

ROSEMARY MADIGAN'S MAGNUM OPUS, *QUARTET* 1981-1991, WILL BE OFFERED AT SMITH & SINGER THIS SEPTEMBER

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

'Quartet' is Poised to Eclipse the Records for Madigan & Potentially For a Female Sculptor in Australia



ROSEMARY MADIGAN 1926-2019

Quartet 1981-1991

sandstone, 187 x 91 x 66 cm

Estimate \$200,000–300,000

© Rosemary Madigan/Copyright Agency, 2021

SYDNEY, 8 September 2021 – In three weeks, the most significant work ever created by Rosemary Madigan will be offered for auction at Smith & Singer. The monumental, carved stone sculpture stands almost two metres tall, and is poised to break the auction record for Rosemary Madigan, and also potentially for any female Australian sculptor. 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. Smith & Singer are honoured to have been entrusted with this work and look forward to engaging with public institutions, corporations and private collectors during the three week campaign before it goes under the gavel in our *Masterpiece: Rosemary Madigan* private auction on 28 September 2021.

'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).



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

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)

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)

*Geoffrey Smith, Chairman of Smith & Singer commented: 'It is indeed a rare occasion that we can unequivocally state we have been entrusted with the finest composition by a major Australian artist, and we are therefore particularly honoured to present Rosemary Madigan's magnificent and magisterial *Quartet* for auction.'*

AT A GLANCE

ROSEMARY MADIGAN 1926-2019

Quartet 1981-1991

sandstone

187 x 91 x 66 cm

Estimate \$200,000–300,000

Private Auction | 28 September 2021 | 6.30PM



WATCH NOW: MASTERPIECE - Rosemary Madigan *Quartet* 1981-1991

Smith&Singer

Sydney | +61 (0)2 9302 2402 | David Mackay | David.Mackay@smithandsinger.com.au



Catalogue details available here:

www.smithandsinger.com.au/catalogue/PAA008

PRESS CONTACT

David Mackay | David.Mackay@smithandsinger.com.au | +61 (0)2 9302 2402 | 0449 773 116

ABOUT SMITH & SINGER

Smith & Singer, formerly Sotheby's Australia is Australia's premier destination for fine art, jewels and objects of virtue. Smith & Singer promotes preservation and connoisseurship of fine art and objects through regular public auctions, private sales, private auctions and exhibitions. In addition to proudly representing a number of leading Australian artists and estates, including the Albert & Barbara Tucker Foundation, David Larwill, John Kelly, Criss Canning and Sally Ross.

[Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [YouTube](#) | [News](#)

© Rosemary Madigan/Copyright Agency, 2021

Attention: Copyright in the image(s) supplied shall remain vested in Smith & Singer. Please note that image(s) may depict subject matter which is itself protected by separate copyright. Smith & Singer makes no representations as to whether the underlying subject matter is subject to its own copyright, or as to who might hold such copyright. It is the borrower's responsibility to obtain any relevant permissions from the holder(s) of any applicable copyright and Smith & Singer supplies the image(s) expressly subject to this responsibility. Note that the image(s) provided is/are for a one-time use only and no permission is granted to alter the image(s) in any way. Images are available upon request. All catalogues are available online at smithandsinger.com.au

Images are available upon request