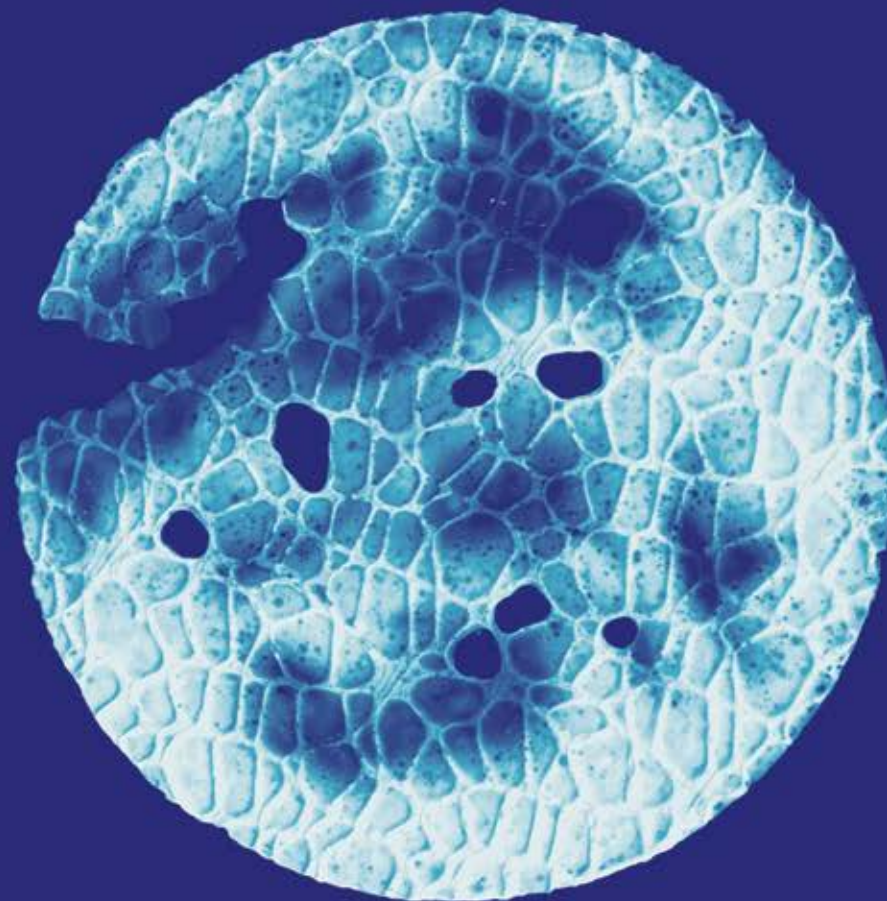
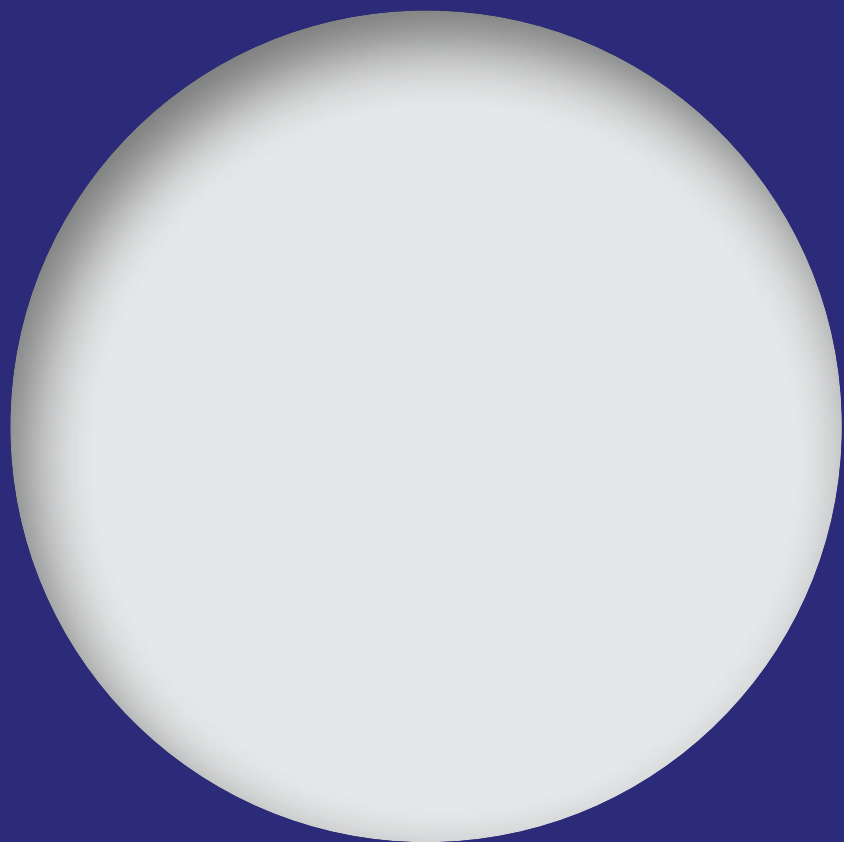


