

Melbourne 21 June 2016

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

Australian Design Icon for Auction

Fine Asian, Australian & European Arts & Design
Auction in Sydney 19 July 2016



A Café Australia dining chair, blackwood (*Acacia melanoxylon*), plywood and leather designed by Marion Mahoney Griffin and Walter Burley Griffin (1916). Estimate \$12,000-15,000

An icon of Australian 20th Century interior design, a Café Australia dining chair designed by Marion Mahoney Griffin and Walter Burley Griffin will be auctioned by Sotheby's Australia on 19 July 2016 in Sydney. This is only the third known full sized chair in existence, with Sotheby's Australia selling a version for an auction record of \$26,840 in 2015 to the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra. The other was acquired by the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, in 2003. Two other partial chairs are known to exist.

Geoffrey Smith, Chairman of Sotheby's Australia commented: 'Very little remains of Café Australia, which at the time was regarded a *tour de force* in interior design. Located on Collins Street, Melbourne, it was demolished in 1938 to make way for the new Australia Hotel. Rare highlights such as this complete dining chair are a valuable insight into the burgeoning modernist style created by one of Australia's greatest architectural and interior design teams. There is richness to the chairs design, while still remaining economical with the fabrication.'

Café Australia opened on 8 November 1916 and became regarded as the most handsome café in Australia, frequented by the elite of the city, including Dame Nellie Melba.

Walter Burley Griffin and his wife Marion Mahoney Griffin are widely known for the design of the national capital Canberra. Other buildings constructed include Newman College, University of Melbourne and the Capitol Theatre, Melbourne. Café Melbourne was the Griffin's first architectural and interior design commission in Australia including plasterwork, stained glass and tables and chairs with highly distinctive decorative elements.



Afternoon Tea Room and Stairway to balcony of Banquet Hall at Café Australia. Collection of the New York Historical Society.

AT A GLANCE

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Auction at The Hughenden, 14 Queen Street, Woollahra, 19 July 2016, 6 pm

Total lots 197 | Total estimate \$787,900-1,137,300

Exhibition in Sydney, 30 & 34 Queen Street, Woollahra, 14-19 July, 10 am to 5 pm

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