

HOMAGE TO REMBRANDT

1 June '96

Dear

It has been very quiet on our exhibition front and you may be wondering what has happened to the idea of organising an "in tandem" exhibition with the Rembrandt "blockbuster" slated for October and November '97 in the National Gallery of Victoria. Here is an update.

Due to Dirk Eysbertse's extended stays in the Netherlands and his other commitments he had to withdraw from the project. This was a great pity because of his exhibition expertise and the sterling work he did for our successful "Second Landing" exhibition at the end of '93.

It has taken quite some time to find other competent people willing to give a hand in organising this show. It can only be tackled with appropriate expertise and contacts in the art world and the commitment to make it succeed. Ms Christine Hubay, interior designer with contacts in fine arts circles and Mark Rogerson, manager of Fresco Site Specific Art, a design group which creates large art works for public spaces, have offered to assist and we can proceed again. We are now approaching possible sponsors for the publication of a fine catalogue and to cover the other expenses associated with a show of this allure. Yes, we are moving!

Adopting a theme instead of allowing artists to submit any works they choose poses new problems for both artists and organisers. But it seemed right to us to be daring and embark on an "Homage to Rembrandt", as a change of theme creates interest and a focus. An acquaintance visited an "Homage to van Gogh" exhibition in Arles in the south of France and declared it a stimulating experience with all sorts of references to his work and fresh and creative interpretations and adaptations. We are sure something similar for Rembrandt by his "offspring" in Australia can succeed.

The response to earlier requests and press articles for declarations of interest in the project has been very encouraging. Some 60 artists have been contacted and about 40 declared to be interested in taking part and new names still keep dribbling in.

This already indicates that we might have to disappoint some entrants as the space in the Access Gallery in the NGV is limited. The attached "Brief" sets out how we intend to handle this situation, should it arise.

From mid-September till the end of October I will be overseas when Melbourne activities will temporarily stall. We need to know by 1 NOVEMBER '96 AT THE LATEST who will actually send in a work, a CV and details of the work to be submitted to curate the show. By Christmas we plan to send out the next update on progress. This timeframe will allow exhibitors sufficient time to complete their work and have it photographed on a transparency available for reproduction in the catalogue by 1 MAY '97 and ready for despatch to Melbourne when required.

This should also give an accomplished art critic time and the material to write an essay related to the works, because the catalogue should also have at least one thought provoking essay. Other topics for essays are being explored. As with the "Second Landing" exhibition, we will attempt again to organise an associated programme with a Dutch Australian flavour.

We urge you to READ THE BRIEF CAREFULLY and VERY SOON set to work on preparing your sketches etc. of your "Homage to Rembrandt" as time happens to fly. The sooner your entry package arrives the better! Your help in minimising hiccups in our plans and late panic rushes is very much appreciated. Remember that all is set up and arranged by volunteers and your consideration is necessary. An ENTRY FORM is enclosed.

If you have queries, please don't hesitate to ring, write or fax (see letterhead details). It is our intention to make this again a first class showcase of the art of Dutch Australians with everything done in style.

The Erasmus Foundation now asks you to step into the limelight of the National Gallery of Victoria and show Australia how we pay "Homage to Rembrandt"! You produce fine art and we'll put it on show.

With kind regards,

Jan Stracke
on behalf of the Exhibition team

ARTIST'S BRIEF *** PLEASE READ CAREFULLY

Rembrandt van Rijn was by all accounts a self willed person well aware of his talent. It doesn't come, therefore, as a surprise that he invites you to pay a posthumous homage to him on the occasion of some of his masterpieces visiting Melbourne. You may find this rather self indulgent were it not for the word posthumous and his genius.

If you are an artist of Dutch descent you are now challenged to produce your own work of homage and to capture him in your own chosen image. Be it chisel to stone or wood, in clay, glass or metal, oil on canvas or board, gouache or burin to paper, from lens to sensitised film or in a soupcan installation, as long as the work has a recognisable connection with Rembrandt.

IN OTHER WORDS:

** To focus the exhibition on this theme each work should refer to Rembrandt and the viewer should be reminded of him.

** The work can be executed in any medium or combinations of media you care to choose.

SOME RESTRICTIONS:

** You must be an artist of Dutch descent.

** If the work is to be hung, its largest side measurement should not exceed 1.5 meters as wall space in the Access Gallery is limited.

** Works to be showcased should not be higher than 50 cm and longer than 1 meter to fit into NGV showcases.

** Artworks must be ready for display, i.e. framed, mounted etc.

WHAT TO SUBMIT FOR ENTRY:

To enable the organisers to get a proper idea of the number of artists who wish to exhibit, their background and Dutch connection and what form their "homage" will take, please submit the following information by 1 NOVEMBER '96 LATEST:

** A CV (Dutch connection, art training, exhibitions, commissions, prizes, reviews etc.). This information is also necessary later for the catalogue we intend to issue.