skopos



skopos

susie althorp

# From Country Arts SA

For more than a decade the Country Arts SA Breaking Ground Award has elevated and accelerated the careers of South Australian regional artists by providing the support to push the boundaries of their practice into new and uncharted territory.

This year’s winner Susie Althorp presents *skopos*, a body of work born from deep research into the way herbarium collecting practices can shape, share, and reimagine our understanding of ecosystems and plant matter. Drawn from Ancient Greek, the title means ‘to see’ or ‘to investigate’, but also denotes an instrument of observation. Through thinking about the herbarium as a site of discovery, Althorp draws upon motifs of scientific tools and viewing apparatus – microscopes, slides and lenses – to give audiences a magical encounter with unseen parts of our underwater world.

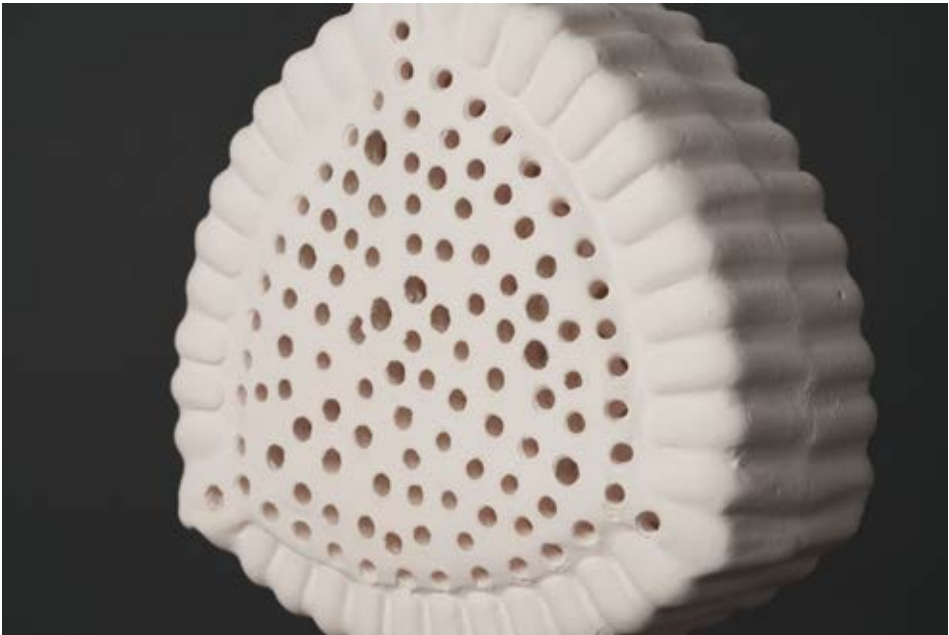
Based in Wallaroo Mines on the Yorke Peninsula, Althorp’s proximity to the coastline provides access to a diverse range of seaweed specimens that inspire her creative exploration. Her practice is further informed by her volunteer work at the South Australian State Herbarium, deepening her engagement with botanical and ecological research.

Althorp’s experimentation with clay, especially porcelain, translates her investigations into evocative sculptural and installation works. Her pieces capture both the strength and fragility of the natural world, and of the materials themselves.

We are delighted to welcome you to the 2025 Breaking Ground exhibition *skopos* by Susie Althorp.

## Acknowledgement of Country

At Country Arts SA, we live and create on the unceded lands of the First Peoples of South Australia. We respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, artists, communities, and recognise their continuing connection and spiritual relationship to these lands, waters and skies. We put ‘First Nations first’ and are committed to listening and helping care for Country, and to safeguard, share and celebrate living cultures.



Top and bottom: *planktos* (detail), 2025, porcelain, dimensions variable.  
Front page: *conectere* (detail), 2025, porcelain and nylon thread, dimensions variable.



*conectere* (detail), 2025, porcelain and nylon thread, dimensions variable.



