



BANKSIA LADY

CELIA ROSSER, BOTANICAL ARTIST

CAROLYN LONDON

This is the story of Celia Rosser, internationally acclaimed botanical illustrator, who ultimately dedicated her life to painting the entire genus of *Banksia*, the only artist to have done such a thing. Her dedication to the task put her at the centre of the Monash *Banksia* Project underwritten by Monash University for twenty-five years and culminating in the production of an extraordinary three-volume florilegium that became one of the great books published in the twentieth century.

This is also the story of the emergence of an artist, who grew up in difficult circumstances during the Great Depression, and pursued her art partly as a way of protecting herself from the harsher side of life. The narrative stays focused on the path of the artist, as she grows up, develops her talent, and learns to understand and take advantage of it. The story follows her struggles to pursue her artistic passion while fulfilling the expectations of women in the 1950s to subordinate themselves to their husbands as wives and mothers. As her children become more independent, she recognises opportunities and, eventually, finds a place at Monash University to fully express herself through her art.

In telling this story of Celia Rosser's unparalleled talent and extraordinary achievement, this book explores the history of botanical illustration, botany, academia, gardens and their barbarism, and Australia's place in changing the shape of the world.

 MONASH University
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