

REVIEW: 'The Flower Hunter Ellis Rowan' by Patricia Fullerton

His book is a biography of an Australian artist born in 1848. She worked in a field and at a time that was dominated by male artists such as Tom Roberts and Julian Ashton. Early, few people in her time appreciated her work, but by 50 years of age, she was a household name in Australia.

Ellis Rowan did watercolour studies of exotic plant, bird, fungi and insect life on grey paper. She worked quickly in 'Plein Air' exclusively, with no preliminary sketches. She was an intrepid explorer and painter of over 3000 works. Her works are botanically accurate.

Rowan spent 50 years exploring the world, determined to record as many exotic species as possible- all that, dressed in her Victorian finery. Many of these species are now extinct or endangered. She explored rainforests in Queensland, the remote outback of Australia, the Caribbean, Papua New Guinea, the Himalayas, Europe and the United States.

This book is a lovely tribute to her life and works, with many beautiful reproductions. You could easily spend a quiet afternoon reading about this Australian artist.

Sue Severino