** Five photographs or slides of your work from your portfolio to present a sample of your oeuvre.

** Sketches, maquettes etc. and a description of the work you intend to submit, including measurements and medium/media used. This information will of course be treated in confidence and will be returned when no longer required. P.T.O.

**** Note: Closing date for entries is 1 November 1996.**

Participants will appreciate that the information asked for is necessary to put together a quality show which "works". With adoption of the "Homage" theme we are unable to select on the basis of portfolio alone, hence the sketches, description of the work etc. you intend to submit to evaluate all entries. PLEASE RETURN THE ATTACHED ENTRY FORM with your submission material and be as informative as possible.

This is a Dutch Australian Community exhibition and we will attempt to include as many "homages" as space and balance permit. However, after the very successful "Second Landing" exhibition we have a reputation to uphold and you should be aware that the National Gallery of Victoria has rather strict guidelines and reserves the right to refuse works if they do not consider them appropriate. They expect us to be discerning.

If for any reason a selection becomes necessary the Erasmus Foundation will hand this task over to a person with acknowledged experience in this field and of appropriate reputation in the art world.

OTHER POINTS TO CONSIDER:

**** Works are not for sale; you display for exposure and greater fame.**

**** Transport and insurance from your address to the depot (to be announced later) and back from the depot to your address is for the artist's account. The Erasmus Foundation will take good care of the works while in depot and in transport to and from the Gallery. During exhibition the NGV takes responsibility of the works.**

**** Selection of works and their display will be in the hands of an outside curator, whose decision is final.**

We need not remind you that the National Gallery of Victoria is the most prestigious art venue in Melbourne, especially during a "blockbuster" when tens of thousands will see your work. All very good reasons to send us your finest "Homage to Rembrandt"!

Please contact us if further information is required or if you wish to discuss matters at 10 Avenue Athol, Canterbury, Vic 3126, phone/fax (03) 98361239.

ENTRY FORM FOR THE " HOMAGE TO REMBRANDT" EXHIBITION.

I wish to take part in the "Homage to Rembrandt" exhibition and I can provide the following details of myself and of the work that I intend to submit :

Name:.....

Address :.....

..... Postcode.....

Phone:..... Fax:.....

I enclose(number) slides/photographs/publications etc. of my PREVIOUS work (please enclose list for easy reference).

My CV, including Dutch connection and art career, is enclosed.

DETAILS OF THE WORK I INTEND TO SUBMIT:

a. Description of the work and its reference to Rembrandt:
(use verso if necessary)

b. Measurements:

c. Medium or media used:

d. I enclose ... (number) of sketches/maquettes of my Rembrandt homage.

I agree with the terms as laid out in the brief.

Signature:

Date:.....

Place:

Please ensure that all required information is included and send all particulars by 1 NOVEMBER '96 LATEST to: Jan Stracke
10 Avenue Athol, Canterbury, Vic 3126.

HOMAGE TO REMBRANDT

BACKGROUND

AIM

The Erasmus Foundation wants to mount an exhibition of works by artists of Dutch descent in the Access Gallery of the National Gallery of Victoria along the lines of the Second Landing Exhibition in 1993.

The Access Gallery is a space in the NGV for community exhibitions.

The Second Landing show ran in tandem with the van Gogh "blockbuster" and was a great success: for the first time it brought together Dutch migrant artists and with the associated programme was a first in mounting a public manifestation with a Dutch flavour (see catalogue)

This time the theme will be a " Homage to Rembrandt" by artists of Dutch extraction (see invitation to artists).

ORGANISING TEAM

The team consists of:

Jan Stracke, President of the Erasmus Foundation who has business management experience, has a Fine Arts degree and was a member of the Second Landing Team,

Christine Hubay , interior designer with many contacts in the art world,

Mark Rogerson, manager of Frisco Site Specific Art which creates artworks for public spaces.

They all work on a voluntary basis.

BUDGET

The budget is based on the Second Landing experiences and will cover:

- * a catalogue (see example), the most costly item on the budget
- * a flyer, freely available at the NGV and at selected outlets to attract viewers to the exhibition and associated events.
- * costs involved in the organising of an event of this nature, such as administrative costs, circulars, insurance, transport of artworks, hiring of equipment, signage, etc. and a stylish opening function.

Total amount required : \$ 21000 which is about 10% more than the cost of the Second Landing exhibition plus extra secretarial charges.

It is anticipated that the sale of catalogues will recover \$ 2000. The Consulate General has indicated that it will provide the same amount as for the Second Landing (\$ 3500).

Remaining sponsorship sought is \$ 15500.

SPONSORS BENEFITS

The Main Sponsor will have a page in the catalogue for an appropriate message.

All sponsors will be thanked in the Foreword and will have their logos displayed in the Catalogue, on the Flyer and on other circulars and on the signage at the entrance of the Access Gallery.

