

# Nolan's Defiant Masterpiece Returns Home

IMPORTANT AUSTRALIAN & INTERNATIONAL ART  
MELBOURNE 20 NOVEMBER 2012 AUCTION



SIDNEY NOLAN 1917-1992, *NED KELLY: CROSSING THE RIVER* 1955. ESTIMATE \$800,000-1,200,000

A MASTERPIECE OF TWENTIETH CENTURY AUSTRALIAN ART and one of the most iconic of all of Sidney Nolan's images of **Ned Kelly**, returns to Australia for sale by Sotheby's Australia. Featured on the catalogue cover of **Important Australian & International Art**, *Ned Kelly: Crossing the River* 1955 will be auctioned on **Tuesday, 20 November, in Melbourne** (Sidney Nolan, *Ned Kelly: Crossing the River* 1955, estimate \$800,000-1,200,000, lot 21, pictured).

*Ned Kelly: Crossing the River* 1955 forms part of Sidney Nolan's 'second' Ned Kelly series and was exhibited in London in May of the same year. Contemporary critics were unanimous in their praise of both the artist and his paintings and named him '...amongst the half-dozen best painters under forty in the world.' Another reviewer found the Kelly pictures of the 1950s 'more compelling than those produced the previous decade,' and declared that his 'naive style has gone, and the invented shapes are now intellectually more coherent.'

*Ned Kelly: Crossing the River* is consigned by Jinx Nolan, the daughter of Cynthia and Sidney Nolan. The painting has hung in her house in the USA for several decades. 'I will miss the painting enormously' said Jinx Nolan. 'I have owned it for a long time and although it contains one of my father's most iconic images it has, until now, been a familiar and comforting part of my life. I have given Geoffrey Smith the task of selling the painting. He is a proven authority on my father's work. He curated a major exhibition of Sidney Nolan's work at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne in 2003 that was enormously successful. Geoffrey is a meticulous researcher and has an unusually astute and in-depth knowledge of the art market.'

'*Ned Kelly: Crossing the River* remains one of Nolan's most indelible images' said Geoffrey Smith, Chairman, Sotheby's Australia. 'Here the Australian outlaw is reduced to neck, helmet, eyes, arm and rifle, as he defiantly and courageously traverses the land of 'droughts and flooding rains'.' The painting was first shown in Nolan's acclaimed exhibition at the Redfern Gallery in London in 1955. It was subsequently included in his first solo exhibition at Durlacher Bros, New York in 1956. Cynthia Nolan then put it aside for her own collection and although the work was subsequently included in major Nolan touring exhibitions in England and Australia, it was never for sale. The painting has not been publically seen since *The Cynthia Nolan Collection of Paintings by Sidney Nolan* was shown at the David Jones' Art Gallery in Sydney in 1975. 'We are truly honoured to be entrusted with the sale of this magnificent painting' continued Geoffrey Smith.

Sidney Nolan was knighted in London in 1981 and became a member of the Order of Merit in 1983. He was given the Order of Australia in 1988. Nolan's major paintings of Ned Kelly continue to generate fierce competition and achieve record results. In 2010 *First-Class Marksman* 1946 sold for \$5.4 million and established the record price for Australian art sold at auction. In 2010 the National Gallery of Victoria acquired *Ned Kelly with Horse* 1955 for \$2.2 million.

## AT A GLANCE

### **Sidney Nolan 1917-1992**

*Ned Kelly: Crossing the River* 1955  
enamel paint on composition board  
71 X 91.5CM

ESTIMATE \$800,000-1,200,000

IMPORTANT AUSTRALIAN & INTERNATIONAL ART, SOTHEBY'S AUSTRALIA  
AUCTION IN MELBOURNE 20 NOVEMBER 2012 | 6.30PM  
926 HIGH STREET, ARMADALE VIC 3143

TOTAL LOTS ON OFFER: 69

TOTAL ESTIMATE RANGE: \$4,395,000-6,161,000

### EXHIBITION IN SYDNEY

THURSDAY 8 – SUNDAY 11 NOVEMBER, 10AM TO 5PM  
118-122 QUEEN STREET WOOLLAHRA

### EXHIBITION IN MELBOURNE

THURSDAY 15 – MONDAY 19 NOVEMBER, 10AM TO 5PM  
926 HIGH STREET ARMADALE

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**For a full catalogue, high resolution images, further information or to arrange an interview with  
Geoffrey Smith, Chairman, please contact:**

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\*\*Pre-estimates do not include buyer's premium.