

LLOYD REES BIO

Lloyd Rees (17 March 1895 – 2 December 1988) has a long-established reputation as one of the great explorers and poets of the Australian landscape. His works are preoccupied with depicting the effects of light, and emphasis is placed on the harmony between man and nature. Rees painted right up to his passing, by which time he was in his nineties. He claimed that one of the benefits of his failing eyesight in his old age was that he could look directly at the sun.

Lloyd Rees came to lithography late in his career, well in his 80's. The prints in this exhibition show an intimate collaboration between artist and printer. Lloyd very much enjoyed the medium and the relationship with Fred Genis. These became one of his last projects before his passing at the age 93.

The subjects are those that have involved Rees throughout his long career. The beaches and landscapes of the south coast of NSW, Sydney Harbour, the country around Bathurst and the O'Connell ranges, Mt Wellington in Tasmania. These, and more general themes such as the massive eroded rock cliffs, monumental boulders and rocks, and the swift mystical changes of light and atmosphere that reflect the inner spirit of Rees' drawings.

Lloyd loved nature, and his last edition of prints (with the support of Bob Brown), became a donation for the Wilderness Society, funding the Franklin River dam protest in Tasmania. For Nearly 70 years, the artist's mystical reverence for landscape, his imaginative response to rock, hills and stones, his visionary qualities of brooding light have inspired generations of younger artists; Brett Whitely frequently acknowledged his debt to Lloyd Rees and his Oberon landscapes have their roots in Rees' vision.

No-one predicted that in the early 1980's when Lloyd Rees started a small, experimental project with Port Jackson Press and master-lithographer Fred Genis, that this would crystallise into a major statement of many of the artist's life-long themes. Rees prodigiously explored the boundaries of fine lithography, and discovered a new medium through which he could express his most intense creative strengths – the potential for broad and aggressive drawing and the sensuous and powerful use of line and tone soon took over his imagination.

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"In my own small way, I have found that the best subjects seem to find you rather than you find them. You have doubtless had the experience. You go out looking for a subject even with one in mind when suddenly an entirely different picture forms before one's eyes. A rhythm of line of form and colour, which almost says "I have come to be painted", and represent a new experience...." Lloyd Rees

"From quite an early age I was overwhelmed with the fact of endlessness... Planetary systems can blow up, but the universe is endless, and our little life is set in the midst of this, and everything in it has a beginning and an end... [This] gives to life a sense of mystery that is always with me." Lloyd Rees