

ROAR - THE ART MOVEMENT THAT ROARED!

Bruce Earles - In Melbourne, Australia

In 1982 a group of young art students, still in their teens and early twenties, decided to take matters into their own hands. Rather than pit themselves against the conventions of an established system and lose, they challenged it by rejecting its means and methods. Being unable to exhibit in the conventional manner, meant losing and losing to them meant waiting for the appropriate twenty years or so until their work was sufficiently 'mature' to be taken up by the art market. They wanted to have a gallery where they and anyone else could exhibit. They, therefore, established the "Roar" studio.

The ROAR group had consisted of about twenty would be artists among them Mark Shaller, Sarah Faulkner, Peter Ferguson, David Larwill, Jill Noble, Judi Singleton, Stephen MacCarthy, Andrew Ferguson, **Bruce Earles**, Wayne Eager, Pasquale Giardino, Mark Howson, Karen Hayman, Ann Howie, Mike Nicholls, Richard Birmingham, Trevor Hoppen.

The name ROAR , coined to make the system stop and take notice, involved a stylistic pun "Roar" & "raw". Mark Howson, designed the emblem and Sarah Faulkner came up with the name "ROAR", emphasizing that the work produced was "raw" with youth and energy.

The influences were many but one was the CoBrA group, which stands for Copenhagen, Brussels and Amsterdam. A post-world war II European art movement. This group aimed to revive expressionism. Their technique involved building up paint, primitive, bright colors, rather than consciously designing the painting.

Christopher Hecate "Age" 1982 neatly sums up the essence of the group, "ROAR was in every sense a social and stylistic, reaction against the contemporary art establishment. The painters who exhibited there shunned the complacent lyrical abstraction and half-baked landscapist of their teachers. ROAR Studios stood for bad artistic manners. The painters who congregated there developed the then rather offensive thickly painted, highly colored and visual exhilarating figurative expressionism. In fact they were so utterly opposed to convention that they even refused to wear the black clothing affected by the trendies."

Relatively quickly gallery directors approached ROAR members, who one by one were recruited into stables such as, Australian Galleries, Gould Galleries and Goya Galleries. Since then each artist has continued to grow and develop, the bond remains and to this day they still support one another. James Mollison, the then director of the Australian National Gallery of Canberra, was an important Institutional support. Their murals still hang in the National Gallery of Australia.

Roar Studios has a place in the history of Australian painting. They are important because they made the art world take notice and are now icons of Australian cultural history – when you purchase an artwork by a Roar Artist you are acquiring a part of the Australian cultural heritage.