Sponsors are reminded that the NGV has strict guidelines for sponsor display which have to be adhered to.

To date some 140 artists of Dutch descent have been located and approached with the enclosed invitation. This is many more than we were able to reach for the Second Landing exhibition due to intensive further searches. People of Dutch descent are notoriously difficult to locate in Australia.

A number of well known artists have already indicated that they are keen to participate and the prospects for a successful show are therefore favourable.

The Consul General Mr David van Iterson is most supportive of this event as is evidenced by his promised financial support and further involvement in the associated programme.

The Erasmus Foundation attempts with this event to display an aspect of the Dutch Australian cultural contribution to multicultural Australia, which will no doubt enhance our image in a personal and commercial sense in the community.

We hope that the generosity of sponsors will make it possible to realise this endeavour.

FACTS AND FIGURES (February '97)

After the "Rembrandt" exhibition in the National Gallery of Victoria became an official event ('95) I started a survey through circulars to available names and advertisements which showed that some 40 artists indicated they were interested in our in-tandem exhibition in the Access Gallery on the theme "Homage to Rembrandt".

In '95 we also put in an official (and timely!) application for exhibition space in the Access Gallery of the NGV for a show to run concurrently with the "Rembrandt".

Further searches in artists registers in Sydney and Melbourne and art dictionaries revealed more addresses of artists of Dutch descent and a register of 166 names and addresses was eventually compiled. However, not all addresses are correct judging by undelivered mail (9) and there are bound to more incorrect addresses.

In June '96 142 invitations were sent out to likely respondents; some artists had been quite unresponsive earlier on, we heard that some had moved overseas, some probably were deceased, etc. It is estimated that an estimated 130 artists received the invitation to take part.

By early November, the closing date, 48 artists had responded with a formal entry (ca 40%). I hope to persuade two more professional artists of standing, who initially indicated that they wanted to take part, but have not sent in their submission, to participate. The total artist pool would then be 50.

In the meantime we have also re-titled the show with a less formal, more catchy and what we feel to be rather apt title :

THE REMBRANDT CONNECTION

Dutch Migrant artists pay Homage to Rembrandt.

A provisional "rating" of entries on available submissions shows:

Acceptable works : 37
Likely unacceptable: 11

This is based on artistic standing (professionals are generally "in") and on the quality of the work proposed.

Breakdown according to medium used :

Painters	24
Ceramics	2
Photography	6
Work on paper	5
Textile art	3
Sculptors	3
Mixed media	2
Leatherwork	1
Woodwork carving	1
Glazer	1
Total	48

Thus about 60 % of the artists is involved in 2D work (painting + on paper) and 40 % in some form of 3D art. (It would be interesting to compare this with the current ratio in the Netherlands. I suspect there to be a higher ratio of painters in the Netherlands).

The acceptable work is often of a surprisingly high and creative standard. If we manage to display some 35 works it would make for a very fine and varied show. It is also clear that the participating artists have seen this initiative as an inspiring venture which has stimulated their exploration of Dutchness and their creativity to give it expression.

At times I had my doubts about the show, but I am now firmly convinced that it must go ahead. We can't disappoint the artists, who shower us with favourable comment about the initiative, and it would be a first class demonstration of Dutch migrant creativeness. About \$ 7000 in funds (of the \$ 21000 budgeted) is still to be found for a successful exhibition as I must insist on a standard comparable to that of "The Second Landing". (see budget sheet).

So far I have found the project much more demanding than the 2nd Landing show : the theme requires much more organisation and correspondence and discussion with artists and I sorely miss somebody with rapid access to the services available to the commercial artworld, something which Eysbertse handled with the Second Landing exhibition. The friendly help from non Dutch assistants also creates problems. They have little idea of Dutch migrants and their temperament and much has to be explained to strike the right tone. And their commitment is obviously not like mine.

Postscript 4-12-'96 :

A fourth circular has now gone out to artists who have responded to the brief and who have submitted details of their artwork, also to ensure that applications are complete and to bring them up to date on latest developments.

A letter has been sent to the Curator of the Access Gallery setting out progress of the project, reminding her that it would be a major blow to a group of able and enthusiastic artists not to allow access to exhibition space.

** It is clear that there is sufficient artwork of quality to mount an inspiring exhibition.

Postscript end January '97.

Artists are advised about the Access Gallery advice and the problems with finding a suitable venue and how this critical problem was overcome. No artist reacted negatively to this turn of events.

** A suitable venue has been found to mount the exhibition.

Postscript 22-2-'97

For practical reasons I have set the deadline for firm commitment of the required funding (\$ 21000) at 1 April '97. I will be overseas for about 6 weeks from 1-5-'97 and the catalogue/ flyer printer has to be organised and artists should get firm instructions about submission of transparencies etc. etc. by 1-4-'97, before I leave.

If insufficient funds have been guaranteed by 1-4-'97 the exhibition will have to be cancelled. \$ 7000 is still being sought.