Simone Fraser has always had an interest in the ancient work from the Mediterranean and the medieval Islamic world. She explains: "Beauty has been an important element in my work. However, there is no 'golden rule' of beauty. The subjective nature of it comes from the fact that it is in the eye of the beholder; and it is a phenomenon that has changed throughout history and has helped form traditions and civilizations. It is more than what we can observe and what we are comfortable with. It needs to be tested. For example, imperfection yields new forms of beauty and this investigation is a constant in my work. Therefore my role as an artist is not to define what beauty is but question what we see and what our relationship with beauty is." 

During our lunch Simone shows me a bowl which has a firmly imprinted spiral visible in its softly thrown interior. It wraps itself around the form, unfolding its embossed narrations. This spiralling form from her early years at Canberra School of Art. Simone continues this research in this new element together and pushing into new ways of using beauty subjectively. Simone Fraser has been making ceramics for a little over 48 years. She creates this work on a potter’s wheel and is able to work on a large scale by using a flame thrower from the gas bottle to stiffen her clay as she forms the individual pieces. This technique was part of her education under Alan Peascod at Canberra School of Art in 1979. Simone continues to develop this way of working, passing these skills to students today at the National Art School in Sydney.
In writing about dry glazes in a recently published book on the work of Alan Peascod, she writes that it is an "intensely personal methodology and needs sensitivity and skill to develop to a point where it can be used to resolve particular aesthetic aims. It relies on intuition, spontaneity and a willingness to break with conventional glaze thinking. It can’t be replicated as an industrial process. Every work is different – the goal is variation not consistency".

This exhibition has a strong sculptural presence. Tall pieces stand alone, while others are grouped together like the tall tree trunks referencing the forests from two of her favourite places, the hinterland behind Byron Bay in northern NSW, and Tathra on the south coast of NSW. Other influences from Cradle Mountain in Tasmania and Table Mountain in South Africa, where she was born, are also hinted at here. There are glimpses of blue amongst the green and yellow glazes and I am reminded of billabongs viewed from the air. As I sit talking to Simone, I look over her shoulder at her luscious Sydney garden, with layers of green foliage and glimpses of her next door neighbour’s pool. I see the layers of colour and texture that have found their way into her studio. This new work presents us with clay textures and patterns that show a strong relationship to the vast dry Australian landscape.

Simone explains, "As we are forced to join a world of fast communication with little time for deliberation, we equally need to follow the trail of our imagination in the silence of our inner domain. We need to 'see', and renew our inspiration, connecting with our origin in mind, and all the while taking another step outwards. The melting pot of references in this body of work: from the fossil, the archaeological, the environmental to the contemporary, have melded to produce a personal timeline in clay that still allows individual interpretation. Touch is an important aspect of the work – the trace of the human hand, the finger mark, the scrape. It’s about a context – a narrative, unfolding through its layers, while still referencing the timelessness of a tradition".

Simone Fraser is represented by Sabbia Gallery, Sydney and Narek Galleries, Tanja.

EXHIBITION
Articulation: aspects creating form
25 July to 16 August, 2014
Sabbia Gallery
www.sabbiagallery.com
www.narekgalleries.com
www.simonefraser.com.au

01 Landscrape (detail), 2013, ceramic, finger scraped and pressed with dry glaze, 56cm (h)
02 Contained Impression, White Satin, 2013, ceramic with white satin glaze, 60cm (h)
03 Simone Fraser. Photography: Greg Piper
04 Contained Impression (and detail), 2013, ceramic with grey blue dry glaze, 55cm (h)
05 Landscrape (and detail), 2013, ceramic, finger scraped and pressed with dry glaze, 56cm (h)

Courtesy the artist and Sabbia Gallery, Sydney