

Artists rally to raise money

"We are sure that the example set by you and your fellow-artists as a gesture of respect for Aboriginal culture and its actual and potential contribution to that of Australia generally made a significant impact". That was the conclusion reached by our ATC chairman, Dr "Nugget" Coombs, in his letter of thanks to the 62 Australian artists who each gave a work to raise funds for our campaign. The exhibition and sale, with the title *Ab Origine* — from the beginning— was held in the National Trust Centre, Observatory Hill, Sydney from January

9 until February 1, as a part of the Festival of Sydney.

It was opened by Manning Clark, and Ms Margaret Valadian also spoke for Aboriginal Australians. The opening attracted several hundred people, and several thousands visited the exhibition on succeeding days. We invited Aboriginal groups and individuals in Sydney and NSW, and we were joined on January 9 by members of the Bostock and Watson families, by Mr Ken Winder, Ms Pat O'Shane, and Ms Natasha McNamara, who organised with Margaret Valadian a workshop on the Treaty/Makarrata for the National Aboriginal Conference, December 8-12. Pat O'Shane, the first Aboriginal barrister, has her practice in Sydney and is the author of *The Queensland Acts — Australia's Apartheid Laws?*

In *The Sydney Morning Herald* of January 17, reviewing the exhibition, Nancy Borlase wrote: "The standard, in a show that catches the spirit of the cause, is first rate". Her judgment was not surprising, because the artists who gave works were:

Ian Armstrong, Sydney Ball, David Blackburn, Arthur Boyd, David Boyd, Hermia Boyd, Polly Boyd, Robert Boynes, Cecilia Cairns, Judy Cassab, George Chaloupka, Gunter Christmann, Benedict Clark, John Coburn,

Margaret Coen, Tony Coleing, Noel Counihan, Ray Croke, Janet Dawson, Lawrence Daws, Robert Dickerson, Neil Douglas, Russell Drysdale, Elizabeth Durack, Leonard French, Silvana Gardner, Robert Grieve, Guy Grey-Smith, Eva Hancock, Abbie Heathcote, Philip Ingamells, Michael Johnson, Matt Kelso, Roger Kemp, Keith Looby, Elwyn Lynn, Guy Madigan, Mandy Martin, Hal Missingham, Mirka Mora, Jinx Nolan, Sidney Nolan, Robert Owen, Otto Paringa, John Peart, Peter Powditch, John Rigby, Marcia Ritchie, Rosemary Ryan, Jan Senbergs, Andrew Sibley, Wendy Stavrianos, Michael Taylor, Eric Thake, Imants Tillers, Robin Wallace-Crabbe, Fred Williams and John Wolseley.

Darani Lewers and Lloyd Rees, having no works available, made donations. Rudy Komon helped us in many ways and contributed Otto Paringa's painting. Some artists, including Brett Whiteley and Tim Storrier, did not hear of the exhibition until it was too late. Brett Whiteley and Tim Storrier are now giving a painting each, and Brett is also starting a major work on an Aboriginal theme.

Many people helped to stage this exhibition, but it was one of our own members, Dymphna Clark, who conceived the idea early last year and then worked with great energy and

inspiration to make it a success. We are very grateful to her and to all those who helped her:

The National Trust of Australia (NSW) and particularly its director, Mr John Morris, assistant director, Mr Peter James, and Gwen Frohlich; Clytie Jessop, director of the S. H. Erwin Museum and Gallery; Ann Berriman of the Visual Arts Board; Heather Stanton of Solander Gallery, Canberra (who is also working for the ATC, with great effect, on Mondays and Tuesdays in our information centre); Edward Parfenovic, the sculptor, who helped to hang the exhibits; Pam Beasley and Christine Smith of the Sydney support group; Elizabeth Oakenfield of the Unitarian Church support group; Winsome Turner, a NSW Gallery guide; Thea Waddell, Mark Berriman, Colleen Russell; Marilyn Stacey; Pam Stacey; Shirley Watkins; George Watkins; Dr Tom Gavranic and Gloria Bishop.

