

# Member Profile

## Merran Esson



Merran Esson, *Tumbarumba Series* (detail), 2005. Ceramic, sizes: 95-97cm high. Photo: Greg Piper

"Merran Esson (NSW) has lived in the vast interior of inland Australia as well as amid the intensely urban confines of its largest cosmopolitan city – Sydney. Her work expresses the contrast between these extremes. Stunned by the way physical environment imposes boundaries on scale, form and function, Esson produces vigorous clay vessels (often pierced) that invite an exploration of the polarities of inside/outside, interior/exterior and belonging/exclusion. Esson is also inspired by the vagaries of texture and its reflection in the Australian landscape, particularly where there is a contrast between the environmental and the industrial; her large vessels have unique textural properties, which probe vernacular ideas about surface and form. Investigating concerns of identity and location, Esson's works respond to different physical environments and re-evaluate scale, form and function. Recent works, begun in the foothills of the Snowy Mountains near Tumbarumba in NSW in south eastern Australia are rural in origin but have an industrial scale. Esson combines linear patterns of the land as seen from the air with surfaces that resemble aged and corroded metal, as found in abandoned water tanks left to rust in back paddocks."

*Extract from an essay titled "A Survey of a Sense of Place" by Stephen Bowers. Published in Ceramics Art and Perception. Issue 58 2004.*

### Artist Statement

My work explores the role of function in ceramics and references containers from the rural landscape; containers such as buckets, and water tanks and silos that sit isolated in a paddock. But it is the combining of separate forms and bringing the work back into the home where discovery can take place. This continues my curiosity

in connecting objects together in ways that explore mutual survival. The creation of one complete piece from two objects is part of the inventive process.

In 2008 I exhibited a body of work titled *Displaced Places* referring to a variety of places stretching from Paris to southern NSW. A residency in the Cite Internationale des Arts in Paris in 2006 created an opportunity to look at place from afar, looking at Australia from Paris, and since my return looking at Paris from Australia. Perhaps it is too early to know how this will be reflected in the work that I make. Once in conversation with Australian poet Michael Brennan, who was also in the Cite at the same time, he mentioned that '*ideas need to settle and rust for a while*'. Sometimes I see structures in the work that remind me of the internal structure in the Metro and RER in Paris. Line work which comes directly from the painted pedestrian crossings in Paris are now translated into the interiors of tanks and buckets and take on new meaning as they combine with marks from my own landscape in southern NSW.

### Biography

Merran Esson is the Acting Head of Ceramics at The National Art School in Sydney, and is the Chair of the organising committee of the Australian Ceramics Triennale, an event held in July this year. She was awarded a NAVA Marketing Grant in 2006, the Gold Coast Ceramic Award in 2005 and the Poyntzpass Pioneer Ceramic Award in 2008 as part of the Sidney Myer Fund exhibition at the Shepparton Art Gallery. Merran is represented by Stella Downer Fine Art In Sydney. [www.merranesson.com](http://www.merranesson.com)