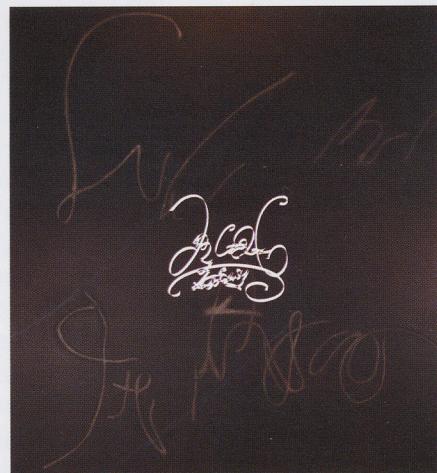


ABOVE: Malcolm Enright at home.
TOP RIGHT: Stieg Persson,
Painting 1987, 1987. Oil on
canvas, 168x183 cm. COURTESY:
MALCOLM ENRIGHT

"I decide what to buy by being intimately in tune with the artist."



John Nelson,
Looking/Seeing, 1992-3.
Oil and mixed media, 5
panels, 160x811 cm.
COURTESY: MALCOLM ENRIGHT

It is this kind of controlled obsession that makes Enright tick. He is an up-beat, even slightly over-the-top individual who does his homework and understands the issues behind the art. Curator of Contemporary Australian Art at the Queensland Art Gallery, Timothy Morrell, says: "Mal was a pivot point for a lot of activity in Brisbane during important and lively years for art in Queensland, and he was brilliant at gathering coherent documentation of conceptual developments at the time." Enright's involvement included being an inaugural board member of Brisbane's Institute of Modern Art and curating several important exhibitions such as *Minimalism x 6* in 1983 and (with New York's Toyo Tsuchiya) *Outside Art* in 1987. He also designed the first seven issues of the contemporary art magazine *Eyeline*. But it is his passion for what he calls "urban archaeology" that defines his collecting habits.

Life as an 'urban archaeologist' began at the age of 11 when Enright worked as weekend helper at Harcourt Howard Antiques in Brisbane. Over the ensuing four decades he has collected found objects, artworks, images and texts, according to a self-determined relational philosophy. Enright confesses: "I can't help but buy and place – I mean, its just what visual people do – they use text and they bolster it and juxtapose it

with images that are really strong." This image/text, or seeing/saying relationship is, of course, the basis for much of the conceptual art that prevailed in Australia during the 70s and into the 1980s, and another dimension of the 'dialogue' to which he refers.

The flagship of the collection is undoubtedly the large number of works by Australia's conceptual artist par excellence, Robert MacPherson. MacPherson is often referred to as Australia's best kept secret, but the secret has been out for some time, with works held in almost every major public collection in the coun-

try. Too few are aware of his seminal role in the development of Australian contemporary art, probably because he is something of a control freak about what is said about his art, and public exposure has been less than it should have been. He has consistently produced some of our most provocative and stimulating art and inspired several generations of younger artists, a number of whom are represented in Enright's collection, such as Eugene Carchesio and John Nelson.

One of MacPherson's works offered in the Phillips sale, *Where are you now Sylvia Holmes?* (1982-3), manifests the concept of 'dialogue', but also brings into focus the often polemical relationship between conceptual art and the art market. The work consists of two 1960s abstract canvases painted by Australian artist Sylvia Holmes, that MacPherson bought in a junk shop in 1983 for a total of \$17, together with four pages of text written by MacPherson. The text takes the form of a letter from MacPherson to Sylvia Holmes, but actually launches a brutal attack on the soft underbelly of the art market, the role of the artist, and the 'value' of art. It exposes the doubts and tenuous 'leap of faith' we all take when we invest our money, time, or emotional energy into art. If nothing else, read this text when viewing the collection.