Michael Boddy and Janet Dawson of the Bugle Press, Binalong, NSW, 2584 (phone 062-274221), designed and printed a special poster to publicise the exhibition, and we also sold our own poster which is designed by Colin Little. This is available from us at the information centre in Canberra, at \$5 on art paper and \$2 on ordinary paper. It cost us \$1.12. (Support groups might like to order some in bulk, for distribution.)

We also produced for the exhibition a postcard, which is based on a photograph taken by the late E. J. Brandl, of an ancient Mimi-style rock painting of a human figure, with head-dress and carrying boomerangs. It comes from the Mount Brockman area of the Northern Territory. Eric's widow, Dr Maria Brandl, gave us permission to use this very striking motif. The cards are available from the ATC information centre at \$1 for 5, or special rates for bulk orders, which may help support groups to raise funds.

What we plan to do

As a result of the exhibition and sale of artists' work, ATC funds increased to some \$40,000, from which we have had to pay some transport and other costs. And we

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Ab Origine

— from the beginning of its human history, Australia was peopled by its own society of men and women. Now, after almost two hundred years of European occupation with its injustices and misunderstandings, its failures in spite of good intentions, there is a strong desire to right these wrongs.

In creating this exhibition, Australian artists working in the European tradition have contributed some of their best work to demonstrate their concern that Australia should restore to the Aboriginal people a fraction of the birthright they once enjoyed for thousands of years

from the beginning —

Ab Origine

have, of course, other commitments, like the production and postage of this newsletter. In a letter of thanks to artists, generally, "Nugget" Coombs wrote that "we were delighted with the interest shown in the work of the Committee and the concern for Aboriginal identity and dignity expressed by the many visitors to the exhibition. The Committee is now able to plan confidently for the next stage of its work".

We have also appointed auditors and we are grateful to Price Waterhouse for agreeing to examine our books on an honorary basis. We expect to include their first report in our next newsletter.

We believe that for the next few months we should concentrate on:

1. Assembling factual and other material relevant to Aboriginal understanding of a Treaty and its possible content, in forms suitable for distribution to Aboriginal and general Australian communities and organisations.
2. Helping the regional support groups to extend their influence.
3. Publishing advertisements Australia-wide drawing attention to the growing threat to Aboriginal rights to land, especially from mining interests and State Governments in Western Australia and Queensland. (On March 8 we put an advertisement in *The National Times*, which is reproduced elsewhere in this newsletter. It predicted the announcement by the Premier of Queensland on March 17 that the State's Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders Acts would be repealed by the end of the year and it called on the Federal Government to make sure that the reserves became Aboriginal land, by the same sort of freehold, inalienable title as that in the Northern Territory.)
4. Using the third general assembly of the World Council of Indigenous People in Canberra during April to draw attention to the need for a Treaty.

We are also considering the employment of professional help to produce short radio and television material to make many more Australians aware of the issue and then support a Treaty. These advertisements will be expensive, as will the advertisements which we are now putting into overseas newspapers and periodicals. So the need for more supporters and sponsors remains urgent, and we enclose forms with this newsletter.

Ignorance is still widespread and so is prejudice, as we discovered from one of the very few critical visitors to our art exhibition, who said: "My forebears came to Sydney in 1885 and there weren't any Aborigines here then. They haven't been here long enough". We have a long way to go.

However professional advertising can be very effective, as the Australian Mining Industry Council must have concluded. The Aboriginal interest was promoted last year in another campaign run jointly by the National Aboriginal Employment Development Committee and the NSW Department of Employment and Youth Affairs, which reported a very marked increase in job opportunities for Aborigines after short TV commercials in six selected areas.

Five paintings still to be sold from our Sydney exhibition are now available in Canberra from Dymphna Clark, c/o the ATC office or on 062-959433. They are Polly Boyd's "Hampstead Heath", Neil Douglas's "Terra Australis", Elizabeth Durack's "The Rim of Our Brittle and Disintegrating World" (in three large panels), Sidney Nolan's "Mask 10" (Ned Kelly) and John Rigby's "Mother and Child".

Aboriginal Treaty Committee Papers

AIATSIS Library, MS 1867

“Artists rally to raise money”, Aboriginal Treaty News No. 1, p. 2, and
“What we plan to do”, Aboriginal Treaty News No. 1, p. 2-3
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