

## The Dealer is the Devil

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**GINA FAIRLEY**

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Adrian Newstead's new expose on the Aboriginal Art Market has everyone talking.



*Adrian Newstead with artist Billy Benn, 2012. Courtesy Newstead.*

Officially launched at Sydney's Australian Galleries (Tuesday, 4 February) the title of Adrian Newstead's book says it all: *The Dealer is the Devil – An Insider's History of the Aboriginal Art Trade*.

There is no better person to tackle such a complex and layered topic as Newstead, founder of Coo-ee Aboriginal Art Gallery (<http://www.cooeeart.com.au>) (1981), Australia's oldest continuously operating Aboriginal art gallery, and former President of the Indigenous Art Trade Association, Director of Aboriginal Tourism Australia, and Head of Aboriginal Art for Lawson-Menzies (2003), and Managing Director of Menzies Art Brands until 2008 - a time which has been described as riding the Aboriginal art boom.

Described as 'part memoir, part road trip, part political commentary', it is the first definitive history of the Aboriginal art market warts and all.

What makes this book so interesting is that Newstead is both witness to and participant in this rising phenomenon, his extensive archive of images colouring the pages.

While it is extensively researched - and could even be described as the 'go to'

book on the industry - it is delightfully free of art speak, racing between classic yarns and a polished delivery of accounts. Simply, it is absorbing.

'Throughout, Newstead's humour, love and respect for his subjects produces a story that reads at times like a thriller, and at others like a lament for a lost world', state the publishers Brandl & Schlesinger.

Moving between remote indigenous communities to white box galleries and reveling auction houses - the power brokers of this new world of dealing - the book trails a journey from Papunya Tula in 1971 to its economic boom during the 1990s when shares were high, super funds blossomed and Sothebys and Menzies vied under the hammer, to its pinnacle with the 2000 Olympics, and eventual demise with the devastating impact of the Global Financial Crisis of 2008.

It is an impact still felt today by the Aboriginal art market and one compounded by a change in self-managed super funds. Perhaps this book by Newstead will inject new interest and respect in collecting what is coming out of these communities.

Politics is always present, from the plight of Namatjira to the remarkable auction records of Emily as a global phenomenon, issues of provenance and fly-in opportunist 'carpet baggers'.

Newstead invites you to read between the lines and form your own opinion.

Newstead said, 'I do not believe that there has ever been a more comprehensive examination of the culture and content that has informed this great art movement, the life stories of its participants, both back and white, and the controversies that have raged around them.'

He could well be right. This book is a must read for anyone interested in our cultural heritage and the fickle intricacies of the art market. *The Dealer is the Devil*, what has been described by some as Newstead's magnum opus.

***The Dealer is the Devil***

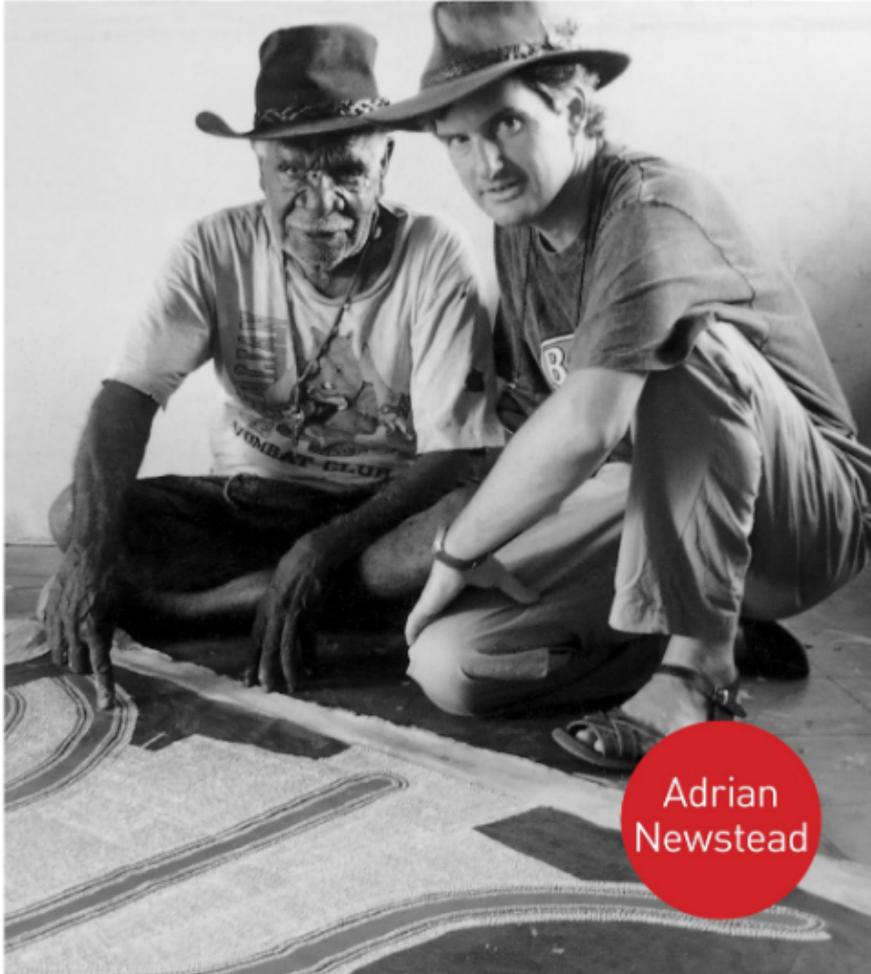
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**(<https://itunes.apple.com/au/book/the-dealer-is-the-devil/id792495926?mt=11>)**

# THE DEALER IS THE DEVIL

AN INSIDER'S HISTORY OF THE ABORIGINAL ART TRADE



Adrian  
Newstead

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gina Fairley is artHub's journalist for Visual Arts.

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