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Strictly Brack: Ballroom Dancers Take to the Floor

John Brack - *Junior Latin American* for sale

Important Australian Art, Auction in Sydney, 25 August 2015



JOHN BRACK 1920-1999, *Junior Latin American* 1969. Estimate \$1,000,000-1,400,000

One of John Brack's most significant paintings remaining in private ownership will be offered for auction by Sotheby's Australia at the InterContinental Sydney on 25 August 2015. *Junior Latin American* 1969 (estimate \$1,000,000-1,400,000, lot 15, pictured) forms part of John Brack's most highly acclaimed *Ballroom Dancing* series and is unique in that it shows non-adult competitors. The series has achieved extraordinary attention and prominence in recent times. In May 2007 Sotheby's Australia sold *The Old Time* 1969 for \$3.36 million, which not only achieved a new world auction record for the artist, but established a new world auction record at the time for a work of art by an Australian artist.

Brack's stimulus for the series was based his fascination of the rituals and realities of competitive ballroom dancing and *Junior Latin American* is reported to be inspired by the Australasian Junior Latin American champions Graham Banister and Jacqueline Steele. Resplendently poised, their youthfulness is artfully disguised by their made-up appearance and formal evening attire of gown and

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tuxedo. As Sasha Grishin noted in his catalogue raisonné on the artist: ‘it is this environment that the dancers have to play out their roles, creating world of make-believe in which they are tightly bonded together in a relationship that is merely a well rehearsed ritual, full of superficial glitter but devoid of deeper meaning. *Junior Latin American* implies that the rehearsal for this mock existence commences in childhood ... and continues into marriage and ‘old time’.’

The series debuted at Rudy Komon Art Gallery in April 1970, and contained twelve paintings, three oil studies and seven works on paper. *Junior Latin American* was one of the four largest oil paintings included and several paintings in the series reside in public collections. The series of ballroom dancing occupies a singular position in the history and development of Australian Art. Intelligent, wry, humanist and incisive these dramatic works are an interpretation of the complex rituals of social interaction and human behaviour. Latin American dance is principally made up of five dance styles, cha-cha-cha, rumba, samba, paso doble and jive.

‘In 2007 Sotheby’s Australia achieved both an artist and Australian auction record with the sale of John Brack’s *The Old Time* 1969,’ said Geoffrey Smith, Chairman of Sotheby’s Australia. ‘Offered for auction for the very first time, *Junior Latin American* is poised to generate enormous interest and excitement.’

AT A GLANCE

JOHN BRACK 1920-1999

Junior Latin America 1969

oil on canvas

96.8 x 163.8 cm

Estimate \$1,000,000-1,400,000

Important Australian Art

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

Total auction estimate \$5,865,500-8,167,500 | 116 lots

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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