away from her life,
like a shadow in a long dream.
Then he'll be just a memory
down long years of indifference and pain.
He will be the beacon
to join other treasured views
of the life's long journey.
And as age tightens its grip
it's the lover's wistful memory that clings
and then caresses us towards the grave.

Lynda Becker's collection of poems on growing up in the Fulham and Hammersmith areas of London will be launched at the end of the month.

Readers' unpublished poems to 30 lines can be emailed with postal address to poetscorner@independentweekly.com.au or posted with an SAE to the Poetry Editor, Independent Weekly, GPO Box 114 Adelaide 5001. A poetry book will be awarded to each contributor.

Solutions from 10

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