

Melbourne 15 July 2015

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Australian War Artist Works for Auction

Important Australian Art, Auction in Sydney 25 August 2015



STELLA BOWEN 1893-1947, *Raymond Postgate* (1922).
Estimate \$15,000-25,000

A rare collection of oil paintings by Australian War Artist Stella Bowen will be auctioned by Sotheby's Australia on 25 August 2015 in Sydney. Only one oil painting by Bowen is recorded as coming to auction in the last 40 years, with the majority of her works held by the Australian War Memorial, Canberra. The six paintings are consigned from the Postgate Family Collection – four of which were included in the 2002 retrospective exhibition *Stella Bowen: Love and War*, that toured nationally.

The six paintings explore Bowen's life and career in France and England. A sensitive portrait of *Raymond Postgate* (1922) (estimate \$15,000-25,000, pictured) captures him seated in an armchair as he looks out contemplatively while smoking a pipe. Postgate was a British socialist, author, gourmand, journalist & editor and social historian. Interestingly, while a conscientious objector during WWI and a founder of the British Communist Party in 1920, Postgate later provided critical support to the British government during WWII and encouraged the war effort. Postgate would go on to found the *Good Food Guide* in Britain.

Adelaide born, Stella Bowen initially trained with Adelaide based artist Margaret Preston, however her art studies were thwarted by her family's reluctance for her to pursue an artistic career. After her mother's passing, Bowen left for England in 1914, where she studied at the Westminster School of Art and gained further inspiration in the company of writers, artists, poets and political activists including T.S. Elliot, Ezra Pound, Gertrude Stein, and W.B. Yeats.

In early 1918, Bowen met and fell in love with the writer Ford Madox Ford author of *The Good Soldier* (1915), and moved to rural England where they had a daughter. Frustrated with the hardships of life in the English countryside, by 1922 the family moved to France, eventually settling in Paris. Although Bowen established her first studio, the struggle of motherhood, and domestic duties left little time to pursue her artistic career.

One of the first women artists' to be appointed as an official war artist, The Australian War Memorial commissioned Bowen in 1944 to depict the activities of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) stationed in England, along with portraits of military commanders and Australian prisoners of war who had returned from war ravaged Europe. Bowen's last painting was completed in 1947 after which she died of colon cancer.



STELLA BOWEN 1893-1947, *Interior, Paris*.
Estimate \$40,000-60,00

AT A GLANCE

Important Australian Art

Auction at InterContinental Sydney, 117 Macquarie Street, Sydney, 25 August 2015, 6.30 pm

Exhibition in Melbourne, 41 Exhibition Street, Melbourne, 13-16 August, 10 am to 5 pm

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

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