

# *dreaming in* **LONDON**

The two *London galleries* and *Georgian-style home* of Melbourne-born Rebecca Hossack exemplify her devotion to indigenous and EXOTIC ART.

invogue



HOSSACK STANDS IN THE DOORWAY TO HER BEDROOM IN A FLOWING NICOLE FARHI DRESS. TO HER RIGHT, AN ABORIGINAL SHIELD BY 1960S PORT KEATS ARTIST DAN LANTJIN. BEHIND HER, JEWISH BERBER RUGS, MADE FROM OLD CLOTHES, FROM THE ATLAS MOUNTAINS IN MOROCCO.

WHETHER SHE IS championing a rising star in Aboriginal art like Lloyd Kwilla or taking on the local council about planting trees in her street (she ran the New York City marathon last year to raise the £20,000 needed to line the surrounding streets of her new gallery with silver birch trees), Australian-born London gallerist Rebecca Hossack is a force to be reckoned with. Tall, elegant and effusive, it's difficult not to be swept up in her whirlwind of conversation, laughter and great strides across the striking sunlit spaces of her gallery or the nearby garden squares in London's Bloomsbury.

Arriving in London in the early 1980s from a law degree in Melbourne on the premise of becoming a barrister in Middle Temple, she instead chose to enrol in a year's history of art course at Christie's – and her future as a leading gallerist in indigenous and “unusual, individual” European art, an Australian cultural attaché and a key mover and shaker in London's art world was set in motion. >



< She opened her first gallery in 1988 on Windmill Street, a second space on Charlotte Street in 1991 and the new gallery, on Conway Street, earlier this year.

Hossack's greatest skill is seeing beauty where others cannot – she has supported artists such as octogenarian potter Ann Stokes when the rest of the art world thought she was mad. (Stokes, whose tree sculpture appears on the front cover of this issue, is soon to be the subject of a major book and retrospective, such is her current popularity.) The new gallery space, left unsurprisingly empty for more than 18 months, was hidden behind an ugly boarded-up building with low ceilings and just one small window when Hossack spotted it on a walk from her gallery in Charlotte Street to home. She has since transformed it into a magnificent three-storey exhibition space, complete with Aboriginal reference library and leafy green roof terrace.

In her tall, thin sliver of a Georgian mews home, which she shares with her author-husband Matthew Sturgis, she has made each room exude a personal intimacy without feeling cluttered or overwhelming. Where her last house was swathed with rich colour on every wall, floor, ceiling and door, this house, in which she and Sturgis have lived for the past decade, is light, white and airy. It is the perfect backdrop to the colours of her glorious collection of drawings and bark paintings by the likes of Papua New Guinea's Mathias Kauage and Australians Robert Campbell Jr and the late Clifford Possum and Emily Kngwarreye, all friends who have stayed with Hossack in the past. >



STOKES' CERAMIC OWLS STRIKE





**THESE PAGES, FAR LEFT, TOP:** HOSSACK'S HUMBLE MODE OF TRANSPORT, HER BICYCLE, PARKED OUTSIDE HER BLOOMSBURY HOME. **LEFT:** LOOKING FROM HOSSACK'S BED TOWARDS A QUEENIE MCKENZIE OCHRE PAINTING. TO THE RIGHT, AN ANTIQUE ELM NURSING CHAIR FROM THE LAKE DISTRICT. **RIGHT:** HOSSACK'S DRESSING ROOM. THE CUPBOARD, MADE OF UNTREATED BUILDER'S SCAFFOLDING PLANKS, IS DESIGNED TO FEEL LIKE A SHIP'S CABIN. THE FURNITURE – "MY HEIRLOOMS," HOSSACK JOKES – WAS INHERITED FROM HOSSACK'S GREAT AUNT CICELY FROM SOUTH WALES.



## EXTAPOSITION OF CRAFTSMANSHIP AGAINST THE MODERNITY OF A SAARINEN TABLE



**THESE PAGES, FAR LEFT:** HOSSACK ON THE ROOF TERRACE OF HER GALLERY. **MIDDLE LEFT:** AN OCHRE PAINTING BY KIMBERLEY ARTIST GOODY BARRETT ADORNS THE LIBRARY AND STURGIS'S DRESSING ROOM. ON THE RADIATOR, A PILE OF TEXTILES. **LEFT:** OWLS IN A CHESTNUT TREE BY ANN STOKES SITS ATOP A SAARINEN TABLE. THE RUG ON THE FLOOR WAS WOVEN BY ARTIST ABIGAIL MCLENNAN WITH COLOURS CHOSEN TO MATCH EACH OF THE SEATS OF THE SAARINEN 'TULIP' DINING CHAIRS. **ABOVE:** INSIDE HOSSACK'S DRESSING ROOM, LOOKING THROUGH TO THE BEDROOM. AROUND THE DOOR HANGS HER ECLECTIC COLLECTION OF JEWELLERY.

< Sturgis makes his mark, too, with a number of walls lined extensively with books, and Hossack has filled many nooks and crannies with her amusing collections of talismanic 'miniatures' (from fish, owls, dogs and birds to cars and bicycles in wood, clay and recycled tin). "I've been obsessed with small things since I was a child and have never stopped collecting them. Matthew sometimes clears some of them away to see if I'll notice, and teases that after six months he puts them in the bin, but it's not true," she laughs.

Tiles and plates featuring Australian animals by Stokes line the neat, chic kitchen, and the tree with Stokes' ceramic owls strikes a stunning juxtaposition of craftsmanship against the modernity of a Saarinen 'Tulip' table and chairs in the dining room. Textiles collected on her travels, from Guatemalan tunics featuring birds and flowers to Indian life quilts made from the wedding dresses of one family's many female generations, lend vibrancy to a linen cabinet in the bathroom. Sunshine dances through the assorted blue and green glass lining shelves across the bathroom window, created to mask the view of the cobbled mews outside and provide privacy whilst bathing.

Hossack is indeed the antithesis of the all-black clad and red-lipsticked gallery owner; "I hate cool," she laughs. Instead, a neon motto above the office wall in the gallery sums up Hossack's driving force: 'work hard and be nice to people'. She has no problem in doing either of these things. "I have spent the last 20 years trying to survive as I built up the gallery, so now I want the next 20 to be about doing shows I really want to do, to work with artists I really believe in, and to create one of the most glorious galleries which I'll still be hobbling around the corner to, with my zimmer frame, when I'm 90." FIONA MCCARTHY  
*Rebecca Hossack Gallery, 2a Conway Street, London and 28 Charlotte Street, London, UK, (+44) 20 7436 4899; www.r-h-g.co.uk.*



**ABOVE:** HOSSACK'S OFFICE AT THE NEW GALLERY, WITH A 1950S FRENCH DESK, AN ORIGINAL EAMES CHAIR AND VIETNAMESE COLOURED BOXES. **LEFT:** THE GALLERY'S MOTTO IN HOSSACK'S OWN HANDWRITING TURNED INTO NEON AS A SURPRISE GIFT FROM HER STAFF. **BELOW LEFT:** THE BASEMENT LIVING ROOM. THE HIGH-BACKED ORKNEY CHAIR WAS ORIGINALLY DESIGNED TO PROTECT FROM DRAUGHTS. TO ITS RIGHT, A SMALL CHAIR MADE FROM A SOLID TREE TRUNK. **BELOW RIGHT:** THE MAIN BEDROOM WITH VIVID YELLOW FEATHER SUN BY SIMON COSTIN. TO THE LEFT, A PAINTING BY DAVID BOWIS IN A DUTCH 17TH CENTURY-STYLE FRAME.