Susie Althorp in her studio on Narungga Country/Yorke Peninsula.

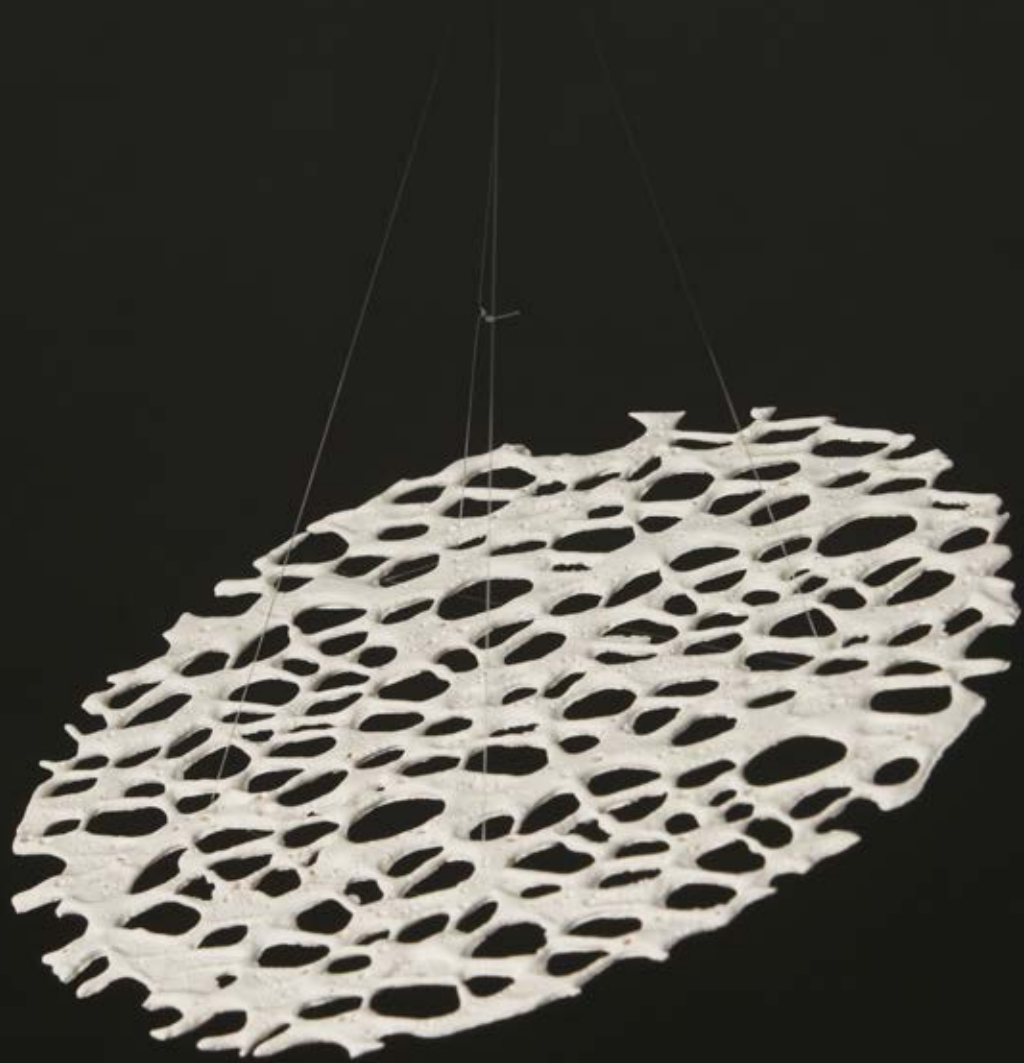
## Artist statement

Susie Althorp lives and works on Narungga land/Yorke Peninsula.

Porcelain serves as the primary medium chosen for its elemental connection to the earth and its dual qualities of strength and fragility. Through experimental studio processes, Althorp transforms biological forms into immersive installations and sculptural works. Translucent porcelain plays with light to create ephemeral spaces where form, texture, pattern, and shadow invite reflection on the fluid nature of life.

Althorp's artistic practice explores the intersection of art, science, and technology. Captivated by the immensity of the ocean and the delicate ecosystems contained within, her work interrogates our relationship with nature through both scientific and sensory lenses. From seaweed collected in the intertidal zones to the microscopic intricacies of drifting algae, her investigations evoke a sublime tension, where awe meets unease.

