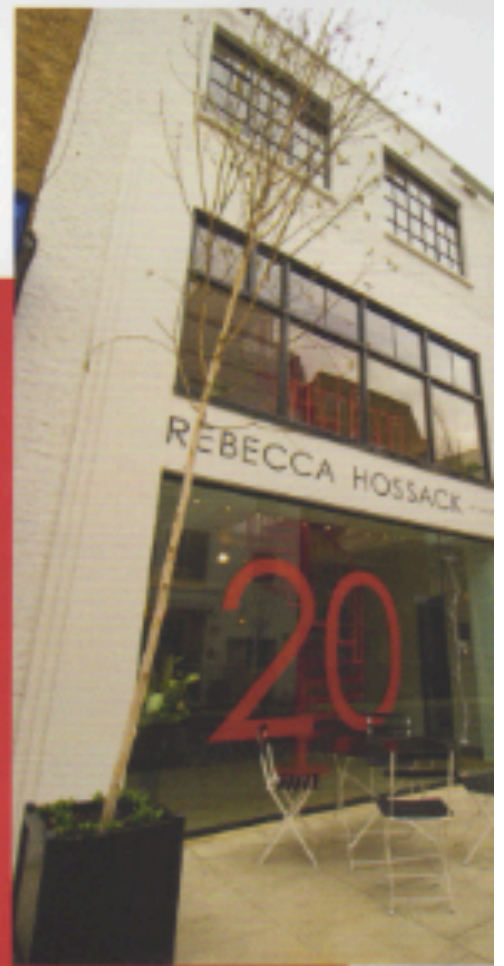


# REBECCA HOSSACK GALLERY, LONDON



MARK DOBER discusses a well-established gallery opened by an Australian expatriate in 1988.

There is a neon sign in the office space of Rebecca Hossack's principal London gallery; it reads, "Be nice to people and work hard". It is an approach that seems to have worked well for the gallery director, who has been showing Australian artists in London since 1988.

Rebecca is herself an engaging person to talk to – she has a beaming smile and conveys warmth and relentless energy. She is always travelling, always busy. Rebecca began by explaining that she was a Melbourne University law and history graduate who found the art world preferable to the legal profession.

Her first gallery, opened in 1988, was among a cluster of galleries in an area adjacent to Tottenham Court Road, not far from the British Museum. Currently, Rebecca Hossack Gallery operates in two spaces in that same neighbourhood. The smaller gallery is in Charlotte Street, and opened in 1993. The larger gallery, in Conway Street and close to the elegant Fitzroy Square, opened in 2006. It is an inviting and intimate space of three storeys. Days earlier I had attended an opening of bird feather art from a Papua New Guinea artist on the upstairs floors. The mood was celebratory and the gallery crowded.

Rebecca estimates that around half the work she shows is Australian – both Indigenous Aboriginal and western. From the beginning, the gallery showed Aboriginal artists from the Western Desert, though selling this work was not easy at first. She persisted and it paid off. Today she is in high demand as a speaker on Aboriginal art. Mostly these talks are to the community in various locales around Britain, via The Association of Decorative and Fine Arts Societies (NADFAS). An issue of concern for a gallery director promoting Indigenous Aboriginal art, says Rebecca, is acknowledging quality – both good and bad.

Rebecca's commitment to showing and promoting Australian artists derives from being Australian herself – although London is now her home. She makes regular trips back to Australia – recently to attend the Indigenous art fair at Cairns. Also in 2011, she returned to Melbourne for the Affordable Art Fair, where her gallery was represented.

Recently, Rebecca showed the work of David Frazer, a printmaker and painter from central Victoria, at her Charlotte Street gallery. You wonder what an English audience would make of the work, for they are dramatised, realist landscapes unlike anything that can be seen in



Opposite:

Top: Rebecca Hossack Gallery exterior.

Bottom: Rebecca Hossack Gallery interior.

Above: Allyson Reynolds, *Moths 23*, 2009, oil on linen



England. Rebecca believes that it is the quality of the art, and its individualism and vision, that appeals. Frazer's work, says Rebecca, is an example of how Australia is producing some of the best contemporary art in the world today — work that is neither self-referential or jaded but notable for its energy and vitality.

A striking feature of how the Rebecca Hossack Gallery functions in the art world emerges in the course of our discussion. I am told that an artist's work is not only sold in solo shows at the gallery, or from the stock room between shows, but is also up for sale at prestigious international art fairs, thereby greatly increasing the visibility of that artist's work to a much wider audience, and boosting the selling opportunities for that artist.

These art fairs are in Europe, North America, Asia and Australia. Naturally, some are more successful than others, but taken as a whole the strategy is proving to have good dividends for the gallery. "We do more art fairs than any other gallery in the world," Rebecca says. In 2011, the gallery participated in a staggering eighteen international art fairs — and she attended all of them.

to work twice as hard and twice as well stand still."

Now there is a New York gallery recently showed David Bromley, to mention one. I asked Rebecca which of the two cities in her experience, pre-eminent in contemporary art. London was the "more interesting" one. With Gerhard Richter showing at Tate and Degas showing at the Royal Academy and Leonardo da Vinci at the National Gallery of London to mention the hundreds of commercial shows, it is hard to disagree.

Oh, and here's a tip — if you are in London from January to March next year, make sure you catch the David Hockney of Yorkshire landscape paintings at the Royal Academy. Not to be missed. □