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Masterpiece of Australian Colonial Art for Auction

IMPORTANT AUSTRALIAN ART

SYDNEY 27 AUGUST 2013



ROBERT NEILL 1801-1852, *ABORIGINES OF VAN DIEMEN'S LAND* 1828. ESTIMATE \$180,000-250,000

One of the earliest known oil paintings of Indigenous Australians will be auctioned by Sotheby's Australia in August 2013. The figurative work by Robert Neill, *Aborigines of Van Diemen's Land* 1828 (estimate \$180,000-250,000, lot 3, pictured), is of profound historical significance, and is the earliest known oil that depicts the Aboriginal Palawa people of Tasmania. Neill arrived in Australia in 1820 and was employed within the colonial public service, however his keen interest in the arts and sciences, and in particular natural history, saw him record the topography, wildlife and people around him.

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Aborigines of Van Dieman's Land records eleven figures in a communal setting and provides a rare insight into the lives of Indigenous Australians at the time of settler contact. Neill has carefully composed the work, meticulously observing the landscape and its people to ensure that his is a faithful and accurate record. In his attention to detail we can see the physiognomy of the individuals, the tools used in conducting their daily life, as well the recognisable Vandiemonian landscape, with the edge of the Derwent at New Town Bay and Mount Wellington rising in the distance.

'Robert Neill's *Aborigines of Van Diemen's Land* is a unique masterpiece of early colonial art,' said Geoffrey Smith, Chairman of Sotheby's Australia. 'This astonishing and early composition respectfully and evocatively records an identifiable region and its Indigenous peoples who were displaced by European settlers soon after their arrival in Tasmania.'

AT A GLANCE

ROBERT NEILL 1801-1852

ABORIGINES OF VAN DIEMEN'S LAND 1828

OIL ON BOARD

22.7 X 29.8CM

ESTIMATE \$180,000-250,000

IMPORTANT AUSTRALIAN ART, SOTHEBY'S AUSTRALIA
AUCTION IN SYDNEY

118-122 QUEEN STREET, WOOLLAHRA

27 AUGUST 2013 | 6.30 PM

EXHIBITION IN MELBOURNE

15-18 AUGUST 2013, 10 AM TO 5 PM

ANZAC HOUSE, LEVEL 4, 4 COLLINS STREET, MELBOURNE

EXHIBITION IN SYDNEY

22-26 AUGUST 2013, 10 AM TO 5 PM

118-122 QUEEN STREET, WOOLLAHRA

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For high resolution images, further information or to arrange an interview with Geoffrey Smith, Chairman, please contact John Keats or Yumeko Leung.

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