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Nolan's 'Desert Bird' Released for Auction

IMPORTANT AUSTRALIAN ART

SYDNEY 27 AUGUST 2013



SIDNEY NOLAN 1917-1992, *DESERT BIRD* 1948. ESTIMATE \$400,000-600,000

A masterpiece by Sidney Nolan that has been owned by the same family since it was sold by the artist in 1948 has been consigned to Sotheby's Australia's August auction of **Important Australian Art**. Sidney Nolan's *Desert Bird* 1948 (estimate \$400,000-600,000) belongs to the artist's highly inventive and ground breaking series of landscape paintings of Northern Queensland that received widespread critical and public acclaim when first exhibited and established Nolan's reputation in Australia.

Two paintings from this series – *Carron Plains* 1948 and *Pretty Polly Mine* 1948 – were purchased by the Art Gallery of New South Wales in 1949 and became the first works by Nolan to enter a public collection and other works in the series are tightly held in public collections. *Desert Bird* is quintessentially Nolan, combining a faithful representation of the wetlands of the Australian ‘outback’, painted in rich tones of fast-drying enamel paint, with the irreverent and surreal image of an over-sized bird floating in the sky. Such



SIDNEY NOLAN 1917-1992, *PRETTY POLLY MINE* 1948. ART GALLERY OF NEW SOUTH WALES, SYDNEY, PURCHASED 1949

works were pivotal in developing the artist’s distinctive style, where the central figurative motif is both akin to and removed from the environment it inhabits (as in the case of the black armour of the Australian bushranger Ned Kelly) and soon propelled Nolan to international fame.

‘*Desert Bird* occupies a singular position within Sidney Nolan’s career’, said Geoffrey Smith, Chairman of Sotheby’s Australia, ‘Not only it is an image of breathtaking originality and exceptional quality, it is also the very first painting that Nolan sold to an independent collector, and as such occupied a special place for the artist. Included in the 1987 and 2007 Sidney Nolan retrospectives that toured nationally, *Desert Bird* retains its original frame, carefully designed and selected by Cynthia and Sidney Nolan, composed of Ash sourced from the coastal rainforests in Queensland and deemed particularly appropriate for and relevant to the painting’s subject matter. We are truly honoured to be entrusted with the sale of this compelling and highly significant Australian painting.’

AT A GLANCE

SIDNEY NOLAN 1992-1917

DESERT BIRD 1948

ENAMEL PAINT ON COMPOSITION BOARD

91.5 X 122CM

ESTIMATE \$400,000-600,000

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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