



Rebecca Hossack with the artist who goes by the professional name of Mr Underwood.

A Brilliant Career

To make a splash in the contemporary art scene in London is a measure of anyone's success. To be *Australian* and make a splash amounts to a veritable tidal wave...

Melbourne-born Rebecca Hossack has done just that. The Rebecca Hossack Gallery is one of London's most celebrated private galleries, and it is being Australian that gives her that something different, that edge.

Following degrees in arts and law in Melbourne, Rebecca decided to study for the bar at Middle Temple in London, eventually throwing it in to follow her passion – art. After a period of working with Christie's, she was awarded a scholarship to work at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice, followed by a stint in an antiquarian bookshop, full of art books that fed her passion.

She bit the bullet and opened her first gallery in 1988. Now, 21 years later, she has two galleries in bohemian Fitzrovia, one in Conway Street, off Fitzroy Square, and a second in Charlotte Street, both cheek to cheek with the renowned Bloomsbury district.

A passionate advocate of Aboriginal art, Rebecca was instrumental in introducing Indigenous art to London collectors. She famously took Clifford Possum to meet the Queen in 1990, when she brought him to London for an exhibition at her gallery – she first met him in a creek bed in Alice Springs in 1989 – and as a gesture of gratitude he painted a bedroom door in her apartment above the gallery. That door is now, of course, a unique and valuable work of art.

Her galleries do not focus entirely on Aboriginal art but also on a wide range

of contemporary Western artists, as well as artists from other countries including Africa, Papua New Guinea and tribal India.

Rebecca visits Australia annually for the Telstra Awards in Darwin. She travels into remote communities with a keen eye, on the lookout for new visions and new artists she can take under her wing. She also takes the opportunity to visit family, friends and colleagues, and this year while in Sydney will give a talk to Society members.

Along with everything else she has achieved, Rebecca was also cultural attaché to the Australian High Commission in London for four years from 1993, following in the footsteps of a certain Sir Les Patterson. Of her time in this job, a distant acquaintance of Sir Les, Barry Humphries, remarked: "Rebecca did a great job. She's very bright and brought glamour to the role – everyone talked about her." A fascinating meeting between herself, Germaine Greer and the Queen was memorably described by eminent author A.N. Wilson in the *Evening Standard*: "Standing together were three of the most remarkable women of our time".

All in all a brilliant career... If you find yourself in London, call in and have a look around.

CRAIG BUSH

Acting executive director

Rebecca Hossack will present a talk on her life and the art in it on August 20. See page 40 for details.