



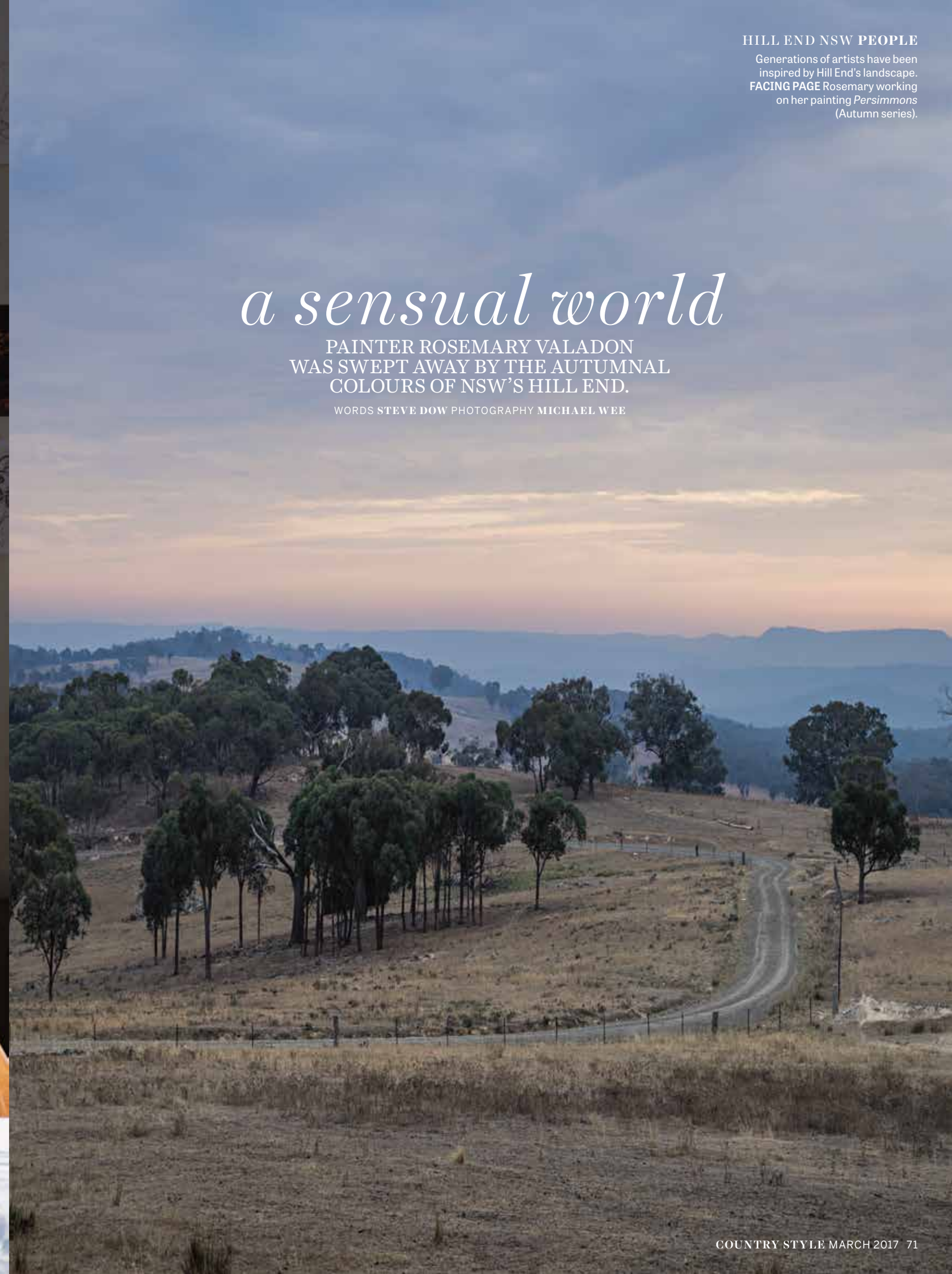
HILL END NSW PEOPLE

Generations of artists have been inspired by Hill End's landscape. **FACING PAGE** Rosemary working on her painting *Persimmons* (Autumn series).

*a sensual world*

Painter ROSEMARY VALADON WAS SWEEPED AWAY BY THE AUTUMNAL COLOURS OF NSW'S HILL END.

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Painter Rosemary Valadon's influences range from the Renaissance opulence of Michelangelo to the crime noir of the Mickey Spillane novels much loved by her late pilot father, Francis Norman Crouch.

The landscape of the former goldmining town of Hill End, in the Bathurst region of NSW, has its own drama, although it's much quieter now than it was in its heyday. Here, Rosemary bought a circa 1870s miner's cottage in 2005, then spent more than a year building a studio on site.

