

Melbourne 13 March 2014

John Keats 03 9508 9900  
John.Keats@sothebysaustralia.com.au

Yumeko Leung 03 8416 5999  
YLeung@3dm.com.au

## Rare Portrait by Tom Roberts to be Auctioned by Sotheby's Australia



Tom Roberts 1856-1931, *Miss Minna Simpson* (1886). Estimate \$300,000-400,000

One of the finest portraits by the prominent and influential Australian artist Tom Roberts (1856-1931) remaining in private ownership will be offered for sale by Sotheby's Australia in Sydney on 13 May 2014.

Most renowned for his pioneering subjects such as *Shearing the Rams* (1890, National Gallery of Victoria) and *A Break Away!* (Art Gallery of South Australia), Roberts is regarded as one of Australia's finest portrait painters. His charming portrait of *Miss Minna Simpson* 1886, the young

1 | Sotheby's Australia is a trade mark used under licence from Sotheby's. Second East Auction Holdings Pty Ltd is independent of the Sotheby's Group. The Sotheby's Group is not responsible for the acts or omissions of Second East Auction Holdings Pty Ltd

niece of his then girlfriend and later wife, was first displayed at the inaugural exhibition of the Australian Artists' Association at Buxton's Gallery, Melbourne, in September 1886. Roberts had returned to Melbourne the previous year, having travelled to Europe and studied at London's Royal Academy of Arts – the first major Australian painter to do so. His learning of anatomy and perspective had been of great benefit. Upon his return he spearheaded the formation of a new school of painting focusing on *plein air*, with many colleagues including Charles Conder, Frederick McCubbin and Arthur Streeton, learning from Roberts' international experience.

A founder of the Australian Artists' Association, Roberts seized the opportunity at the inaugural exhibition to advertise his skills in landscape and genre with five works including *The Artists' Camp* (1886, National Gallery of Victoria) *A Summer Morning Tiff* (1886, Art Gallery of Ballarat) and the present work. Also displayed at the exhibition was Frederick McCubbin's *Whispering in Wattle Boughs* (1886, Private Collection) sold by Sotheby's Australia in May 2012 for \$1.2 million including buyer's premium.

Roberts' great skill in painting portraits was both his gift and occasionally his burden, as the demand for commissions was so great. *Miss Minna Simpson*, however, shows us Roberts, the portraitist, at his very best, turning 'mere likeness' into a complex and beguiling work of art that is a summation of the skill of the painter, psychology of the sitter, and the period in which it was created. *Miss Minna Simpson* featured in the major Tom Roberts retrospective exhibition that toured Australia from 1996 to 1997 and was one of only a small group from the total 84 works borrowed from private collections.

## AT A GLANCE

### **TOM ROBERTS 1856-1931**

*Miss Minna Simpson* (1886)

oil on canvas

60.7 x 50.6 cm

Estimate \$300,000-400,000

Important Australian Art

Auction in Sydney 13 May 2014

---

## For More News on Sotheby's Australia

VISIT [sothebysaustralia.com.au/articles/press](http://sothebysaustralia.com.au/articles/press)

FOLLOW [twitter.com/sothebysAUST](https://twitter.com/sothebysAUST)

JOIN [facebook.com/sothebysaustralia](https://facebook.com/sothebysaustralia)

---

*\*Estimates do not include buyer's premium and prices achieved include the hammer price plus buyer's premium.*

Images are available upon request

All catalogues are available online at [sothebysaustralia.com.au](http://sothebysaustralia.com.au)