

# Smith&Singer

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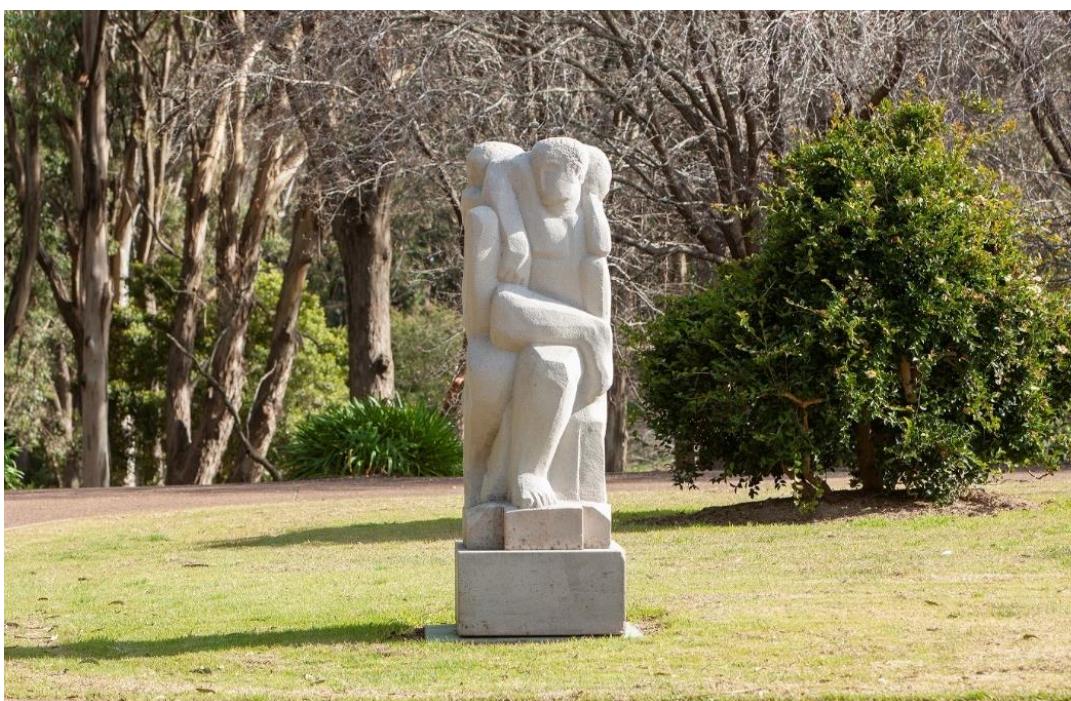
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ROSEMARY MADIGAN'S MAGNUM OPUS, QUARTET 1981-1991, SETS NEW WORLD AUCTION RECORD FOR THE ARTIST AND THE THIRD HIGHEST PRICE FOR AN AUSTRALIAN FEMALE SCULPTOR REALISING \$387,500

*Telephone Bidders from Around Australia  
Competed in a Spirited Private Auction Setting a New Benchmark for Australian Sculpture on the Secondary Market.*

*'Quartet' 1981-1991 Eclipses the Previous World Auction Record by Nine Times,  
Established in 2006 for Rosemary Madigan's 'Head', which realised \$43,020.*

*The Strong Result Achieved Further Demonstrates the Continued Demand  
for Works by Female Australian Artists Across all Mediums.*



ROSEMARY MADIGAN 1926-2019

Quartet 1981-1991

sandstone, 187 x 91 x 66 cm

Estimate \$200,000–300,000

Sold for \$387,500

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**SYDNEY, 29 September 2021** – Last night, at Smith & Singer's latest offering in its Masterpiece Private Auction series, we saw the most significant work created by Rosemary Madigan almost double its low estimate and achieve \$387,500. The monumental, carved stone sculpture established a new world auction record for Rosemary Madigan, eclipsing the previous record held since 2006 by nine times. The result also represents the third highest price ever realised for a female Australian sculptor at auction.

*Geoffrey Smith, Chairman of Smith & Singer commented:* 'Rosemary Madigan occupies a singular position within the history and development of Australian art as a female sculptor of stature and significance, whose œuvre unquestionably deserves wider appreciation and acknowledgement. Rarely can we unequivocally state that we have been entrusted with the finest composition by a major Australian artist, and we are therefore particularly delighted with the response received from collectors throughout Australia.'

## *Perhaps Australia's Greatest & Least Celebrated Sculptress, Rosemary Madigan's Life Spanned the Birth of Australian Modernism*

*'It always starts with a piece of stone. This block was nice and big, plain, no grain. Even the subject Day I saw at the start – then, oops! Michelangelo had done it; but never mind. I've always liked relief. This is a relief but also not. I was going to call it Medici Quartet, referring to Michelangelo's four figures in the Medici Chapel, Florence, only with his horizontal figures put vertical. I thought of 24 Hours. It's my feeling of a full day. The four figures: Night sleeps, a female. Day is a male, dynamic. Evening is male, legs crossed, relaxed. Morning is female, waking, yawning, stretching.'* (Rosemary Madigan, quoted in Daniel Thomas, Rosemary Madigan: Robert Klippel, The Carrick Hill Trust, Adelaide, 1992, p. 21).