Rosemary's surrounds are very different from the world of the Italian Renaissance painters she admires and the gritty, urban 20th-century pulp fiction she reads. The latter inspired *Wicked Women*, her series of portraits of identities such as crime writer Tara Moss holding a pistol and former crown prosecutor Kara Shead lounging in green underwear.

"Women are supposed to be so kind and good, that's the archetype we keep getting thrust at us," says Rosemary. "We have as many other feelings, not of destructiveness, but of badness, or something darker and interesting."

Rosemary, now in her late 60s, was born in Turramurra, a northern suburb of Sydney, when it was still wild bush. She and her sister Carolyn were tomboys, matching adventures with brothers James and Philip. When she was 11, the family moved to Greensborough and then Eltham, Victoria, which were very rural at the time. "We'd take off all day and play in the bush," she says.

The mountainside at Hill End is dug out with mines and you can't walk very far without finding a disused shaft. However, by the 1940s, Hill End's goldmining days were over and the town was better known as an artists' colony. Russell Drysdale

and Donald Friend painted here. Rosemary first visited in 2003, on a one-month Bathurst Regional Art Gallery residency. It was May. "The autumn hues here are absolutely glorious," she says. "It's full of colour; it's very English. I thought it was going to be like a Drysdale painting, but it wasn't. There were the most beautiful oaks and maples all dropping their leaves. It was a really good community."

Today, the population of Hill End is in decline — Rosemary estimates that there are only about 85 people in the centre of town, and young residents are moving away for jobs in Mudgee and Bathurst. Rosemary lives alone and relishes being a long distance from other people, although her front gate looks towards the township.

The original cottage was made of wattle and daub, and clad in galvanised iron, but in the 1970s a local builder and miller replaced the lean-to at the back (used as the kitchen), adding a large bathroom and living area, and strengthening the ceiling and roof. The cottage still has charm — although Rosemary prefers to spend the summer months in the air-conditioned comfort of her studio. The artist's love of rich colour is evident in her bedroom, which is painted a lovely deep red. By the mantelpiece in the living area is a painting of a woman who looks like a wry Judy Davis with a plate of oranges, but is actually a portrait that merges the faces of Rosemary and a friend, painted in 1990 in the style of German painter Paula Modersohn-Becker. "It has followed me wherever I go," says Rosemary.

Her greatest inspiration at Hill End is her garden and the contrasting seasons. The garden is planted with roses and maples, and there's a productive vegetable patch with tomatoes and spinach, and herbs such as sage. The apples, >



**CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT** One of Rosemary's paintings hanging by the mantelpiece. "I wasn't wanting a portrait in particular, just a woman's face, so I used elements of my own and a friend's face," she says; Hill End's Royal Hotel was built in 1872; Rosemary painted her front door using stencils that she designed; *Persimmons* (Autumn series) is half complete here. Rosemary adopted Paris the cat after he was abandoned in a Bathurst park. **FACING PAGE** Rosemary's desk strewn with tools of the trade.



CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT Rosemary's work *Roses and Red Browns*; *Tied Up* hangs behind Rosemary's desk. It was part of the *Wicked Women* exhibition at Sydney's Justice and Police Museum in 2012, as well as the Orange Regional Art Gallery in 2014; these metal plates painted with roses were found in the house when Rosemary bought it, along with the bowl and table; the detailed work *Euphoria* hangs in Rosemary's bedroom. **FACING PAGE** Autumn on tree-lined Beyers Avenue, which runs through the centre of Hill End.

**HL** For the best trees to plant for autumn colour, visit [homelife.com.au/gardening/plant-guides/autumn-trees-and-shrubs](http://homelife.com.au/gardening/plant-guides/autumn-trees-and-shrubs)



nectarines, pears, almonds and quinces are doing fine. "I make a lot of quince jelly," Rosemary says. "There are lots of plums, too. We all get into plums up here."

After a long spell of painting still-life works and portraits — she was a finalist in the 2016 Archibald Prize for her portrait of neighbour and fellow artist Luke Sciberras — Rosemary is now starting to look more at mortality. Her beloved mother, Margery, was born on a farm in Lincoln, England, and died last August aged 96. "I've started a series of still-lives in which the settings and the flowers are starting to become dry and fragile and old. It's a beautiful state with the flowers. So I'm doing that as a homage to my mother." *CS*  
*Rosemary Valadon appears in the documentary A Sensual World, which screens on ABC TV on March 14th. For more about Rosemary's work, visit [rosemaryvaladon.com.au](http://rosemaryvaladon.com.au)*