

ARTAND

– NEWS –



– GERARD HAVEKES: A LIFE IN TILES – By ARTAND, Canberra

An eccentric and committed ceramicist, Gerard Havekes (1925–2011) created one of Sydney's most familiar, albeit frequently overlooked, sculptures: a trio of sandstone figures located in the centre of Hyde Park. Most recently, his work has been installed in the new Hotel Hotel complex in Canberra's NewActon area, where his handmade tiled mural in the foyer leads guests to the hotel's secret garden.

Created in 1961 for his first major Sydney commission, the Frederick Joseph Walker Fountain Memorial in Hyde Park symbolises the pioneering spirit of Australia, expressed through the emblematic figures of a woman, a fisherman and a farmer. Havekes spent over a year excavating the 8 tonne figures from their original 48 tonne block, through the use of a small jackhammer.

Born in Holland, Havekes immigrated to Australia in 1950 and spent his life pursuing experimental artforms while living in various locations across New South Wales. Havekes is best known for his prodigious output of hand-glazed and carved ceramic tiles, configured into colourful murals. Working closely with interior designers and architects, his murals populate the major cities as well as regional towns including Broken Hill. One of his most substantial works, located at the Darwin Casino, includes 13 tonnes of handmade tiles, which Havekes hand-fired in his Sydney studio, personally delivering them to Darwin in his trailer.

During the 1980s, Havekes moved to a warehouse in Leichhardt, where he

invented a new medium: the three-dimensional tapestry. Designed by the artist and produced in Hong Kong, these works adorn the walls of several Sydney buildings, such as the National Australia Bank headquarters in the CBD.

Image Credits

Gerard Havekes, mural, Hotel Hotel, Canberra.