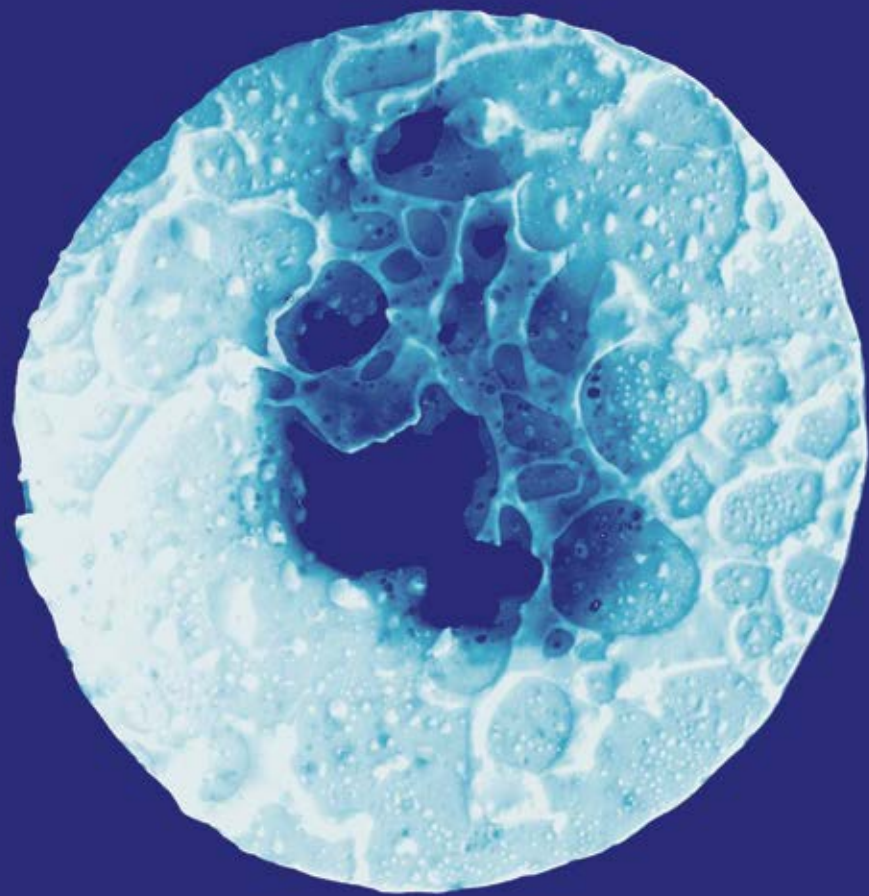
Central to her practice is research, currently historical viewing instruments and contemporary devices, tools which have shaped scientific understanding, and in turn have altered human perception. By deconstructing these instruments, the artist reveals the fragile boundaries between, observation, interpretation, and illusion.



*conectere* (detail), 2025, porcelain and nylon thread, dimensions variable.



*skeletons* (detail), 2025, porcelain, dimensions variable.



# Catalogue essay

by Ian Gibbins, July 2025

## skopos

At the change of tide, we feel the push and pull of earth and moon and the sheer mass of ocean around us. For now, bare feet gently cross hydrated sands, rippled by the activity of last night's waves. Soon the sea will return, perhaps ankle deep, perhaps up to our knees, and once again, our view of what might lie beneath is refracted and reflected by peaks and troughs, eddies and unpredictable surges in a surface as fluid as light itself.



She moves slowly, mindful of where she should place her next step. Sea and sky, sea and sand, sand and sky... the surfaces, the interfaces, shift around her, give way, allow access, close behind her. What might be found beneath these boundary zones? What might these hidden transitions tell us? She is a watcher, a guardian, scouting and collecting on our behalf, marking her tracks in memory for future revelation.

+ + + + +

Previous page, above and right: *conectere* (detail), 2025, porcelain and nylon thread, dimensions variable.



planktos

Between sea and sky, the surface is never static. Every movement leaves a trace: a puff of wind, schools of fish, a diving bird, our hands and feet, an offshore storm. Our perspective changes with the time of day and night, the angle of the sun or moon, and the movements, always the movements.

This is the realm of microscopic biota, the plankton. Amongst them, powered by sunlight, diatoms generate oxygen that supports all life on earth. Encased in glassy armour intricately patterned with ridges and spines and pores, the diatoms invisibly spin and twirl beneath the surface currents.

Yet, here we can experience diatoms on their own terms, at their own scale. Suspended in air, open to breezes from passers-by, these porous porcelain reconstructions invite us into their hybrid world of form and function, a re-imagining linked to their reality by careful observation and interpretation.

