
Meet the man ready to give away his secret \$500m art collection

For 40 years, Lindsey Hogg has quietly amassed a trove that is one of Australia's best-kept secrets. Now he wants it to belong to others.



Lindsey Hogg's art collection – valued at \$500 million – includes Francis Bacon's 'Blood On The Floor'. **Wayne Taylor**

James Thomson *Columnist*

Oct 9, 2020 – 12.00am

Lindsey Hogg has spent 40 years amassing what is arguably Australia's most valuable private art collection almost entirely in secret. Now he wants to give it all away to the people of Victoria.

The scope of Hogg's collection, which is conservatively valued at \$500 million, has never before been revealed, in part because of the extraordinary lengths the Melbourne businessman has taken to keep it a secret, including using a fake name to navigate the art world.

But Hogg, who will soon turn 80 and owns and runs two manufacturing firms, wants to hand his collection to the public by building a \$50 million

gallery complex to house the 120-odd artworks. It would operate through a charitable trust that will be completely independent from him and his family.

“If we can get this thing going with the authorities ... this collection will stay together and educate and inspire generations,” Hogg says.

“It will create its own identity and its own place in the art world here in Australia. I have no doubt about that.”



The mystery of who bought Brett Whiteley's iconic 'The Jacaranda Tree (on Sydney Harbour)' at auction in 1999 can now be solved.

Hogg spoke exclusively to *The Australian Financial Review* in his Melbourne home, where part of his stunning collection of mainly European and Australian works is on display.

In the foyer alone sit several iconic paintings – a selection from Sidney Nolan's famous *Ned Kelly series* and Brett Whiteley's *The Jacaranda Tree (On Sydney Harbour)*, which fetched \$1.98 million in 1999 – then a record for an Australian artist.

At the time, the *Financial Review* speculated the distinctive painting, which went to a mystery private collector, [may have been purchased by One.Tel](#)

[founder, Jodee Rich](#), or [a Hong Kong based designer named Steven Jackson](#). But 20 years on, it can now be revealed that Hogg was the buyer.

Also in the foyer is a huge canvas by British artist Francis Bacon titled *Blood on the Floor*. Bacon's *Three Studies of Lucian Freud* sold in 2013 for \$US142 million.

Blood on the Floor is a different work, of course, but it speaks to how the artist is valued on the international art market, and just how significant Hogg's collection is.

Hogg plans to name the gallery Rosemaur after his parents Rose and Maurice, who he says arrived in Australia in the 1930s from England “with 30 bob and the promise of a job”.

Maurice, a skilled chemist who specialised in plastics and spent World War II assisting with pioneering plastic surgery, rose through the ranks at conglomerate Nylex, where Hogg worked after leaving school in year 11.

I thought, how could you possibly put such a beautiful image like that on a piece of canvas?

— Lindsey Hogg, art collector

“I spent six years on the factory floor, which was my university,” he says.

Maurice would eventually start his own business, which Hogg joined. When the family firm was sold to General Electric in the mid 1970s, Hogg set up his own plastics firms. He remains involved in the businesses, which have largely funded his art purchases.

Hogg caught the art bug during a visit to the National Gallery of Victoria, where he was struck by a painting called *The 28th Regiment at Quatre Bras* by Elizabeth Thompson, which depicts a British regiment at the Battle of Waterloo.

“I thought, how could you possibly put such a beautiful image like that on a piece of canvas?”

Hogg's curating journey started in London. A framer he knew introduced him to Richard Nagy, an expat Australian art dealer who would become

central to building Hogg's collection.

Speaking from London, Nagy says Hogg's initial interest in the Napoleonic period soon expanded to a wide variety of European art and then into Australian works. Nagy says he quickly proved an unusually open-minded client.

"He literally threw himself in the deep end ... which is exceedingly rare. But what he also has is an exceptional perceptiveness, which is equally rare."

One of the rare things about this collection is that it can't be done again.

