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Major Albert Namatjira works for Auction



Albert Namatjira 1902-1959, *(Untitled) (Central Australian Gorge)* (circa 1948). Estimate \$50,000-70,000

Four paintings by renowned Aboriginal artist Albert Namatjira (1902-1959) will be offered for sale at Sotheby's Australia's Important Australian Art auction on 13 May 2014 in Sydney. Heralded as a pioneer of contemporary indigenous Australian art, Namatjira is associated with a distinct movement away from traditional Aboriginal art techniques. His style contrasts earlier Aboriginal art, using watercolour and pencil to create detailed depictions of the Australian landscape. The works have remained in the same family hands since first acquired, and are presented in their original frames. All four works have been consigned from a single private collection in Adelaide.

Namatjira first began as an artist using the pokerwork techniques, but inspired by the works of Rex Battarbee and John Gardner in 1934 at the Herrmannsburg Lutheran Mission he adopted watercolour, a medium he favoured for the rest of his life. Initially self-taught Namatjira went on to learn from fellow Australian artist and mentor Rex Battarbee. In 1938 Namatjira held his first solo exhibition in Melbourne at the Fine Arts Society's Gallery, the show was a sell-out and marked the beginning of Namatjira's highly successful professional career.

(Untitled) (Central Australian Gorge) (circa 1948) (estimate \$30,000-40,000, lot 83) is a contrast when compared with the three other landscape works; the detailed shadows of the rocks reflecting in the water and framing the gorge. The tranquil expanse of water is painted in the deep blues Namatjira normally reserves for mountains. The strong lines and tonal use of colour used to create the outback landscape give the painting dimension, engaging the viewer in the silent magic of the artist's ancestral land.

Namatjira had a deep connection to the land and this is evident in his paintings which are the prized legacy left behind after the artist's death. Throughout his life Namatjira was active in indigenous rights movements and in 1957 he was granted Australian citizenship, making him the first indigenous Australian to be liberated from the legislation that made Aboriginal people wards of the state.

'As one of Australia's most influential and renowned artists of the twentieth century, Sotheby's Australia is honoured to be entrusted with the sale of this significant collection,' said Geoffrey Smith, Chairman of Sotheby's Australia. 'We are delighted to offer exceptional examples that have remained hidden from public view since the time they were created and acquired by the family of the present owners.'

AT A GLANCE

Important Australian Art
Auction in Sydney, 13 May 2014, 6.30 pm
InterContinental Sydney, 117 Macquarie Street, Sydney

Exhibition in Sydney
8-13 May 2014, 10 am to 5 pm
30 Queen Street, Woollahra

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