

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE23090873

Hinchliffe, Meredith Maxwell

(1946 -)

Born 7 September, 1946, Warwick Queensland Australia

Occupation Arts administrator, Valuer

Summary

Meredith Hinchliffe has been involved with the arts in Canberra since 1977 when she joined the Crafts Council of the ACT as its Executive Secretary and then Director. She went on to work in organisations such as the National Campaign for the Arts, Museums Australia, ArtsACT, and the Donald Horne Institute for Cultural Heritage at UC, and has also worked as a freelance arts consultant and exhibitions curator since 1997. Meredith is a specialist on crafts including ceramics, textiles and furniture, and is an approved valuer under the Commonwealth Government's Cultural Gifts Program. She has written about the arts for numerous arts journals and regularly contributed reviews of crafts and visual arts exhibitions and books to The Canberra Times from 1978 to 2009. Meredith has been a long-time advocate and lobbyist for the arts, and is a significant patron of and donor to arts organisations, especially the Canberra Museum and Gallery. In 2022 she was made a Member of the Order of Australia in recognition of her significant service to the arts.

Details

"Meredith Hinchliffe was born in Warwick, Queensland to Captain Leslie Maxwell (Max) Hinchliffe (1916–2003) and Marjorie Moffat Hinchliffe (1920–1998) née Smyth. She was educated in Australia and America, finally at Canberra Church of England Girls' Grammar School, and the University of Canberra (then CAE, 1977).

Meredith joined the Crafts Council of the ACT in 1977, and worked as its Executive Secretary and Director till 1986. In that time she curated many exhibitions of individual artists and groups across the media of ceramics, wood, textiles, leather, metalwork and, to a lesser extent, glass. She also showed at Craft ACT a number of touring exhibitions – e.g. an exhibition of Molas from the San Blas Islands of Panama. She went on to work at the Australian Bicentennial Authority (ACT and Island Territories), ArtsACT and Business Development in the ACT Government, managing grant programs. She served as the full-time Executive Director of the National Campaign for the Arts Australia Ltd in July 1996, and assisted with the successful campaign for ArtBank to be retained as a government entity. She built up a strong network of media contacts during this time, but lack of funding led to the Campaign being wound up in August 1977.

In 2000 Meredith took on a project management position at the Australian Science Teachers Association and was then appointed Executive Officer of Museums Australia, the national professional association for museum workers and museums, in July 2002. She worked as Public Arts Project Officer for ArtsACT and has managed several public art installation projects. From July 2008 to April 2009 she was the inaugural Executive Officer of the Donald Horne Institute for Cultural Heritage at the University of Canberra. From 1997 to 1999 Meredith worked as a freelance arts consultant, a role she has renewed at various times in the years since. Notable examples include curating the Survey exhibition of the Tamworth Fibre Textile Collection in 2010. In 2013, having catalogued the extensive holdings of furniture designed by Frederick Ward for University House at the Australian National University, she curated an exhibition of his exceptional mid-century pieces at the Gallery of Australian Design (Canberra). Most recently, as a Research Associate at the National Museum of Australia Meredith has been involved in working on the Trevor Kennedy Collection recently acquired by the Museum.

Meredith is approved to value Australian ceramics, glass, textiles, jewellery, leatherwork, wooden objects and furniture from 1950 for the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program. She has written prolifically about the decorative arts since the late 1970s, including as a regular contributor to The Canberra Times from 1978 to 2009, writing review articles of crafts and visual arts exhibitions and books, and continues to contribute reviews to the Canberra City News. She has written many articles about issues of importance to the arts for a number of journals, including the National Library News, Smarts, Pottery in Australia (now the Journal of Australian Ceramics), Ceramic Art and Perception, Craft Arts International, Textile Fibre Forum, Object, Craft Australia, and the Italian magazine Studio Vetro. Meredith has long lobbied for, and donated to enterprises across the arts spectrum. She was a leading advocate in the movement to establish the Australian National Capital Artists Inc (ANCA) as an independent, not-for-profit, artist-run initiative. It was created in 1989 as a collaboration between the ACT Government and representatives of Canberra's visual arts community, leasing 35 affordable and professional studio and exhibition spaces to artists. With support from ArtsACT, the ANCA Gallery opened in 1992, presenting a program of art exhibitions and events and supporting critical approaches to contemporary arts practice. Meredith was a founding board member of ANCA in 1992 and a guest curator in 2013. She is a board member of The Childers Group, which was created in 2011 as an independent arts forum in the Canberra region, advocating support for the arts to governments at all levels, and engaging with the private sector, educators, the media and the broader community about the value of the arts.

After inheriting a substantial legacy from her father, Meredith decided to make good use of it by donating to the decorative arts collections of public galleries. In addition to regular donations to the National Gallery of Australia and the National Museum of Australia, in 2004 she started giving a significant sum annually to the Canberra Museum and Gallery for purchase of artworks by Canberra region artists, with a focus mostly on decorative arts. In 2019 the Gallery reciprocated by presenting an exhibition of pieces from the Meredith Hinchliffe Fund. She says: 'Although I'm not wealthy, people like me can still make a difference.... I just believe in giving money to things that are really important, to support artists; I know how tough it is for them.'

Meredith Hinchliffe has also been a long-time volunteer and board member in a number of national and ACT arts bodies since the 1980s, including the National Gallery of Australia, the Friends of the National Museum of Australia, the Friends of the National Library of Australia, and the ACT branch of the Australian Decorative and Fine Arts Society. She was a board member of Ausdance ACT and chaired its board from 2009–12. In the ACT, Meredith's contributions to the arts were recognised in 2000 with an ACT Women's Award. In 2011 she received an Australia Day Medal from National Gallery of Australia and in 2022 she was made a Member of the Order of Australia for 'significant service to the arts through a range of roles and organisations'."

Published resources

Fred Ward, Pioneer Australian Designer: His Life and Work in Furniture Design, Amy Jarvis and Meredith Hinchliffe, <https://www.theaustralianafund.org.au/events/online-lecture-2-fred-ward-pioneer-australian-designer-his-life-and-work-in-furniture>

Canberra Museum and Gallery, <http://www.cmag.com.au/collection-search?utf8=%E2%9C%93&q=meredith+hinchliffe+collection>

Author Details
Louise Moran

Created 25 April 2023
Last modified