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Record Result for Indigenous Australian Art

IMPORTANT AUSTRALIAN ART
MELBOURNE 26 NOVEMBER 2013



LIN ONUS 1946-1996, *ROBYN* (1995). SOLD FOR \$414,800 NOVEMBER 2013, AUCTION RECORD FOR THE ARTIST

Strong results for colonial, modern and contemporary Australian art were achieved at Sotheby's Australia's major sale held on Tuesday 26 November 2013 in Melbourne. Comprising 60 lots, a total of \$2,700,470 including buyer's premium (IBP) was sold, or 82.8% by value and 66.7% by volume, with three new artist auction records achieved.

The evening commenced with the historic *Portrait of Francis Bacon* by Australian-British artist Roy de Maistre. Bacon has captured the world's attention in the last two weeks with the sale of his rare triptych, *Three Studies of Lucian Freud*, which became the most expensive work of art to have sold at auction. De Maistre was one of Australia's early pioneers of modern art and gained success on an international scale. After competitive bidding, his portrait of his young artist friend sold to an international telephone bidder for \$79,300 IBP (estimate \$40,000-60,000, lot 1).

Two tapestries from The Estate of the Late Dr Jan Altmann attracted strong bidding. Brett Whiteley's *River 1976* (estimate \$50,000-70,000, lot 7) and John Perceval's *Fisherman's Inlet 1975* (estimate \$25,000-35,000, lot 6) achieved \$112,240 IBP and \$42,700 IBP respectively. These rare wool tapestries were manufactured by the home of French tapestry weaving for half a millennium, Tapisseries d'Aubusson, who also produced works on commission by leading international artists such as Jean Lurcat, Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso.

The repatriated *Robyn* (1995) (estimate \$160,000-180,000, lot 17, pictured previous) by Lin Onus, painted a year before the artist's untimely death, was well contested and sold for an auction record for the artist at \$414,800 IBP. Of Scottish and Aboriginal heritage, Onus' diverse and multicultural background was translated to his works in his painting style which harmoniously integrated 'western' painting styles together with Indigenous culture. Merging the visual and conceptual as well as Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia, *Robyn* is an exceptional example of the work of this pioneer urban Aboriginal painter.

An exemplary work by Margaret Olley *Yellow Room, Afternoon* (1990) achieved an auction record price of \$158,600 IBP against a presale estimate of \$70,000-90,000 (lot 9). Edmund Capon has referred to Olley's work as a 'continuing celebration of the great tradition of painting, just as it is a celebration of the fruits and hidden riches of the detail of her own immediate world.' (*Margaret Olley*, 1996, p. 7)

The highly anticipated sale of Arthur Streeton's masterpiece, *Evening, Venice* 1908 sold for \$219,600 IBP (estimate \$180,000-220,000, lot 10). The winning bidder is just the second owner to acquire the painting after it was purchased a century ago by prominent Australian businessman Oswald Syme and has remained in his family's possession until the auction. Previously hidden from public view, the work was reproduced for the first time in the sale catalogue.

Thomas Balcombe's *Aborigines Fishing by Torchlight* (estimated \$8,000-12,000, lot 46) had considerable competition, achieving a final result of \$30,500 IBP setting a new auction record for the artist. Balcombe, a relatively unknown artist, was a government surveyor who was highly regarded as a sketcher and lithographer. His work shows him to be a notable recorder of Aboriginal life on the frontier. A rare and historically significant oil, *Aborigines Fishing by Torchlight* is a characteristic example of mid 19th century settler artists' aestheticisation of traditional Indigenous lifeways.

'Sotheby's Australia has again achieved strong results, reflecting our commitment to presenting well-curated and researched sales from the colonial to contemporary period,' said Geoffrey Smith, Chairman of Sotheby's Australia. 'As leaders in our market, our expertise and global reach enables us to offer quality works from Australia's most significant practitioners and produce some outstanding results.'

AT A GLANCE

IMPORTANT AUSTRALIAN ART

AUCTION IN MELBOURNE

ANZAC HOUSE 4 COLLINS STREET, MELBOURNE

26 NOVEMBER 2013 | 6.30 PM

TOTAL SALE INCLUDING BUYER'S PREMIUM \$2,700,470

SOLD BY VALUE 82.81%

SOLD BY VOLUME 66.67%

ARTIST RECORDS AT AUCTION

Thomas Balcombe 1810-1861, *Aborigines Fishing by Torchlight*, oil on board
Sold for \$30,500 including buyer's premium

Margaret Olley 1923-2011, *Yellow Room, Afternoon* (1990), oil on board
Sold for \$158,600 including buyer's premium

Lin Onus 1948-1996, *Robyn* (1995), synthetic polymer paint on canvas
Sold for \$414,800 including buyer's premium

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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.