### **GENIUS HIDDEN IN THE STONE**

Born in South Australia, Rosemary Madigan was the youngest of five children and from an early age was inspired by her geologist father's collection of Indigenous artefacts. As she later recalled, 'It fired a child's imagination. Why would you want to be a painter when the physicality of such an object was in your midst.' (Rosemary Madigan, quoted in 'Rosemary Madigan: Sculptor with Interest in Mystical and Spiritual Traditions', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Sydney, 15 March 2019)

Rosemary Madigan, June 1981,  
unknown photographer. Source: Art  
Gallery of New South Wales Archive

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During World War II, Madigan moved to Sydney, where she attended East Sydney Technical College and studied sculpture under Lyndon Dadswell, completing her diploma in 1948. In 1950 Madigan was awarded the New South Wales Travelling Art Scholarship – only the third sculptor in its history – and for the next three years toured Europe and India, carefully observing Romanesque sculptures in churches as well as Indian treasures housed in the Ellora Caves.

Returning to Australia in 1953, Madigan completed important commissions in Adelaide while she commenced teaching positions with various art schools. In 1973, she returned to Sydney and assumed further teaching appointments. It was during this period that Madigan developed a working and later personal relationship with Robert Klippel, one of Australia's most eminent and respected practitioners, that lasted until his death in 2001.

## MADIGAN'S MAGNUM OPUS

*Quartet* 1981-1991 is Madigan's most important work, the *tour de force* of her career, and was featured in Madigan and Klippel's joint major survey exhibition at Carrick Hill, Adelaide, in 1992. Illustrated on the cover of the exhibition catalogue that was authored by Daniel Thomas, the remarkable power and beauty of the work was duly celebrated:

'Finally we have *Quartet*, a large carving in Gosford sandstone, begun in 1981 outdoors at Tyrrell's stonemason's yard, Delhi Road, Ryde, but mostly worked on after the great block of stone was delivered in June 1990 to Klippel's new warehouse-cum-workshop at Curtis Road, Balmain. There it stood in strong sidelight whenever the loading dock was opened to the day ...

Madigan remembers that one of her solo shows at Rudy Komon Gallery suddenly revealed itself as "Sacred and Profane". She is conscious that her art embraces both Christian spirit and Renaissance flesh ... Perhaps *Quartet*, a marvellous piece of direct stone-carving, an anachronistic technique in 1991, has timeless qualities heightened to special intensity in Adelaide. Day and night are universal but in Adelaide they are peculiarly present. In its Mediterranean climate, the city on a plain between sea and mountains is strictly orientated to the four compass points. Young Madigan's daily journeys due north to school and south to home were always visibly and obviously dramatized by the time of the day. Evening is a dramatic production in Adelaide; low sun hits the calm gulf waters and flashes its glare straight to the city's east-west streets, or into the eyes of a girl looking down to the sea from Cliff Street, Blackwood.' (Daniel Thomas, *Rosemary Madigan: Robert Klippel*, The Carrick Hill Trust, Adelaide, 1992, p. 24)

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## AT A GLANCE

ROSEMARY MADIGAN 1926-2019

*Quartet* 1981-1991

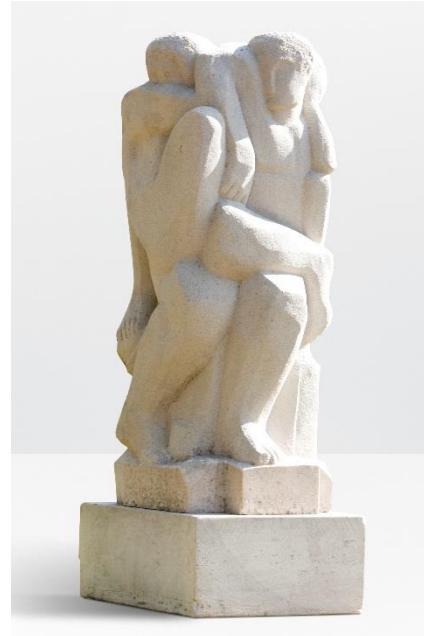
Sandstone

187 x 91 x 66 cm

Estimate \$200,000–300,000

Sold for \$387,500

Private Auction | 28 September 2021 | 6.30PM



Catalogue details available here:

[www.smithandsinger.com.au/catalogue/PAA008](http://www.smithandsinger.com.au/catalogue/PAA008)

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