



Angela Valamanesh was born in Port Pirie, South Australia in 1953 and currently lives and works in Adelaide. She attended the South Australian School of Art, completing a Diploma in Design in 1977, Masters of Visual Arts in 1993 and was awarded a PhD from the University of South Australia in 2012. Working primarily in ceramics, Valamanesh creates functional and non-functional items.

About being here is a series of seven unglazed ceramic vessels of varying shapes and earthy tones, inspired by the South Australian landscape including the Riverland and the Flinders Ranges. Valamanesh prefers to arrange the vessels on a shelf at eye level, suggesting a link to the western tradition of the still life, which often includes an arrangement of objects.

Valamanesh began to move away from functional objects and instead became fascinated by scientific illustration, creating works of art that made links to scientific plant, human and animal specimens. These objects appear like enlargements of microscopic organisms, yet are rather small in scale and share a similar earthy colour palette and texture. *Animal Vegetable Mineral* (2007) was inspired by observations of human anatomy as seen in medical illustrations of anatomical models. Valamanesh transformed medical imagery into three dimensional objects that depicted views of the human body not normally seen with the naked eye.

She completed residencies at the Smithsonian Institute, Washington DC in 2014 where she examined botanical illustrations. In 2015, Valamanesh explored medical imaging techniques as an artist in residence at the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI) as part of the South Australian Living Artist (SALA) Festival.

The simplicity and beauty of the natural world and its range of earthy colours continues to influence Valamanesh. After a residency at the Barr Smith Library at the University of Adelaide, she created *Everybody's Everything: Insect/Orchid* (2017) inspired by scientific illustrations of orchids and their insect-like characteristics.

image: Angela Valamanesh, Australia, 1953, *About being here*, 2001, Adelaide, South Australia, stoneware, 29.0 x 80.0 x 20.0 cm (overall); Gift of the Potters' Guild of South Australia Inc. assisted by the South Australian Government Grant 2002, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide. © Angela Valamanesh

RESOURCES

BOOKS

Kenneally, C. *Angela Valamanesh: About Being Here*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, SA, 2009

WEBSITES

Adelaide City Council – 14 Pieces
<http://adelaide.sa.gov.au/things/14-pieces>

VIDEO

National Gallery of Australia, Angela Valamanesh – Airborne
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U2wWYNMTBU>

KEY LITERACY WORDS

Anatomy
 Botanical illustrations
 Ceramic
 Fire
 Function
 Glaze
 Scientific illustration
 Texture
 Utilitarian
 Vessel

EARLY YEARS

RESPONDING

The colours of Valamanesh's vessels are similar. Where have you seen these colours before?

Find another work of art on display where these colours feature.

Select five colours that best represent the place where you live and explain why you have chosen them.

Consider why Valamanesh titled this work *About being here*.

MAKING

Create a clay vessel that is inspired by the natural environment.

Look at Valamanesh's *Animal Vegetable Mineral* (2007). Share enlargements of microscopic plant and animal organisms with students. Can students identify which enlargements are from plants and which are from animals? Using these images as a reference invite students to draw their own microscopic images or carve patterns in clay slabs.

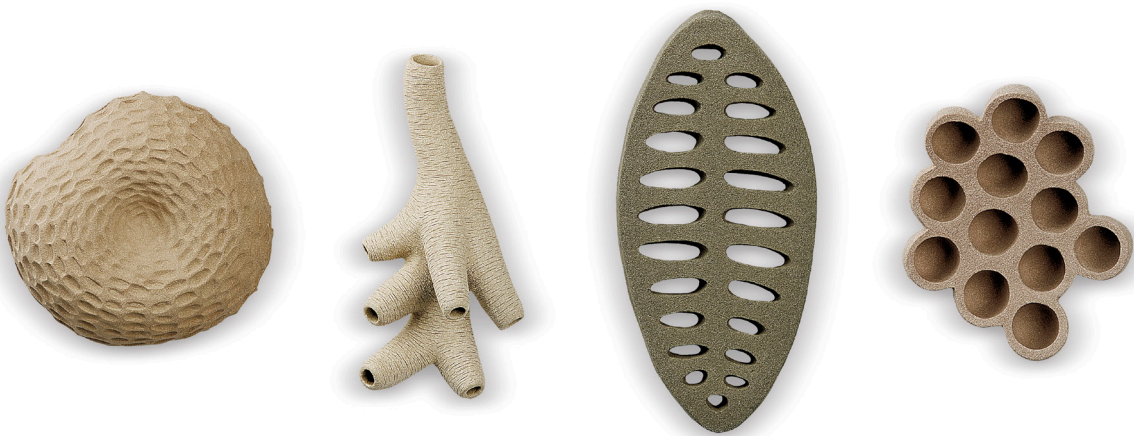


image: Angela Valamanesh, Australia, 1953, Australia, 1953, *Animal Vegetable Mineral*, 2007, Forresterville, South Australia, stoneware, 19.5 x 20.5 x 6.3 cm (a); Gift of the Potters' Guild of South Australia Inc. : Winner of the South Australian Ceramics Award 2007. Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide © Angela Valamanesh

