

Vale Hogarth Galleries!

By Jane Raffan, on 26-Aug-2010

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The gallery pioneered the contemporary contextualisation of Aboriginal art; owner Clive Evatt claimed he was the first to put a bark painting on a white wall under a spotlight^[i]. Although the Galleries were originally devoted to showcasing both Indigenous and non Indigenous Australian art, in 1982 Evatt decided to focus solely on Aboriginal art.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s successive directors Kerrie Williams, Helen Hansen and Ace Bourke developed the exhibition program and brought the gallery acclaim with landmark community shows and breakthrough exhibitions of urban based artists such as Michael Riley and Destiny Deacon. In the late 1990s they championed the young stars of the Lockhart River gang.

Over time however, as the profiles of art centres grew, and centres themselves became more directly accessible to collectors, Hogarth found it increasingly difficult to source premier work, which is routinely allocated to high profile dealers and their clientele well before a group show of community work is staged in the big smoke.

With the boom in the Aboriginal art market earlier last decade, the gallery's business model was impacted by an explosion of competition, much of it online. Four years later its ethos and financial position was described as being delicately balanced.^[ii] New layers of bureaucracy and the market downturn since 2007 would have further compounded constraints.

Industry portents aside, the closure represents a sad loss to the commercial landscape for Aboriginal art.

^[i] Australian Art Collector, Issue 37, July 2006, p185

^[ii] Australian Art Collector, Issue 37, July 2006, p188

About The Author

Jane Raffan runs ArtiFacts, an Art Services Consultancy based in Sydney, with a specialist focus in the field of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art. Jane is an accredited valuer in Aboriginal Art for the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program. She has over 20 years experience in the arts sector, working initially for the Art Gallery of New South Wales, and then over twelve years in the auction industry. www.artifacts.net.au.