

Handpipers & Queen

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Glossary

Edited by Raffaella Barker
with Matthew Sturgis

★ PHOTOGRAPH BY JULIAN BROAD

HOSSACK REGIMENT 'I want people to share the enjoyment I feel for art,' says Rebecca Hossack, the gorgeous Australian amazon and art-loving founder of the modestly

named Rebecca

Hossack Gallery.

'I came to London seven years ago to study law at the Middle Temple but ended up worshipping in the National Gallery.' Even now her impassioned advocacy of her artists' merits suggests that she would not have been wasted at the bar. After the cultural whirl of the Christie's course, the Peggy Guggenheim Gallery and the Last Wapping Show (for the organisation of which she won a Government award), Rebecca set up her own gallery in Windmill Street.

When so many exhibition spaces are distant warehouses or derelict grocers' shops given a lick of white emulsion and couple of spotlights, it is a rare delight to visit Rebecca's elegant gallery in swinging Fitzrovia. 'I love Fitzrovia,' she enthuses. 'It's so full of life and Greek restaurants full of plastic flowers.'

Rebecca has added greatly to the life and colour of the area, not only by her own presence but also by bringing with her two amorous bulldogs, Moon and Stella ('They're engaged'), and by setting up a pair of green bull-terrier bronzes (cast by Edward

Cronshaw) on the pavement outside her gallery. They are all much admired.

While most of Rebecca's stable of artists is British she has not neglected her Australian roots. 'I think it is important to show the northern hemisphere what the south is up to.'

Although the uncharitable and ignorant are often tempted to view the 200 years of antipodean history from Captain Cook to Crocodile Dundee as a cultural Nullabor Plain, one should not forget (even in the year of her bicentenary) that Australia boasts a living culture of her own. For over 50,000 years, aboriginal tribes have been depicting their tribal 'dreamings' in the sands of the outback. Only recently, traumatised by confinement in Government reservations and inspired by 'western' example, have they started painting these 'conceptual desert landscapes' on to canvas.

The results are extraordinary: large geometrical abstracts, picked out in the deep, rich colours of the central Australian desert. The pictures are alive with the spirit of the ancient songlines and the cool, dispassionate shapes of 'neo-Geo' art.

Throughout July Rebecca is showing the first major exhibition of aboriginal art in this country. 'There will be work from ten painters of Papunya Tula settlement,' she says. 'I am treating them as contemporary Australian artists, not ethnological curiosities.'

The Rebecca Hossack Gallery is at 35 Windmill Street, W1 (409 3599) and is open from Monday to Saturday, from 11 am to 7 pm.



★ PHOTOGRAPH BY DANIEL THISTLETHWAITE