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Title:

Speech notes - opening Pro Hart exhibition, Lidums Gallery

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SPEECH NOTES FOR THE PREMIER. MR DUNSTAN. OPENING PRO HART EXHIBITION.

LIDUMS GALLERY. 30.10.73

MR LIDUMS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

THE CRITICS ARE STILL HAVING TROUBLE WITH PRO HART - I THINK BECAUSE HE IS STILL COMMITTING THAT MOST HEINOUS OF CRITICS' SINS - HE'S POPULAR.

HE PAINTS WELL AND HE SELLS WELL. NOW I SUPPOSE THERE'LL BE ANOTHER OUTCRY BECAUSE HE'S WORKED ON THIS CHRYSLER PROJECT AND THERE'LL BE PRO HART WORKS IN HUNDREDS MORE LIVING ROOMS.

NONE OF WHICH I'D IMAGINE WILL FAZE PRO HART FOR A MOMENT - AND NOR SHOULD IT. HIS IS AN AUTHENTIC AUSTRALIAN VISION, HE DEALS WITH UNIQUELY AUSTRALIAN THEMES.

BUT HIS TALENT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH NATIONALISM.

RECOGNISED FIRST IN HIS HOME TOWN THEN NATIONALLY PRO HART IS NOW AN ESTABLISHED INTERNATIONAL SUCCESS. HIS RECENT LONDON EXHIBITION WAS AN OUTSTANDING SUCCESS AND HIS WORKS HANG IN THE WHITE HOUSE AND BUCKINGHAM PALACE.

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AGAIN THAT SIMPERING CRITICAL CHORUS DISMISSES PRO HART AS A NAIVE -- A KIND OF ANTIPODEAN GRANDMA MOSES, PRETTY ENOUGH BUT LACKING PROFUNDITY.

I CAN ONLY SAY THAT I'D RATHER A SINGLE CANVAS OF MR HART'S SUN DRENCHED, LIFE-LOVING SIMPLICITIES THAN A WHOLE GALLERY OF SOME OF THE POMPOSITIES THAT WIN THE CRITICAL ACCOLADE.

I'M ONE OF THE LUCKY ONES: I ALREADY OWN A PRO HART. I GET AN ENORMOUS AMOUNT OF PLEASURE FROM IT DAILY AND I ONLY WISH I COULD AFFORD TO HAVE MORE. IT SEEMS TO ME THAT THE ESSENCE OF HIS PAINTING IS A FRESHNESS AND GAIETY: IT'S LIFE AFFIRMING PAINTING. IT'S FUN. AND IT'S OF ENDURING VALUE AS WELL. PRO HART OFFENDS ALL THE CANONS. HE LIVES IN BROKEN HILL, FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE, HE'S DESIGNED A MACHINE GUN AND A TELESCOPE, HIS OUTPUT IS NOT ONLY FINE IT COMES IN QUANTITY.

HE DOESN'T FIT INTO ANY CONVENIENT LITTLE NICHE.

BUT THEN NOR DID FURPHY OR LAWSON - TWO OTHER GENUINE AUSTRALIAN VOICES WHO BELIEVED THAT ART CAN AND SHOULD GIVE PLEASURE TO THE MANY.

PRO HART IS A PEOPLE'S PAINTER NOT IN ANY ARID SOVIET SENSE BUT A MAN WHO DEPICTS A COMMON RESPONSE AND TOUCHES A NATIONAL CHORD IN A MOST UNCOMMON WAY.

CHRYSLER THROUGH THE AIRTEMP PAINTING SCHEME HAVE IN A SHORT WHILE DONE MUCH TO ENCOURAGE ART IN AUSTRALIA AND BRIGHTEN PEOPLE'S HOMES.

THEY'VE DONE IT AGAIN HERE AND I THINK EVERYONE INVOLVED IS A WINNER AS A CONSEQUENCE.

I'VE VERY MUCH PLEASURE IN DECLARING THIS EXHIBITION OPEN.

THANK YOU.