RESPONDING

The colours used in Valamanesh's works of art are often borrowed from the South Australian landscape and reference the dry red sand from the central desert, the Riverland and the Flinders Ranges. Find images of these landscapes that match each of Valamanesh's works and research the animals, plants and climate of these landscapes.

Each of the vessels in *About being here* are different in size, shape and colour. How has Valamanesh created a unified series?

Valamanesh's works have a minimal quality that evokes a sense of stillness and quiet. Find other examples of 'quiet' or 'still' works of art. Describe what qualities make them quiet.

Research clay wheel throwing. How do you think Valamanesh achieved such pristine shapes?

Designers and artists are often concerned with form and function, the shape of an object and the way it looks versus the intended purpose of the object. Valamanesh created functional items early in her career but shifted towards non-functional works of art. Locate other works of art where an artist or designer has balanced form with function?

Valamanesh's vessels are unglazed – does this mean her work is functional? What is the function of works of art that aren't necessarily *used*?

MAKING

Spend time drawing *About being here*, or create your own arrangement of cups, glasses and vases placed on a shelf or table to draw. Pay close attention to proportion and scale. Draw it again from another angle, or from above.

As a child, Valamanesh was always interested in drawing. After visiting the Adelaide Botanic Gardens or a local park nearby, create a series of botanical illustrations. Use a viewfinder to focus on one area of a plant or flower. Draw your specimen with as much detail as you can see.

Making functional objects is often a way for artists to make a living. Inge King made jewellery prior to making her large sculptural pieces or commissioned public works. Milton Moon, Gladys Reynell and Angela Valamanesh all made functional ceramic works throughout their careers. Create a series of functional objects such as vessels, plates or decorative items. Decorate your objects using colours that capture the environment you live in. Create a class stall to raise money for an environmental charity in your area.

Locate medical imaging photographs that reveal the insides of a human body not normally seen with the naked eye. Using this image, transform it into three-dimensional object by simplifying the shapes and enlarging its scale. Perhaps you might use an image of human capillaries – now imagine enlarging these ten times the size.

TIP Look at *Animal Vegetable Mineral* for inspiration



image: Angela Valamanesh, Australia, 1953, *About being here*, 2001, Adelaide, South Australia, stoneware, 29.0 x 80.0 x 20.0 cm (overall); Gift of the Potters' Guild of South Australia Inc. assisted by the South Australian Government Grant 2002, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide. © Angela Valamanesh

RESPONDING

While Valamanesh was studying at art school she was influenced by Asian ceramics, including the translucent pale green glaze called celadon used in Chinese ceramics. Compare Valamanesh's works of art to other ceramic traditions used by artists throughout history.

Valamanesh's objects became less usable as she focused more on texture. Compare Valamanesh's work to the work of Khai Liew. Discuss the formal qualities of their work. Do you think they share similar ideas about the objects they create?



image: Khai Liew, designer, Australia, 1952, Bruce Nuske, ceramist, Australia, 1949, *Bruce [cabinet on stand]*, from the 'Collec+ors' series, 2010, Cabinet, Norwood, South Australia; tiles, Adelaide, South Australia, American white oak, porcellaneous stoneware, sgraffito decoration, 130.0 x 212.0 x 50.0 cm; Gift of Michael Armitage, Susan Armitage, Philip Bacon AM, Colin and Robyn Cowan, Julian and Stephanie Grose, Andrew and Hiroko Gwinnett, Jim and Andrea Katsaros, Diana Laidlaw AM, Sonia Laidlaw, Macquarie Group Foundation, David McKee, Pam McKee, Jillian Russell, Peter and Mary Sutherland, Janet Worth to the Collec+ors Appeal through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation 2012, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide. photo: Grant Hancock

What is the difference between an artist or designer and a craftsperson? Which title best describes Angela Valamanesh?

Australian potter Milton Moon inspired Valamanesh to create domestic items before moving towards less functional items that were more playful. Other South Australian ceramicists such as Gerry Wedd and Margaret Dodd produced objects that have been described as 'quirky'. They make reference to Australian culture in a humorous way. Discuss their different approaches in terms of technique and ideas.



image: Margaret Dodd, Australia, 1941, *FJ Holden pretending to be an Australian native porcupine*, 1982, Adelaide, earthenware, 14.0 x 14.5 x 32.1 cm; South Australian Government Grant 1987, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

Investigate English Botanist Nehemiah Grew's *Anatomy of Plants* and scientist Robert Hooke's book *Micrographia*. Other than subject matter, what connections can you make between the characteristics of their work and the ceramic objects made by Valamanesh?