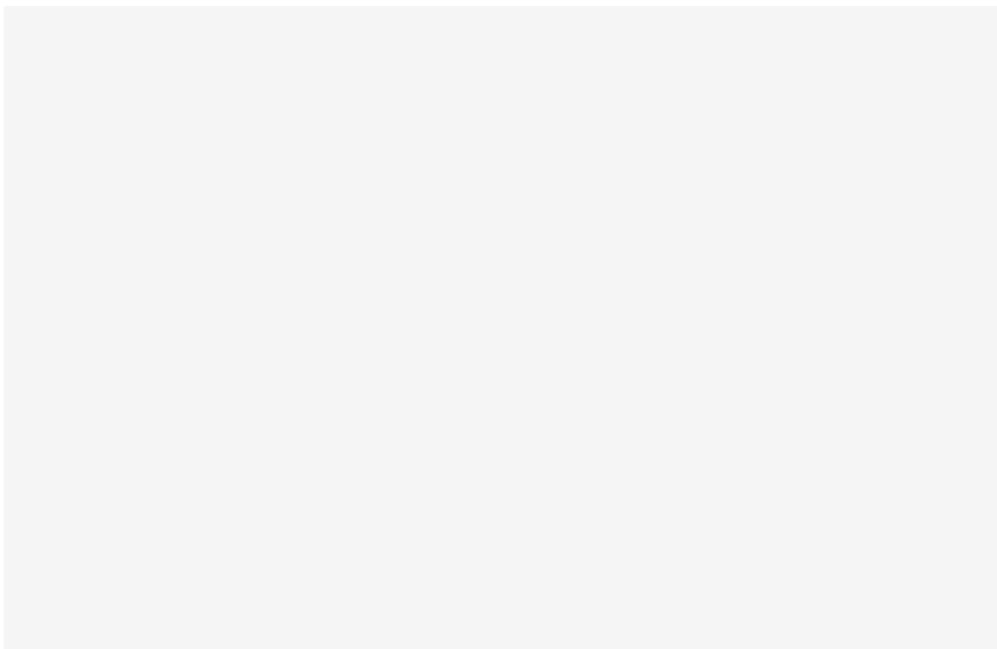
— Richard Nagy, art dealer

Nagy says Hogg's collection, which includes Impressionist pictures, paintings depicting great battles through history, sculpture and even vintage televisions and radios, would easily be valued at more than \$500 million.

He says his client's acquisitions in the 1980s and 1990s were particularly well timed.

"One of the rare things about this collection is that it can't be done again. The truth is there's just not enough high-quality works going into the market place to even sustain the major auction houses."

Nagy has also been central to Hogg pulling the wool over the eyes of the art world for four decades.





Hogg used the nome de plume Ian Peterson to navigate art circles. **Wayne Taylor**

Hogg has gone to extraordinary lengths to maintain his privacy, typically purchasing art through agents or the companies of third parties. When he's loaned works to museums and galleries – something he's done on almost 40 occasions – Hogg has even gone to the trouble of packing them and delivering them himself. Many of his best friends don't even know the extent of his collection, he says.

“I've just kept a very low profile. And I've only really been interested in the collection and enjoying collecting.”

One tactic was to use a fake name – Ian Peterson – to navigate art circles. The ruse worked. When galleries such as the Tate Modern in London or the Museum of Modern Art in New York have borrowed his works, Hogg has been invited to dinner events – under his nom de plume.

“Lindsey Hogg was totally anonymous but Ian Peterson was known around the world at the tables of the greatest art museums and galleries,” Nagy laughs, adding that the size and value of Hogg’s collection hasn’t changed him.

“In some ways he’s more worldly, but mainly he’s the same bloke. He really doesn’t stand on ceremony and is totally lacking in pretension.

"To see this quality of art, Australians have to go around the globe. It is such an extraordinarily generous gift."

Hogg plans to build his gallery at Harkaway, about 40 kilometres south-east of Melbourne. The eight-hectare site, which has been designed by Melbourne architect Danielle Peck of Architecture Associates, will also include a restaurant, extensive gardens, walking trails, education space and a wetland.

Hogg’s vision is that the enterprise will be cashflow positive, so that it can acquire new works. But he emphasises that Rosemaur will be totally independent from him and his family, who support his vision.

Hogg first had the idea for the gallery about eight years ago. He has been quietly working on plans for the project and talking with local and state governments for more than four years.

Hogg has the support of the City of Casey but there has been some resistance from local residents, with more than 650 signatures on an online petition protesting the development on the grounds it is in a "green wedge" planning zone.

Hogg is continuing talks with the Victorian government, which is taking public submissions on the development as part of its planning process.

While Hogg says he never envisaged it would take so long to get the project approved, he’s respectful of the process and concedes that his low profile

might have worked against him – it's simply hard to believe the scope of the collection that he's built.

“I think that I'm viewed with a little bit of suspicion, because nobody knows me. But they are going to after this.

“I am an eternal optimist,” Hogg says of the gallery's prospects. “I really would dearly like to see it operating. That's the important thing – so I can see it from a distance and I can feel grateful and happy.”