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50 MOST COLLECTABLE ARTISTS

Noel McKenna



Although **Noel McKenna's** name hasn't appeared on every *50 Most Collectable* list over the last seven years [he missed out in 2005], his work has proven to be enduringly popular as the choice of the committed collector, the admiring artist and the true believer in the poetry of the every day. "Noel is an artist whose quirky take on life really appeals to my sense of humour," says art consultant **Alison Renwick**. "The whimsy, which is apparent in everything he paints, translates very well into the small tiles, the strange ceramics and the glorious works on paper and oil on canvas paintings. I definitely prefer his smaller works. They have an intimacy I think which really suits his style. Although he is a very well established artist with a fantastic primary and secondary market, he is still one to watch as I think he will continue to surprise us all with his unusual Magritte-like take on life."

Writing on his work for *50 Most* in 2004, **Timothy Morrell** accurately summarised McKenna's painting when he observed that the artist "has a subtle understanding of the loneliness and pathos of ordinary lives, and the potential strangeness of familiar landscapes". McKenna's work often includes the iconography of the outer suburbs; houses, front yards, lost dogs, birds on road signs and giant fruit, yet he never gives into sentimentalism or a self-conscious Australiana. Indeed, it is a sense of sadness that McKenna so expertly evokes that sets him apart from nearly every other Australian artist. "Fellow artists love his work and so do the buying public," observes collector **Reg Richardson**. "The work touches a chord evoking a warm response from viewers. His 2005 survey show at the City Gallery in Wellington, New Zealand is recognition of his increasing status as an artist."

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Noel McKenna, *Owl in snow* (detail), 2005. Oil on plywood, 60 x 70cm. COURTESY GREENAWAY ART GALLERY, ADELAIDE

Born: 1956

Price range: etchings: \$880; ceramics: \$550-\$1,100; works on paper: \$2,200-\$3,300; paintings: \$4,950-\$22,000

Dealers: Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney; Greenaway Gallery, Adelaide; Niagara Gallery, Melbourne