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# 'Lost' Icon of Australian Beach Culture Rediscovered

Important Australian Art | Auction in Sydney 24 November 2015



RAYNER HOFF 1894-1937, *Pacific Beach* (circa 1930-1932). Estimate \$25,000-35,000

Once thought lost and possibly destroyed, a powerful and evocative wood sculpture by Rayner Hoff has re-emerged after almost 80 years. Consigned to Sotheby's Australia's *Important Australian Art* sale *Pacific Beach* (circa 1930-1932) (estimate \$25,000-35,000, lot 1, pictured) will be auctioned on 24 November at the InterContinental Sydney.

Rayner Hoff was a champion of depictions of physical perfection that referenced classical imagery and placed these within a contemporary context. During the 1920s and 1930s the popular view of Australia as a modern day Arcadia was articulated and promoted by Hoff, who declared: 'The call to sun and surf, the great open roads and wonderful bush is all too strong for any to resist. Hence we are active, virile and well... Few nations can show such an advantage of bodily perfection.'

The relationship between health, exercise, sexuality and nationalism is exemplified in *Pacific Beach*. In Deborah Edwards's exhibition catalogue on Rayner Hoff she comments: '*Pacific Beach* portrays the crowded activities of contemporary "Australian Hellenes" on a Sydney beach, in a frieze-like tableaux which moves towards iconic representation.' The central motif is of bronzed and rippled male and female swimmers, flanked by a male surfer and surrounded by men, women and children.

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Rayner Hoff contributed significantly to Australian public sculptures and buildings, some with a level of controversy for their morality of the form. Sydney's Hyde Park Anzac Memorial remains incomplete (and the casts now lost) due to the concern of the naked presentation of men and women. Other public sculptures are housed at the War Memorial, Dubbo, National War Memorial, Adelaide, and the King George V memorial, Canberra.



CHARLES MEERE 1880-1961, *Australian Beach Pattern* 1940. Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. Purchased, 1965

Following Hoff's premature death in 1937 at the age of forty two, *Pacific Beach* was included in the artist's memorial exhibition in Sydney the following year, where it proved an obvious inspiration to Charles Meere, whose *Australian Beach Pattern* (1940, Art Gallery of New South Wales, pictured) shares both formal and conceptual similarities and has become one of the most iconic images of Australian beach culture.

Geoffrey Smith, Chairman of Sotheby's Australia commented: 'The re-emergence of Rayner Hoff's *Pacific Beach* is a cause for celebration, and a timely re-affirmation of Hoff's standing as the preeminent Australian sculptor of his generation.'

#### AT A GLANCE

RAYNER HOFF 1894-1937  
*Pacific Beach* (circa 1930-1932)  
wood, 58.5 x 106.7 cm  
Estimate \$25,000-35,000

#### Important Australian Art

Auction at InterContinental Sydney, 117 Macquarie Street, Sydney, 24 November 2015, 6.30 pm  
Total estimate \$7,635,000 to \$9,985,000 | Total lots 94

Exhibition in Sydney, 30 & 34 Queen Street, Woollahra, 19-24 November, 10 am to 5 pm

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