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## Bathing Beauty Basks in Full Glory at Sotheby's Australia



Brett Whiteley 1939-1992, *Washing the Salt Off II* 1984, Estimate \$800,000-1,000,000

In celebration of the Australian summer and our nation's quintessential beach culture, Sotheby's Australia is delighted to offer Brett Whiteley's *Washing the Salt Off II* 1984 (estimate \$800,000-1,000,000, lot 16) at the November auction of Important Australian & International Art in Sydney. After five years in Europe and America, Whiteley returned to Australia for the summer of 1965. While at Whale Beach, north of Sydney, he was inspired to begin what would become one of Australia's most significant beach series.

Painted in 1984 *Washing the Salt Off II* captures the sexual liberation that was taking place across the country; this new found freedom was very much alive on Sydney's beaches. In a celebratory display of the female form *Washing the Salt Off II* depicts a topless bather arching gracefully up to the top right of the canvas, away from the viewer. The subject's rear is unapologetically exposed, dominating the canvas, teetering on one foot as she washes sand off the other. Perhaps it is in this soft organic composition that we can find Whiteley's commentary of the human condition, the urge to meticulously record the everyday beauty and complexities of the human body.

Although infused with an element of voyeurism, the female figure – frequently of his muse and wife Wendy Whiteley – is in this particular series a celebration of the Australian beach. In his documentary *The Beach: Beach Culture in Australia*, Don Featherstone described Whiteley as 'the great Australian painter of female sexuality at the beach.' This highly acclaimed painting of a sun-kissed bather in her barely-there bikini bottom showering after a swim provides clear evidence in support of Featherstone's claim.

'Brett Whiteley's *Washing the Salt Off II* is an outstanding example of the artist's celebration of the natural environment and the human body', says Geoffrey Smith, Chairman of Sotheby's Australia. 'The distinctly Australian subject lends itself perfectly to our November sale as we prepare for end of year and New Year festivities in which the beach plays such a pivotal role.'

#### AT A GLANCE

BRETT WHITELEY 1939-1992  
*Washing the Salt Off II* 1984  
oil on canvas  
86.5 x 86.5 cm  
Estimate \$800,000-1,000,000

Important Australian & International Art  
Auction in Sydney, 25 November 2014, 6.30 pm  
InterContinental Sydney, Treasury Room  
117 Macquarie Street, Sydney

Exhibition in Melbourne  
13-16 November, 10 am to 5 pm  
Level 9, 41 Exhibition Street, Melbourne

Exhibition in Sydney  
20-25 November, 10 am to 5 pm  
30 Queen Street, Woollahra

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