

Melbourne 12 August 2016

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

Albert Namatjira's Largest Composition Ready to Establish New Auction Record

Important Australian Art | Auction in Sydney 31 August 2016



ALBERT NAMATJIRA 1902-1959, *Finke River Mission and Mount Hermannsburg* (1951). Estimate \$80,000-100,000

The largest and most significant work by **Albert Namatjira** ever offered for auction is set to create a new world record price by Sotheby's Australia on 31 August at the InterContinental Sydney. ***Finke River Mission and Mount Hermannsburg*** (1951) is one of only a handful of works in his productive career known to depict the whitewashed sandstone buildings of the Finke River Mission and, due to its scale, remains unique (estimate \$80,000-100,000, lot 21, pictured).

Sotheby's Australia will reproduce the work for the first time since it was painted. Initially exhibited at Tmara Mara Gallery in Alice Springs, *Finke River Mission and Mount Hermannsburg* was purchased for 150 guineas by the present owner's father while on a family trip from Adelaide to Alice Springs in 1951. The painting will be publicly exhibited for the first time since 1951.

Geoffrey Smith, Chairman of Sotheby's Australia commented: 'The Finke River Mission was one of Albert Namatjira's rarest subjects with his more common scenes being aspects of mountain ranges, gorges and their surrounds, often with a ghost gum or two, or even a palm tree. Watercolours of the Mission tended to be painted as either gifts or commissions for people who lived or worked on there. In 2006 Sotheby's Australia achieved the current auction record for the artist for *Hermannsburg Mission with Mt Hermannsburg in Background* (circa 1936-1937) that sold for \$96,000. We anticipate strong interest for *Finke River Mission and Mount Hermannsburg* and look forward to the possibility of establishing a new auction record for one of Australia's most significant and influential artists.'

The Finke River Mission at Hermannsburg, south west of Alice Springs was established in 1877 by Lutheran missionaries and was the first Aboriginal mission in the Northern Territory. The pastoral lease of almost 4,000 square kilometres was maintained by the church until the freehold was granted to the traditional owners in 1982. Namatjira, a traditional, initiated Western Arranta man, born at Hermannsburg, spent most of his life painting his ancestral country and beyond.

Albert Namatjira was a confident image-maker, beginning with the pokerwork-decorated boomerangs, woomeras and mulga-wood plaques he made in his twenties. It was as a watercolourist that he found his true metier, inspired by seeing a Rex Battarbee and John Gardner exhibition at the Hermannsburg Lutheran Mission in 1934. Initially self-taught, Namatjira accompanied Battarbee on two month-long expeditions during which time he absorbed much of the latter's technique. Namatjira became one of the most famous artists of his generation at a time when Indigenous Australians suffered extraordinary persecution and inequality. Namatjira was granted full citizenship in 1957, tragically not long before his premature death in 1959. Namatjira's works are represented in major public and private collections throughout the world, including Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

AT A GLANCE

ALBERT NAMATJIRA 1902-1959

Finke River Mission and Mount Hermannsburg (1951)

watercolour over pencil on paper

47.7 x 83.5 cm

Estimate \$80,000-100,000

Important Australian Art

Auction in Sydney, 31 August 2016, 6.30 pm, InterContinental Sydney, 117 Macquarie Street, Sydney

Estimate range: \$6,769,000-9,072,000 | Lots on offer: 68

Exhibition in Melbourne 17-21 August, 10 am to 5 pm, 41 Exhibition Street, Melbourne

Exhibition in Sydney 25-31 August, 10 am to 5 pm, 30 & 34 Queen Street, Woollahra

For More News on Sotheby's Australia

VISIT sothebysaustralia.com.au/articles/press

FOLLOW twitter.com/sothebysAUST

JOIN facebook.com/sothebysaustralia

**Estimates do not include buyer's premium and prices achieved include the hammer price plus buyer's premium.*

Images are available upon request

All catalogues are available online at sothebysaustralia.com.au

Copyright in the image(s) supplied shall remain vested in Sotheby's Australia. Please note that image(s) may depict subject matter which is itself protected by separate copyright. Sotheby's Australia makes no representations as to whether the underlying subject matter is subject to its own copyright, or as to who might hold such copyright. It is the borrower's responsibility to obtain any relevant permissions from the holder(s) of any applicable copyright and Sotheby's Australia supplies the image(s) expressly subject to this responsibility. Note that the image(s) provided is/are for a one-time use only and no permission is granted to alter the image(s) in any way.