

CULTURE BOOKS

A Tear in the Glass review: Mary Ryllis Clark's moving account of a life lived

By **Steven Carroll**

August 10, 2018 – 12.15am



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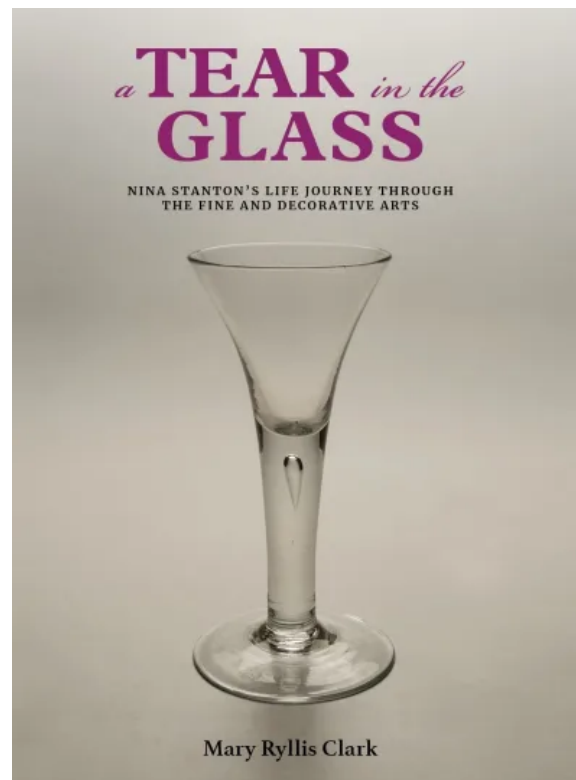
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A Tear in the Glass

Mary Ryllis Clark

Anchor Books, \$45

When Nina Stanton, a museum director for most of her life, was dying in 2009 she was working on a memoir with a difference. She had been director of Melbourne's Johnston Collection and chose 100 paintings, sculptures and artefacts from it to illuminate and illustrate her story. When she knew she was too sick to finish it she asked her friend Mary Ryllis Clark to take over. The result - Stanton's writing in italics housed in Clark's commentary and observations of her friend's life - is sad, moving, but always lit with the beauty of the talismanic objects. A funerary horse from the Tang dynasty, for example, takes Stanton back to the house in Glenroy where she grew up where her father would create shadow figures on a wall with his hands. The strategy is highly effective in evoking a much troubled yet professionally successful life.



A Tear in the Glass. By Mary Ryllis Clark.