+ + + + +

conectere / colligere

Between sea and sand, the surface shifts slowly, grain by grain. A little below, denizens we rarely see pursue their private lives: the snails and cockles, the worms and shrimps. A little above is the zone of algae and the ecologies they support. Buoyed by the density of water, anchored by holdfasts, the algae need neither woody trunks nor stiff stems. Like diatoms, they gather energy from whatever sunlight can reach their depth, from whatever photons their reds and browns can absorb.

Inevitably, holdfasts break and algae drift ashore. We see them there in the shallows; we can collect them there within reach of air. No longer viable, they can persist in our archives. No longer between sea and sand, they are preserved between paper and press, annotated with name and place and the time they last experienced the wash of the sea, the foundation of sand. Cast in fine porcelain, they gather new light in our gaze.

+ + + + +



Stereoscope instrument from artists' personal collection.

ocellus

Between sand and sky, the surface feels familiar. This is the underpinning for the domains we most often inhabit. This is where we walk, where we breathe. It is a surface where shadows are most clearly defined.

The sand was once stone, created deep underground, eroded and abraded by wind and water. Fused into glass, the sand lets the light through, as bright as day. Transformed into lenses, the glass refracts our sight-lines, from sky to beneath the surface of the sea, the better to magnify and resolve the life that gives us life, the organisms that have preceded us by uncountable generations.

Porcelain is its own form of glass. In her hands, it focuses our gaze past the surfaces, onto what is and what is not and what the alternatives might be. She urges us to pay attention.

+ + + + +

## Susie Althorp: *skopos*

22 August – 13 September 2025

Praxis Artspace

### From the artist

I would like to thank Country Arts SA for this extraordinary opportunity, especially Lauren Mustillo for her enthusiasm and dedication to this project, and Beth Wuttke for her design work on this catalogue.

SALA Festival.

My mentor Catherine Truman for her wonderful knowledge, insights and help extending my practice in new directions.

Praxis Artspace, Patty Chehade, and her team.

Installation assistance by Sam Mulcahy.

Sam Roberts photography.

BGSA Herbarium especially Carolyn Ricci, Prof. Bob Baldock and Betty Smart for providing access to the incredible algae collection, a source of great inspiration.

Emeritus Professor Ian Gibbins for his beautiful catalogue essay and sharing of experiences.

My loving family, Brenton, Alice and Becky for your enduring support and encouragement.

### Country Arts SA

Kath M Mainland CBE, Chair Country Arts SA Board

Anthony Peluso, Chief Executive/Executive Director

Anthony Jones, Chief Financial Officer

Cassandra Barendregt, Development Director

Hugh Atkinson, Manager Human Resources

Merilyn de Nys, Arts and Culture Leader

Sam Yates, First Nations Arts Director

Sussan Baldwin, Arts Centres Leader

Breaking Ground curator: Lauren Mustillo, Visual Arts Manager

**Susie Althorp: *skopos*** has been commissioned by Country Arts SA through the Breaking Ground Award presented in partnership with SALA Festival and Praxis Artspace.