Investigate how artists and scientists have influenced each other throughout art history. Consider the use of anatomical wax models, or the physical and chemical properties of materials artists use to make a work of art. Locate other works of art in the Gallery that have been influenced by science. Use this example as a starting point for discussing a scientific idea or principle. What similarities do these works of art share with Valamanesh's works?

Angela Valmanesh and her husband Hossein Valamanesh have worked together on many joint art projects. Angela Valamanesh once stated "*our work goes together – its compatible*". Select two works of art by each artist and explain how these works of art are *compatible*.

SECONDARY

MAKING

Materials are an essential part of making a work of art. Valamanesh describes clay as having its limitations. List some of the limitations of clay? Compare ceramics to three dimensional objects made from other materials. Consider weight, strength, appearance, texture and durability. Imagine you are one of these materials. Write and perform a monologue with the title 'I am the supreme material'. Can you morph into any shape by hand? Are your materials easily found and affordable? Do you need heat to become strong and unbreakable? Or are you heavy and can't be easily moved?

Valamanesh describes the linear display of some of her works like the way letters form words or a sentence on a page. Create a fifth work that would sit seamlessly next to *Animal Mineral Vegetable*. Consider, texture, subject matter and palette.

Valamanesh was inspired by early scientific illustration. Using a microscope, gain access to an invisible world. Collect plant life to examine under a microscope and create a series of illustrations. Turn one of these illustrations into a three-dimensional form.

Angela Valamanesh and Hossein Valamanesh have collaborated together on public works of art including *14 Pieces*. This work is located outside the South Australian Museum and was inspired by the contents in the museum. Collaborate with a partner to design a sculpture to be placed at the entrance of the Art Gallery of South Australia. How might your design respond to or connect with the Gallery's content and mission statement?

THINK AND DISCUSS

We no longer need botanical illustrators since the invention of photography and the microscope – discuss.

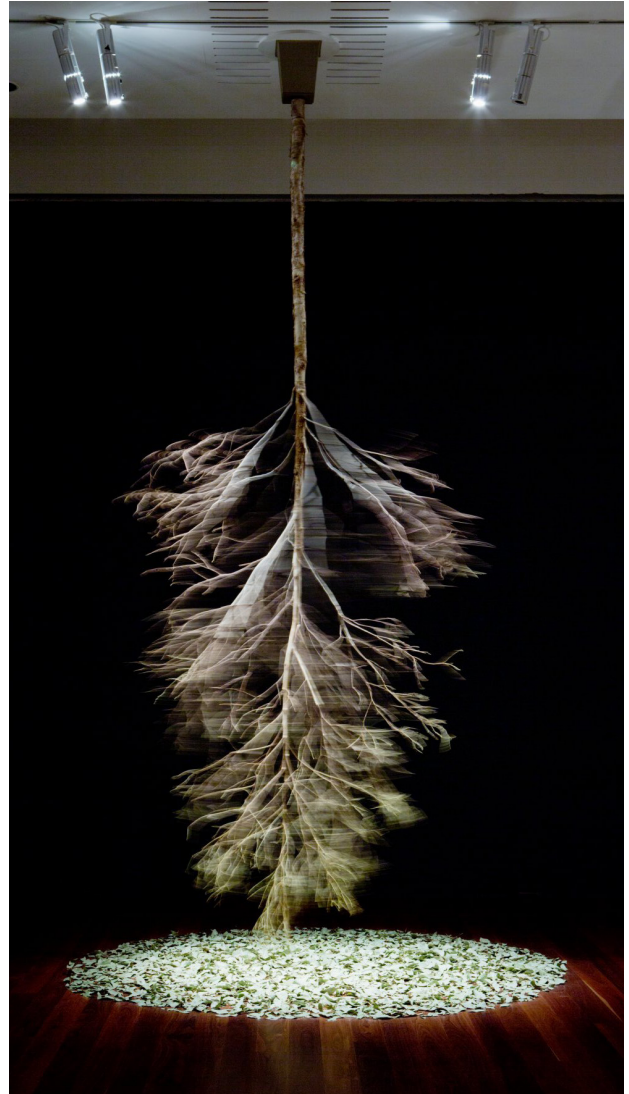


image: Installation view, HEARTLAND, 2013, Art Gallery of South Australia, featuring Hossein Valamanesh, *After rain*, 2013.



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