

Inge King Memorial Service NGV Great Hall, Monday 9 May 2016, 10:30 am

Stuart Purves - notes

- You've just heard from Jane Eckett what a remarkable person Inge King was.
- Australian Galleries had the privilege of representing Inge and her work from 1988, we weren't the first gallery to do this, she had had significant times with the Powell Street Gallery and a very good relationship with Marianne Baileau at Realities. The closing of both those galleries was to our good fortune.
- How many of us have a friend who is 100 years old?
- I knew she was fading and was in Adelaide at a wedding. I got the message in the church and quietly stepped out to speak to Jo and Angie
- We put a message on facebook; over the next few days those words I dictated reached 109,000 people.
- This of course is nothing to do with me, it illustrates that this grand woman Inge King greatly admired, in a big way. And why shouldn't she be? She'd been earning the position for 100 years.
- We held 20 exhibitions of Inge King's work

- I would say that I had 3 periods with Inge.
  - Our time when my mother Anne Purves was alive, and we looked after Inge together
  - Then for many years when Inge and I were in true rapport it was a knockout time, although if I strayed she would remind me what a wonderful person my mother was
  - and then 5 years when she was in a care home
- These 5 years were not the best period but may have been the most valuable. For at least monthly and often more I would visit her and we would have an hour's talk. Her wisdom shone out, she spoke about Germany, England, America and Australia.
  - how lucky she was
  - In these conversations it was very clear that Grahame King, Inge's loving husband, and Inge were inextricably linked.
  - She wanted to die, I asked her to explain that and said she didn't look ready, she said when I got to her age I would understand
- In the care home she would say "you can't do anything about what you can't do anything about. But you can do a lot of what you can do."
- In earlier years when I would say something of enthusiasm for a hopeful outcome she would very regularly say "we will see". Inge was very grounded and knew the way of things.
- It was a pleasure to watch Inge in full stride, preparing for an exhibition.
  - the working of the studio
  - maquettes to final works
  - abundance of ideas a various stages of fruition

- Installing an exhibition was an event. Trucks and cranes would arrive, on many occasions the front door would be removed to allow for the large works to enter the building which sometimes took up to 10 men to lift and place into position. Grahame and Inge discussing the positions.
- She was a dream artist, at day's end of these preparations the show would be placed
  - lighting etc etc
  - Such was Inge's clarity.
  - Busier at the end than at the beginning
- exciting large scale sculptures
  - wonderful relationship with John Fasham, Robert Hook and Euan Coates.Recently:
  - *Rings of Saturn* – Heide, fabulous work, fabulous position
  - *Shearwater* – South bankEarlier:
  - *Sun ribbon* – Melbourne University
  - *Forward Surge* – on the lawns of this gallery
- Private Commission, *Grande Arch*, yet to be installed but Inge saw it
- This slight and beautiful woman was a big game art maker.
- Inge was no pushover
  - tough and determined, she raised an eyebrow

- Dame Elizabeth opening
  - “You’re no wall flower yourself”
  - Inge missed nothing
  - you couldn’t get away with anything that wasn’t to her standard
- If an artist can be judged on the calibre of those that follow them, then Inge was one of these. Her exhibitions attracted the most serious of collectors. Both private and institutions.
- All the major galleries are well represented with her work. Although she often reminded me that I could do better with Western Australia.
- She was not a complainer but did mention from time to time by comparison that painters had it easy.
- My visits to Inge’s studio were frequent, both while Grahame was alive and after.
  - on occasions we were in each other’s company for the National Gallery’s annual dinner
  - significant shows
  - I drove her to Lorne the year she was Lorne Sculpture by the Sea patron
  - and many happy occasions such as these
  - in fact from time to time my partner, Kerri, would say to me “how is your other girlfriend these days?”
- She was very kind to me with her time
  - no nonsense
  - very intelligent person
  - perhaps little less known is that she had an incredible sense of humour and could really laugh at these times.

- Never lost the thrill of a work of hers being purchased
  - Melbourne Club (*Firebirds*)
  - First sculpture purchase for 150 years, she'd cracked the men
  - members would chain themselves to it now
- A very recent honour to mark their respect by Sculpture by the Sea in Sydney
  - this years exhibition dedicated to her
  - arranging to install at their expense 2 major works
- Major books
  - Judith Trimble, Sasha Grishin, Jenny Zimmer
- Major shows:
  - Robert Lindsay McClelland
  - David Hurlston, NGV
- Inge was very pleased to live long enough to see her own success but it was very clear to me that she was proud of her family. Often mentioning her admiration for her daughters and their children.
- Inge contributed a great deal to my understanding of sculpture and enriched my life greatly, and here today I thank her publicly.