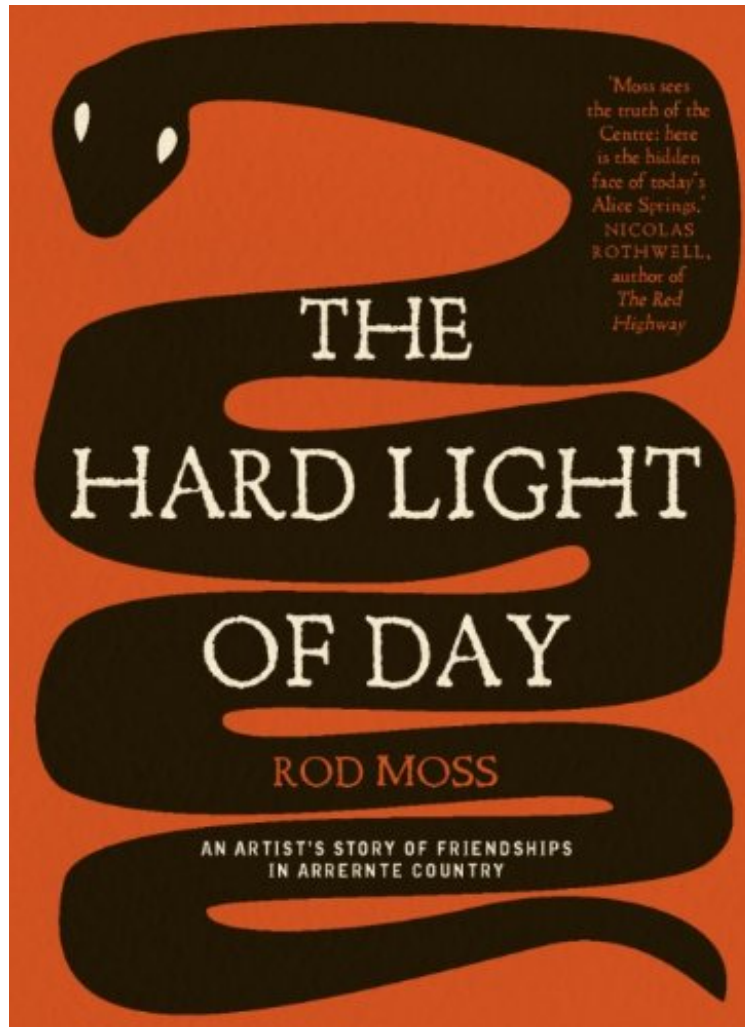


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Rod Moss

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Rod Moss : The Hard Light of Day: An Artist's Story of Friendships in Arrernte Country before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Hard Light of Day: An Artist's Story of Friendships in Arrernte Country:

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both in his paintings and his writings, are only vaguely known. Now thanks to the publication of this book we learn just how fine and artist and a humanitarian he is. This is a book for art lovers, for sociologists, and equal rights champions, and for historians as much of what Moss has to say traces a people closer to the original man than any we might encounter the Aborigines of Australia. In a recent issue of the art journal *Poets an Artists* the following observations were noted: In a global pandemic of instant communication via the growing armamentarium of sophisticated cell phones equipped as near computers jabbering in fragmentary symbols and inundated by input from the infinite number of blogs and twitters, the speed of current living seems to be approaching that of light. In this raucous atmosphere where history is not only discarded but nearly negated the presence of artists who keep us in touch with the flow of life is ever more important. Rod Moss is an Australian artist who, though well known in his own country, remains too little known in the international art field, and the reasons for discovering the art of this gifted painter go beyond admiration of his canvases. Moss has devoted his talent to focusing on the origins of life in the vast land of Australia by returning to the Aborigines. Rather than using the neglected and abused Aborigines as canvas fodder for his paintings, he has moved into Aboriginal territory, making his home in central Australia in a place called Alice Springs, distant in proximity and cultural diversity from the sophisticated major cities of Melbourne and Sydney. Here Moss witnesses the people who retain their affinity for the past - a people whose lives depend on survival within the day, not the collection of possessions or the luxuries of, say, 'planning for the future.' While many view these 'backward creatures' as poverty stricken drunkards whose attention to the law and to the white man ethics estranges them from society, Moss among others has grown into these families, learning their simple views of the cosmos, their own sense of dignity, their being at one with the earth, and it is this uniqueness that Rod Moss celebrates in his paintings by calling our attention to the differences as well as the similarities between these 'primitive, original folk' and the 'civilized' world. Each of Rod Moss's paintings has a dual meaning: each represents an event he has observed and each references imagery and ideas from famous Western paintings, often those with a biblical reference, as in *RAFT* (Gericault's *Raft of the Medusa*) and in *INTERVENTION* (Caravaggio's *Nativity*). Moss also pays homage to the now popular Aboriginal art, art that is created from dots and rapid color wisps and references to primitive renderings not unlike cave drawings: these techniques he uses as his backgrounds for his figures and like the Aborigines, the constancy of the earth/time provides a contrast to the activity of the message of the people depicted in the paintings. Paintings such as *CROW WHISPERS* concentrate on the Aborigine people as themselves. A remarkable artistic technique is the manner in which Moss subtracts color from the skin of the Aborigines, electing instead to paint faces, hands and feet in black and white. In *BIG ROOSTER* these differences are marked: white men are in full color while the Aboriginal figure is in black and white. And when Moss elects to make a political statement, such as pleading for correcting the neglect and abandonment of abuse of the Aborigines (as in the portrayal of the supposed *RECONCILIATION WALK*) the poignancy of his commitment to his adopted family of man is most powerful. It is the obvious wealth of art history background always at work in the mind of Rod Moss coupled with the unique manner of painting the near indescribable quality of light found in the areas where the Aborigines live and the painterly choices he makes in visually describing what he sees and feels that makes this art so important. It is difficult for the viewer to be in the presence of a Rod Moss painting without absorbing at least some of the responsibility for the manner in which civilized man has pushed indigenous peoples into the background, all in the name of progress. Seeing what Moss sees, those basics of existence in a world so preoccupied with climbing success and possessions and gadgetry, reminds us of one of the important roles of our artists - preserving our history, even perhaps expanding our attention and concern for the neglected ones that exist in every society of this globe. Grady Harp, February 11

A story of whitefella-blackfella friendship that offers hope for the future. Two years after artist Rod Moss arrived in Alice Springs to teach painting, he met an Indigenous couple who had set up camp in the gully beside his flat. Over the next twenty-five years, his friendship with Xavier and Petrina Neil and the friendships that grew from it with the families of Whitegate, an Arrernte camp on the outskirts of town, would nourish and challenge Moss beyond his imagining. *The Hard Light of Day* offers a rare insight into the reality of life in the Centre, from the contours of the MacDonnell Ranges and the textures and sounds of Arrernte culture, to the endemic violence, alcoholism and ill-health that continue to devastate Aboriginal lives. In recalling the relationships and experiences that have shaped his life and work in Alice Springs, Moss reveals the human face behind the statistics and celebrates the enriching, transformative power of friendship. Illustrated with Moss's evocative paintings and photographs, *The Hard Light of Day* is an incredible journey into a world never shown in the mainstream media, and an artist's chronicle of the moments that have inspired him.

About the Author Rod Moss is an artist who is represented by the Anna Pappas Gallery in Melbourne, the Fireworks Gallery in Brisbane, and the Peta Appleyard Gallery in Alice Springs. He is the recipient of the Northern Territory Book of the Year Award. nbsp;