

ART COLLECTOR

MELBOURNE ART FAIR 2025 SPECIAL EDITION



EBONY RUSSELL



Why pay attention?

Since beginning her MFA at National Art School, Warrane/ Sydney in 2018, and transitioning to full time art practice, **Ebony Russell** has coupled the “unmatched energy” she receives from making with a focus on research, experimentation, and exploration. Her resulting practice is ever evolving and is catching the eyes of international and national curators. In just the last two years alone, Russell’s work has been invited for exhibition in London, New York, Venice, Los Angeles, China, and across Australia, notably at the Powerhouse Museum and Australian Design Centre. Her work is being acquired by major national collections, currently held by ArtBank, Parliament House, Powerhouse Museum, Wollongong Art Gallery, Bendigo Art Gallery, National Art School, Bega Valley Regional Gallery and Australian Catholic University among others.

What do they do?

Russell creates ornately sculpted ceramic works, borrowing techniques from cake decorating, a craft traditionally associated with women. She pipes coloured porcelain ruffles, pleats, shells, roses, and scrolls to create elaborate sculptures and often incorporates sprig-moulded or cast elements from her own collection of ceramics. Her recent work includes extravagantly constructed urn sculptures and large-scale works standing a metre and a half tall, featuring piped bricks as their base and polychromed forms akin to kraters, large two-handled vessels from Ancient Greece.

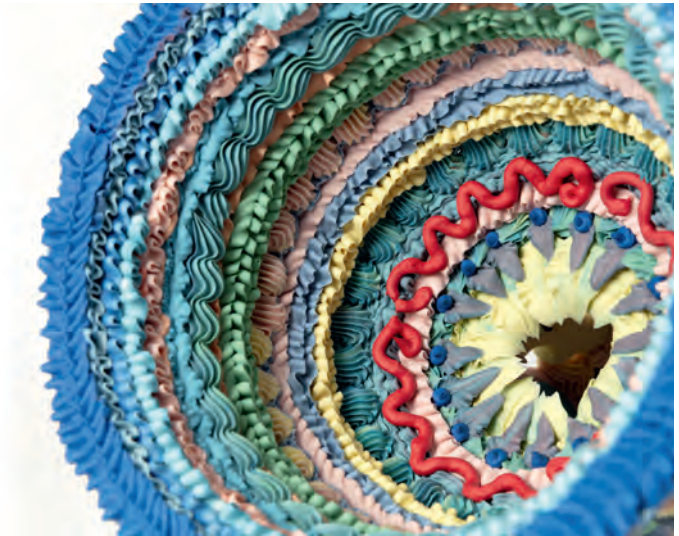
What’s going on?

Russell challenges the trivialisation of practices historically dismissed as ‘women’s work’ through her embrace of “excess, sentimentality, and ornamentation

RIGHT: Ebony Russell,
Polychrome Open Urn, 2025.
Porcelain and stain, 26 x 22
x 22cm.

OPPOSITE: Ebony Russell,
Polychrome Collection, 2025.
Porcelain and stain, variable
dimensions.

COURTESY: THE ARTIST
AND MARTIN BROWNE
CONTEMPORARY, WARRANE/
SYDNEY.



celebrating the emotional and aesthetic qualities that have been marginalised in patriarchal art traditions.” Through the very process of forming her sculptures, Russell is dismantling the separation between women’s work and artwork.

Her body of work developed for Melbourne Art Fair demands attention, with each piece inviting you to engage deeply — to notice the intricate decorative details, fissures and perforations. Look closely at the volute handles in *Polychrome Volute Krater I Pier*, and you’ll be rewarded with the faces of a goddess. These details were taken from Russell’s personal Victorian Parian ware vase and are in keeping with the autobiographical touches she includes in her work. Russell notes that “these misshapen, flattened, and compressed faces stare back at the viewer, standing guard over the sculptures”. This piece honours goddesses and myths, sparking reflection on how these female figures have been the subject of “centuries of misrepresentation of their power, roles, and strength through the male gaze.”

The gallery says...

“Inspired by the creative women in her life and bolstering her practice with an appreciation for the handmade, Ebony Russell’s unique technique involves methodically piping layers of porcelain into ornate, sculptural forms. The physical technique creates results not dissimilar to the frills and folds of icing on a cake, but in Russell’s case, the boundary between decoration and structure is dissolved. She has created a vast visual repertoire of historical references looking through a romantic and kitsch lens, while at the same time overturning superficial ideas of ‘decoration’ and ‘craft’ as a feminine, and therefore meaningless pursuit. Russell’s sculptures are gravity defying, often subtly slumped and leaning. The work speaks to the turbulence of navigating the world as a woman; or the aspects of womanhood that are dangerous and confusing.”

See it at:

Martin Browne Contemporary (Warrane/ Sydney), Booth B1.

ELOISE LINDEBACK