ARTIST: RON MCBURNIE

ARTWORK: A Rake’s Progress – Sale of the Century I and II

ABOUT THE ARTWORK

The artist made this diptych (of two related etchings) to be part of a series which was titled “A Rake’s Progress”. The series was loosely based on an earlier series of paintings and engravings by the great English artist William Hogarth (1697-1764).

Hogarth’s Rake’s Progress was made initially as a series of paintings which the artist popularised in an edition of prints (made using the etching and engraving process). Hogarth’s series followed the descent of young Tom Rakewell after he inherited and squandered the wealth left to him by his miserly father. After a series of bad decisions including gambling, loose living etc. Tom ends his days in the Bethlehem Hospital (aka Bedlam), London’s famous mental asylum.

Ron McBurnie made his own series of images of the Rake’s Progress in which his Rake is somewhat autobiographical and follows the life of the then artist living his early life as an art student in Brisbane. Many of the images are set in Brisbane city or surrounding suburbs and depict political and social events and topical landmarks in the area. In each etching the artist, or Rake, appears sometimes hidden within the landscapes depicted.

The two Rake’s Progress etchings in the exhibition printed from zinc plate have a link to Hogarth’s last engraving of Tom Rakewell’s incarceration in the Bedlam mental asylum. A link to the image can be found in the street sign as well as the position of the dogs on the street and several other clues. Unlike Hogarth’s Rake who seems destitute, McBurnie’s Rake is still active and has hope even though raking leaves in the middle of a cyclone may be seen by some as an irrational activity. Pandemonium can be observed on the street with the burning of art books and a piano suggesting the loss of our culture. Inside the houses people watch a popular 1980’s quiz show called Sale of the century, which is symbolic of what is happening to the land just outside their door.

View images of Hogarths Rake’s progress at this website
https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/monarchy-enlightenment/britain-18c/britain-ageof-revolution/a/hogarth-a-rakes-progress
INVESTIGATE

*Sale of the century* is described as an etching on paper. **Find out** what an etching is. From reading about the artwork, what metal has the artist used to make this etching?

**Look online** for an image of Hogarth’s last engraving of the *Rakes Progress*. **Compare** that work with McBurnie’s *Sale of the Century*.

![Image of etching](Figure 1. William Hogarth, A Rake’s Progress, plate 8, “The Madhouse” 1735, engraving on paper, 35.5 x 31 cm (Britannic.com, 2016)).

**List** any similarities between the two works. *Clue: Street names, dogs.*

**Write down** why you think McBurnie called his diptych “Sale of the Century”. Does the title relate to any activities taking place within the etching? *Clue: Game Show, selling something.*

**Locate** the artist on the left side of the left panel. What activity is he involved in completing and why do you think he is doing it?

Who is the unluckiest animal in the etching?