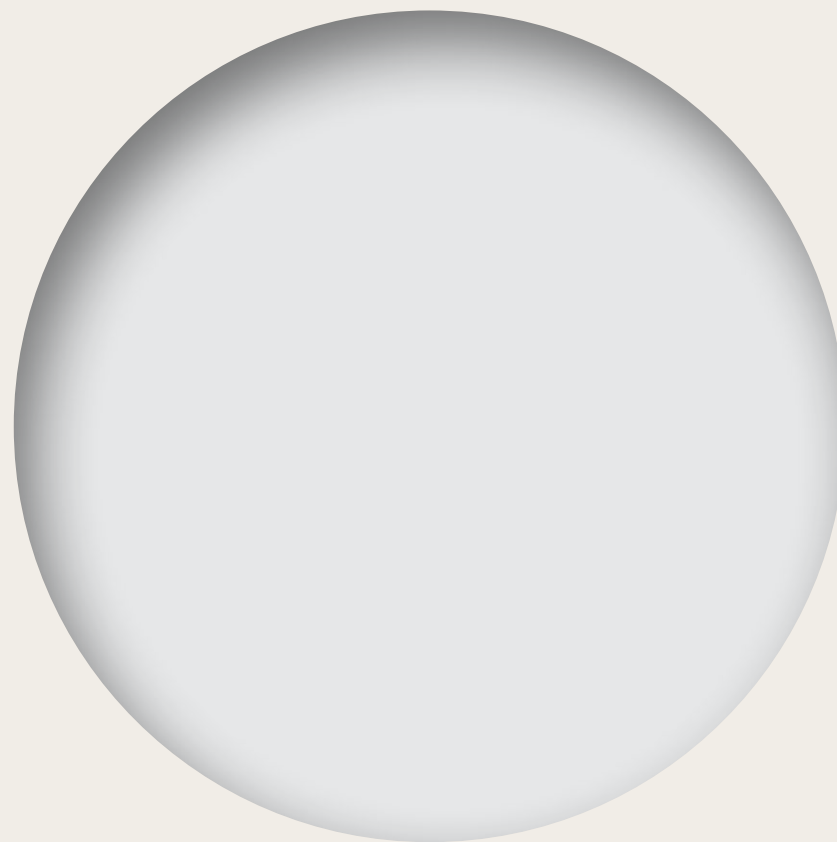
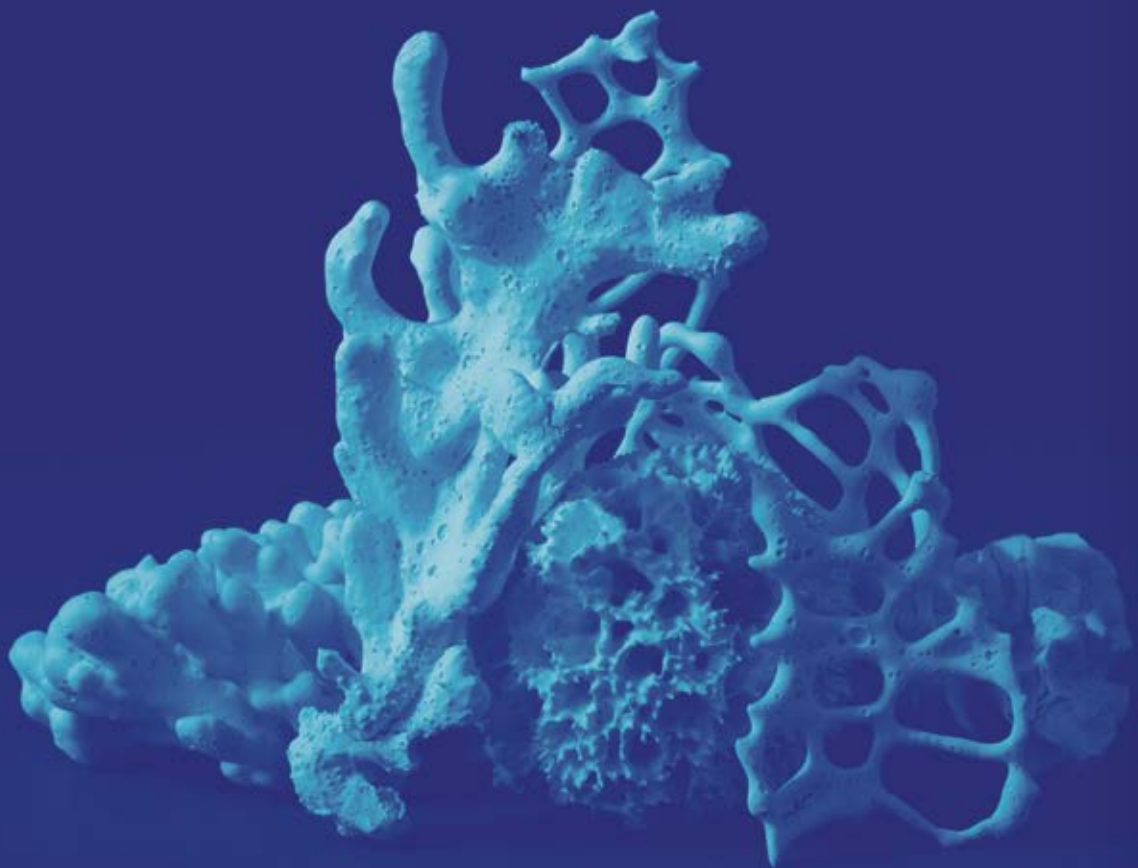
© Country Arts SA, the artist and authors.

All photography by Sam Roberts.

ISBN: 978-0-9954008-8-7



*planktos* (detail), 2025, porcelain, dimensions variable.



*skeletons* (detail), 2025, porcelain, dimensions variable.

