

Circles row artists agree to meet in the middle

By PETER HUGHES,
Adelaide

A painting at the centre of a Federal Court battle over its legitimacy is back in the hands of the man who produced the original. It will not be seen by the public again in its present state.

It was not revealed whether the artist, Charles Bannon, intended to remove the "crop circle daubism" that had been added to his 1981 work 'Piccaninny Daylight at the Olgas'.

But after an out-of-court settlement Mr Bannon has given notice that he will mount a campaign for legislation to outlaw any similar incident.

An Adelaide fringe artist who calls himself Driller Jet Armstrong turned 'Piccaninny Daylight at the Olgas' into 'Crop Circles on a Bannon Landscape' by adding a white circle-and-daub blob. He said the cost of justice had stopped him establishing his own copyright to the work.

Last week, Mr Bannon was granted a Federal Court injunction that halted Mr Armstrong's plans to exhibit the reworked painting, with a \$650 price tag, in an Adelaide Gallery. It was, Mr Armstrong said, a serious artistic statement announcing "the death of realist landscape painting".

In the Federal Court yesterday, lawyers for Mr Bannon and Mr Armstrong told Mr Justice O'Loughlin that a settlement had been reached. It had been agreed that Mr Armstrong would sell his 'Crop Circles on a Bannon Landscape' to an "anonymous" buyer for \$650 so the reworked painting could be returned to Mr Bannon.

It had been agreed that there would be no sale, hire or exhibition of the painting, that there would be no proceedings for damages by either party, and that neither party would seek an order for costs.

Driller Jet Armstrong, in a luminous green suit decorated with black crop circles, sat in court with the contentious painting at his side. After the hearing, he met lawyers for Mr Bannon outside in the street and swapped the reworked landscape for a \$650 cheque. say money.

Mr Bannon said in a statement after the case that he intended to push for legislation against this "ambiguity and discrepancy in the law" to protect visual artists from such acts, and he hoped that others concerned with the issue would join him.

from: MARK MORAVEC
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Dear FT Editors,

You Brits may have
a monopoly on the
actual crop circles,
but us Aussies
have our important
contributions to
make on the
artistic aspects
of crop circles !!