

The quietly dramatic art of Anne Fleming



Words and photos by Carol Altmann

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[/dropcap]ne of the many beautiful things to come out of the inaugural South-West International Women's Day Art Prize was the opportunity for people to see works by artists who don't receive – or necessarily seek – a lot of exposure.

One such artist is the softly spoken, warm-smiled **Anne Fleming**, a painter and ceramicist who works from her home studio in the main street of Dunkeld and who operates a small gallery in the same location called The Waiting Room.

Like many artists, Anne is not particularly keen on spending precious creative time learning how to master Facebook, or worrying about how to run a website, so apart from a presence on the [South West ArtsAtlas](#), most people find Anne's

studio by happy accident.

It is a delightful discovery.



The beautifully glazed work, "Catching up", which not only reflects Anne's talent, but her wry sense of humour.

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[dropcap]elicate, finely glazed ceramics are displayed alongside Anne's often-dramatic oil paintings inspired by the landscape: not just that of her immediate surroundings, but those of her extensive travels in remote Australia. She and her husband Doug, a GP, love to head out in their Toyota troop carrier to "camp rough" – there is no caravan attached.

"I have never been interested in painting pretty, chocolate-box type images. I love exploring the contrasts and the drama and to say something about what this landscape means to me," Anne explains.

There is a similar drama and movement in Anne's sculptural work but these, unlike most of her paintings, are influenced by observing people rather than places.

Anne picks up one such work, "Catching up", a beautifully white-glazed piece which at first appears to be two young women sitting having coffee, until you look more closely.

"One is talking on her mobile and the other is checking her mobile, which is how many young people catch up these days," Anne says, laughing.



Anne's entry in the inaugural South-West International Women's Day Art Prize, "Dancer". The work now belongs to a lucky Warrnambool owner.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #8F9F59;"] A
[/dropcap]ne chose one of her sculptural works to enter in the South-West IWD Art prize – 'Dancer', inspired by the Bangarra Dance Theatre – and it is this piece, and others like

it, that hint at her first career as a physiotherapist.

This is a work by someone that clearly knows how bodies move and what they look like when they do.

It is the same with another piece, a bent-backed shearer, who again reflects another stage in Anne's life when she and Doug decided to move from the Mornington Peninsula to the south-west.

"We decided we wanted to live on a few acres, so Doug started looking around for a practice in the country and there was one at Penshurst," Anne explains.

"The only problem is that it is very hard to just buy a few acres in this part of the world, so we ended up with 500!"

The pair had never farmed in their life, but were thrown in the deep end when about 1000 sheep were delivered "to the front door" of their property and needed to be mustered into a back paddock.

"They had to go through this tiny gate. We had no sheep dogs, but we had kids on bikes, and it took forever," Anne laughs at the memory.



'Wangi Falls', oil on board, is one of Anne's many dramatic landscapes inspired by her "rough camping" trips to remote Australia.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #8F9F59;"] W
[/dropcap]hile still working as a physiotherapist – and a farmer – Anne returned to study art at Deakin University in Warrnambool in the 1990s and picked up a thread that had lain dormant while she raised her family.

Growing up in Adelaide, Anne would watch the work of her mother, **Dorothy Potter**, who was part of Val Morgan Advertising and responsible for designing ads shown at cinemas and drive-ins.

"My mother was very artistic...and I had always loved art, but I hated art at school because that was all very formal, about colour wheels and that sort of thing," Anne says.

Anne took a series of small classes and workshops, but it was only once she enrolled at Deakin and studied under the guidance of lecturers like **Graeme Birt** and **Ross Gray** that she

began to find her “voice”.

“You are always learning,” she says, “and it’s never what you might call easy.

“A lot of people say, ‘oh, it must be so relaxing to just paint’, but it is often agony and very frustrating but then, at some point, the painting takes over and it works...and you realise you have created something that nobody has done before.”



Anne Fleming in her Dunkeld studio: “You are always learning and it is never what you might call easy.”

[box]The Waiting Room gallery can be found at 107B Parker St, Dunkeld. Open “haphazard” hours, but mostly weekends. Contact Anne on 0438 361 761. See more of her work on [South West ArtsAtlas here](#).[/box]

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