



# Sally Walk

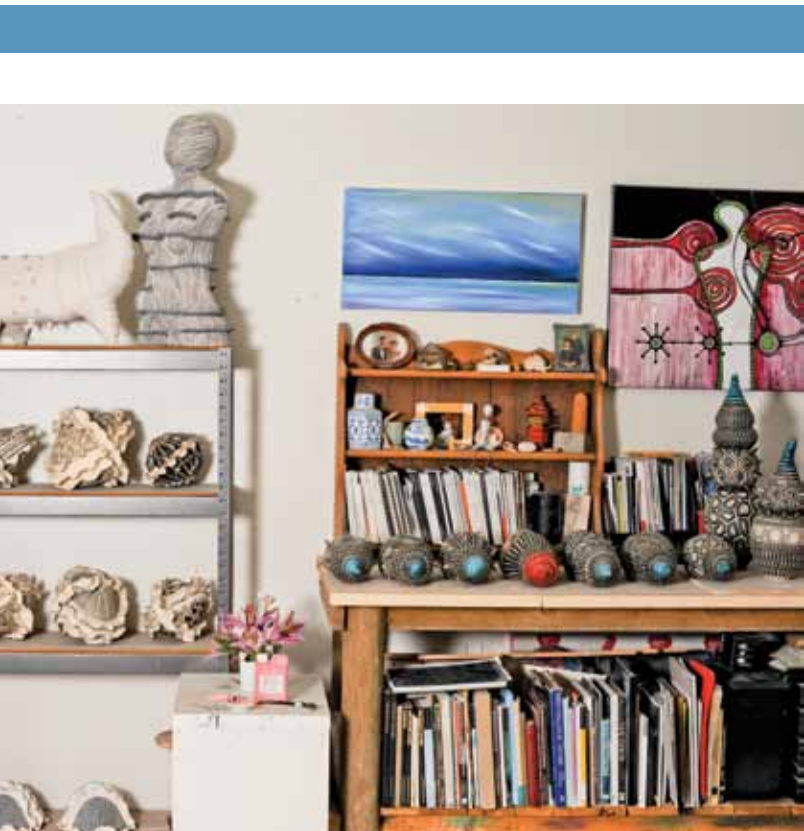
CURATED BY SANDRA EVERTSON

Award-winning Australian ceramics artist Sally Walk is a natural creative conduit, turning out animated, organic works of art. She's worked with her chosen medium for over 25 years, fascinated by form and texture. Sally's focus is primarily sculpture using porcelain and stoneware clays. "I am interested in human nature ... my current work explores the idea of facades and the way our outer self is used to ensure belonging," shares Sally.

I live in Warragul, Victoria, Australia, about an hour from Melbourne. I've always had a love affair with clay. I was introduced to it in high school thanks to one of those very inspirational teachers. At 17, I began a bachelor's degree in ceramic design at Monash University. I studied throwing, hand building, primitive firing techniques, glaze chemistry, printing, mold-making, and slip casting. Now, as I approach my 47th year, this all seems so long ago, but my love of clay has never left me. I am addicted to its properties, discovering its limitations, and pushing its boundaries. It's messy and it's time consuming and I love it. I feel that I have so much more to discover.

I grew up on the coast of Port Phillip Bay, spending my childhood at the beach searching rock pools for unusual sea creatures, snorkeling, and swimming. These wonderful experiences have no doubt influenced my artwork, which has often been described as referencing sea creatures. I was one of those children who was fascinated with the natural world: I collected shells, dead animal skulls, shark eggs, and anything that had an interesting texture. ➤





Ceramics has been, and I think always will be, my addiction, and thankfully it is also my job and my livelihood. I work from home in my purpose-built studio, and I also teach ceramics and art. During the day my students are my focus, and I work on my own sculptures in the evenings and on weekends. I am completely dedicated to my success as an artist.

I love form and particularly love clay in its unglazed state. I find clay to be most beautiful at the leather-hard stage. I'd love to find a glaze that would preserve this appearance, which is a challenge I continue to work on. I use minimal glazes, working in quite a different way than most ceramic artists. My focus is on sculpture, even though I also make all my own cups and plates.

I am fascinated by human nature and how we interact with each other. I'm fascinated by what makes us different and also how we are so alike. I want to better understand how we act, dress, and behave in order to feel a sense of belonging, to try and comprehend how prejudice and hatred can perpetuate itself in some societies. I use these ideas conceptually in my work, ultimately manifesting in highly textural surfaces, such as very harsh spikes and heavily carved line work or soft and delicate textures with frills or skirts of finely sculpted clay.

My current work groups together sentinel-type forms, and each section is thrown on the pottery wheel using a porcelaneous stoneware clay. They are joined together at the leather-hard stage and then carved with strong patterns. Under-glaze is painted into the patterning and the excess is wiped away to give an almost antique patina. The tips of each work are dipped in copper glaze to produce a strong turquoise coloring. They appear to be uniform and in formation, with spiked surfaces that act as a warning. In my imagination, this is an adaptation to prevent anyone from getting to really know you, always being on the defensive to avoid any pain. ➤



In contrast to the sentinels, I create groups of creature-like spheres that delicately rest on skirts of finely flowing frilled edges. Each rounded form has a carved patterned surface. Presented as groups, these works are obviously related, as if all part of a family. The pattern is like a fingerprint, similar yet unique to each form. They look as if they may open but they don't. Perhaps they are the keepers of all the family secrets, held within the facade of a beautiful outer shell.



I feel very comfortable in my studio. It's not a big space, just 18' x 12', with a window that faces out to my garden. Often there are blue wrens playing in the apple tree and I can easily be distracted by their frolicking. My pottery wheel is positioned to look out the window. I love to work in the warm afternoons as the sun shines in. I create to the sound of my favorite music and enjoy singing along as I work. I don't often sketch out designs, preferring to design by physically creating. It's not the most cost-effective way to work, but the beauty of clay is that it can be recycled.

My work is unique, and this is deliberate. I want to create artwork that is new and exciting, and that interprets ideas in new ways. I am passionate about developing my skills am fascinated by new technology (I just completed a 3-D and printing course).

What do I want out of life? It's not a complicated answer: I simply hope others will love my artwork as much as I do so I can keep creating for as long as I am able. I always have something in mind to lead me to the next creative venture.

WHERE WOMEN CREATE would like to thank Sally Walk for her involvement in our summer issue. To learn more, visit [sallywalk.com](http://sallywalk.com), Facebook (Sally Walk), and Instagram (@SALLY\_WALK). Sally Walk has been working in clay for over 30 years. She has a bachelor's degree in ceramic design, a post-graduate teaching degree, and she is currently completing the final year of a master's degree in visual art. In 2015, Sally was awarded the Lorenzo il Magnifico award (1st place) for ceramics at the Florence Biennale in Italy. She has presented at ceramics symposiums in China, India, Japan, and South Korea, and has exhibited her work in Australia, France, China, Japan, Italy, New Zealand, and South Korea. This year she will have a solo exhibition in Australia followed by the Tokyo International Art Fair, and in 2018 she will have a solo exhibition in New York.

Photography by Melanie Crookston. Learn more in *Traveling Companions* on page 134.