



New Art on the Block

IN WHAT WILL BE A LITMUS TEST OF THE MARKET FOR AUSTRALIAN CONTEMPORARY ART, BRISBANE COLLECTOR MALCOLM ENRIGHT WILL PUT HIS COLLECTION UP FOR AUCTION IN MAY. SALLY BUTLER ASKED HIM WHY. PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARK BURGIN.

On May 3 this year Phillips International Auctioneers will conduct the auction sale of The Malcolm Enright Collection of Australian Contemporary Art in its Sydney saleroom. Mal Enright, Brisbane-based creative director and graphic designer, is selling his entire collection of contemporary artworks and related ephemera accumulated over the past 30 years. It is a unique collection systematically and thoughtfully brought together by someone closely involved with the artists and early developments in conceptual art in Australia since the 1970s. The story of the growth of the collection, and the man behind it, traces a significant history of recent Australian art, and the sale of the collection is an unprecedented opportunity to test the waters of the current market for Australian contemporary art at auction.

It is impossible to categorise a collection including works by artists such as Robert MacPherson, Stephen Killick, Jenny Watson, Peter Tyndall, Narelle Jubelin, Ken Whisson, Scott

Redford, Stieg Persson and John Young, but the terms 'conceptual', 'experimental' and 'contemporary' indicate the emphasis of Enright's interest. It is art that demands involvement, or at least an investment beyond the financial, requiring the spectator to metaphorically stand inside the artwork if they want to 'see' what is going on. Enright calls it a "dialogue" and says his involvement in the dialogue determined what he bought. "I decide what to buy by being intimately in tune with what the artist is producing, or not so much what they're producing, but what they are really saying. It is why I have followed MacPherson from the first work all the way through the painted works, the iconic works, the frog poems... I have done the same with Scott Redford and John Young. You are told what to buy by the train you have already set in motion... I'd roll through and buy six works at a time for \$20,000 and spend two years paying it off, so I had to make sure when I roll, I roll where I am getting the right thing."