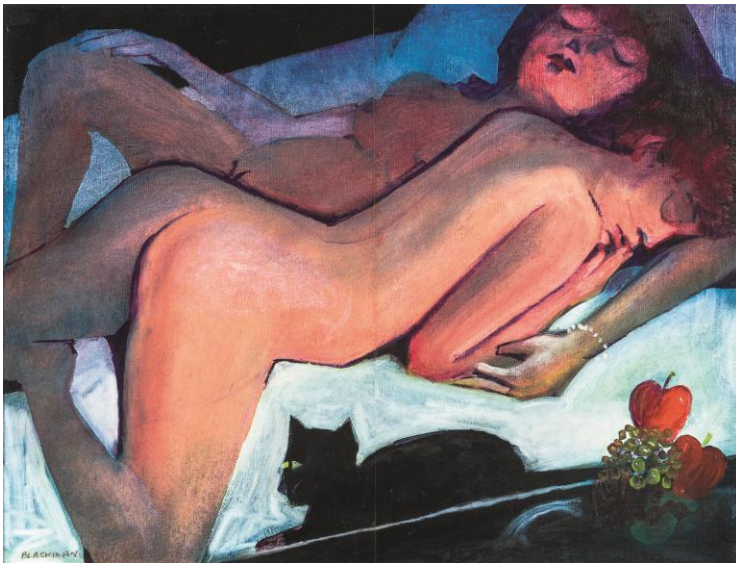


## Facebook's ban on Charles Blackman nude artwork attacked as 'living in the 1950s'

Melbourne art auction house Mossgreen says refusal to allow post featuring artwork *Women Lovers* is 'ridiculous'



*Women Lovers* by the Australian artist Charles Blackman.

The artwork was part of a video post by Melbourne's Mossgreen art auction house that was blocked by Facebook. Photograph: Mossgreen

[Melissa Davey](#) Wednesday 1 March 2017 13.54 AEDT

The [Melbourne](#) art auction house Mossgreen has accused Facebook of "living in the 1950s" after it refused to allow an advertisement for an artwork by the esteemed Australian artist Charles Blackman.

The artwork, called *Women Lovers*, was part of a video post by Mossgreen to promote a collection of works to be auctioned next week. *Women Lovers* is an oil painting that depicts two naked women in rest, a black cat next to them. The work largely features one of the women's backs, with the nipple of the women lying next to her also exposed.

Mossgreen attempted to boost the video by turning it into an advertisement, a move that would have seen the video promoted to audiences beyond just those who are members of the Mossgreen Facebook page. But [Facebook](#) blocked it.

Mossgreen was told by the social media giant that, “This advert wasn’t boosted because it violates ad guidelines by advertising adult products or services including toys, videos or sexualising enhancement products.”

Mossgreen’s chief executive, Paul Summer, told Guardian Australia that Facebook needed to rethink their policies.

“I can’t quite believe it, to be honest,” Summer said. “I feel I’m not living in the 21st century. It’s like Facebook are living in the 1950s. There is nothing sexual about this image and my question is, why do Facebook assume people look at naked figures and see sexual things?”

“We see images on Facebook constantly of people semi-dressed on beaches. There is nothing sexual about this artwork. It is just a beautiful image of two women, one lying with her back facing the viewer, and to ban it because you can see a little bit of definition on the other woman’s nipple is just ridiculous.”

He added that artwork featuring naked men had not attracted censorship by Facebook.

In a Facebook post on the Mossgreen page, the auction house wrote that it had been forced to remove the Blackman video from the video in order to promote the upcoming auction. Members of the page reacted with anger and surprise.

### **Analysis Facebook’s censorship of Aboriginal bodies raises troubling ideas of ‘decency’**

Facebook happily hosts Kim Kardashian’s cleavage, but suspended users posting images of topless Aboriginal women for ‘violating community standards’. Leigh Alexander wonders, just whose standards are we talking about?

One user, Sally Davis, wrote: ‘I love this painting. Removing it is ridiculous’.

Another, Peter Sansom, wrote that Facebook seemed “happy to host a ton of offensive hate groups” but balked at art. “This is not the first or the last time this has happened,” he wrote.

Camilla Bertocchi described it as “a beautiful painting, full of tenderness and warmth”.

“I fail to see how anyone could possibly interpret this painting as being inappropriate for use in an advert,” she wrote.

Blackman, age 88, is considered one of Australia’s greatest living artists. He was made an officer of the Order of the British Empire for his services to Australian art in 1977.

His works sell for tens of thousands of dollars.

<https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2017/mar/01/facebooks-ban-on-charles-blackman-nude-artwork-attacked-as-living-in-the-1950s>

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