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"Red + Blue"

Charlotte King 1993

Art



# GRAHAME KING AM ARTIST

23-2-1915 — 11-10-2008

**W**HEN GRAHAME KING DIED, AGED 93, on Saturday 11 October 2008, he had maintained a distinguished presence in the Australian art world for more than seven decades.

In the 1930s he helped pioneer the new art of chromo-photolithography which transformed developments in colour advertising in the print industry. After studies at the Working Men's College (now RMIT University), and over the road at the old National Gallery Art School, from 1939 to 1942, he enlisted in the army and served until 1946. In the mid 1940s he began Saturday classes with the George Bell School, exhibiting four paintings alongside works by Rupert Bunny, Russell Drysdale, Jeffrey Smart and others in Bell's 1945 Contemporary Artists' Exhibition. He also became Secretary of the Victorian Artists' Association and thereby commenced a lifetime of selfless service to the arts.

Carrying letters of introduction from Prime Minister Ben Chifley and the sculptor Orlando Dutton, King set out for London in late 1947. He stayed for three years, touring Europe and painting along the way. Home-base while abroad was The Abbey Arts Centre, an artists' colony in Hertfordshire which welcomed Australian visitors and residents including the painters Leonard French and James Gleeson, sculptor Robert Klippel and art historian Bernard Smith. It was there that he met his soon-to-be wife, Inge Neufeld. Through her and many other artists he learned of the new generation of American abstractionists active in New York. King's paintings and prints of the late 1950s and 60s indicate an empathy with the interests of artists like Mark Rothko and Barnett Newmann.

After their marriage in July 1950, the Kings returned to Melbourne in 1951, living in a one-room studio above the Stanley Coe Gallery at 435 Bourke Street. By the early 1960s King had abandoned figuration, joining Melbourne's first generation of abstractionists. Drawing on his earlier experience in the trade, and given an opportunity to operate a lithography press at RMIT, he soon embarked on a program of experimentation with the medium that would establish him as a major practitioner in the field. Beautiful lithographs, created over many years, have been seen in private and public galleries too numerous to mention, while he is represented by 158 works in the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra (available to be viewed on the Gallery's website).

Dividing his time between RMIT – where he taught the art of lithography to several generations of students – and the Kings' heritage-listed Robin Boyd home-studios, King also dedicated himself to the advancement of the art of printmaking throughout Australia.

In 1965-66, together with the artist Udo Sellbach and Dr Ursula Hoff, Assistant Keeper of Prints and Drawings at the National Gallery of Victoria, King helped establish the Print Council of Australia where he became Honorary Secretary and, later, President. As that organisation's membership began to rival that of similar bodies in the USA and Britain, he was recognised as 'the quiet force behind the scene'. Through his work on exhibitions, print commissions, publications and publicity, the works of many Australian artists were shown abroad and reciprocal exhibitions from New Zealand, Japan, Germany, Scotland and elsewhere were received and toured in Australia.

In the early 1980s King was appointed a founding artist-member of the new Australian Print Workshop and was to serve on its committee for almost ten years. Throughout the formative years he shared his lithographic skills and assisted numerous projects. In the late 1990s the Workshop invited him to collaborate in the production of a suite of three large-scale, multi-colour lithographs which were subsequently exhibited in an APW exhibition which toured Australia from 2004.

For his tireless efforts on behalf of both national organisations, and assistance to innumerable individuals, he is very fondly remembered by a wide spectrum of the art community and has been lovingly dubbed Australia's 'Patron Saint of Printmaking' by Sasha Grishin, art critic for the *Canberra Times*.

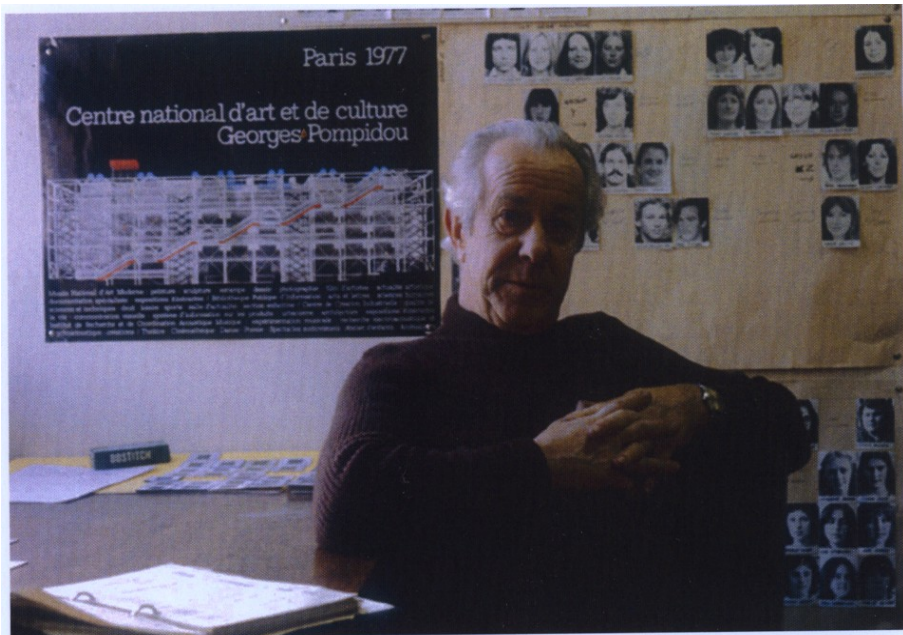
Inge and Grahame King operated as a very close and mutually supportive creative team – since the 1960s exhibiting together and most recently at the Drill Hall, Canberra (2002) and McClelland Gallery + Sculpture Park (2004).

King's own career as an artist-printmaker began in earnest with the magnificent lithographs and monoprints of the 1960s – works such as *Floating Tower* (1963) and *Prelude* (1968), the latter acquired by the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. It, and the powerful works created in the following decades, depended on King's fine sense of abstract composition, colour and texture – along with his expert control of a very difficult medium. His repertoire of ideas and calligraphic style was expanded in the 1970s after several journeys to Japan, and in the 1980s by travels in the Northern Territory.

Each artist taps into the mood of the times in which he or she lives. King's oeuvre exemplifies many of the central concerns, interests, and stimuli that have driven modern artists. From the antipodes he remained closely informed about world art, travelling out into the world and then retiring to his studio to continue the dialogue between inner and outer references, form and content, and private practice and public commitment – all the time quietly resolving his aesthetic impulses through the creation of significant prints and paintings.

Grahame King leaves behind his wife Inge, daughters Angela Hey and Joanna Tanaka-King, five grandchildren from their two families and son-in-law Professor Yuki Tanaka – along with a veritable multitude of friends.





**GRAHAME KING COMMEMORATION**  
**AUSTRALIAN GALLERIES, COLLINGWOOD**  
**22 OCTOBER 2008**

IMAGES

page 1: *Red & Blue*, lithograph, 1973

page 2: *Grahame King in his Studio* (detail).  
Photograph: Richard Beck

page 5: *At Nourlangi*, lithograph, 1984

page 6: *Grahame King at RMIT*, c.1977

page 7: *Elegy*, mixed media, 2001

page 8: *Floating Tower*, lithograph, 1963

