

“The Crafts Movement in Australia: A History”

by Grace Cochrane 1992

“Scandinavian designers had an aggressive worldwide public relations program, sending speakers and exhibitions round the world and a few George Jensen outlets were established in Australia. Norman Creighton remembers a Jensen exhibition in Melbourne in the late 1960s. “we went as a group, and saw the film of the factory - we were goggle-eyed. It was the first opportunity to pick up a piece of hand crafted silver, a fish-dish 2-3 feet long. That day electrified the next ten to twelve years.” (pp 109)

“At RMIT, the gold and silversmithing course taught by Victor Vodicka, Wolf Wennrich and Chris McWaters, was perhaps the oldest. Wennrich made a return visit to Germany in the early 1970s and came back enthused about the new work he had seen there, which considered jewellery as art, using linear and painterly techniques in metal. Jewellery developed as a major study within the department, and the new direction was apparent in 1974, when Wennrich and three of his students, Marian Hosking, Rex Keogh and Norman Creighton, showed their work in the exhibition 3+1 in Melbourne and Sydney.” (pp 223)

“From an early stage the Victorian State Government saw value in supporting the development of the crafts, and the Crafts Council of Victoria (CCV) was the first of the craft associations to receive substantial state financial support. Other states which were still operating from cardboard boxes on kitchen tables were overwhelmed when the Victorian government allocated over \$100,000 to this organisation as early as 1974. As well, many members of the Victorian association had come through the strong art/craft teacher education program, were active in the Victorian Art./Craft Teachers Association, and were experienced politically. They were able to capitalise on the government’s interest in the arts, economics and education to influence major arts events, like Arts Victoria ’78: Crafts, and the establishment of a crafts centre at the former metropolitan Meat Market.

“By 1978 the theme of the Victorian government’s arts festival was specifically that of the crafts, largely because of their by-now high public profile, and the lobbying skills of the council (the Crafts Council of Victoria - CCV). A complex program of crafts activities and initiatives took place over the whole year of Arts Victoria 78: Crafts, probably the most sustained effort to celebrate and promote the crafts to that date. The organising team comprised Marjorie Johnson as director, Norman Creighton, seconded from Melbourne State College for a year as education officer, and Glenda King, crafts consultant for the non-metropolitan program.” (pp 277)

Note: Norman Creighton was president of the Crafts Council of Victoria from 1976-1977.