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Check Mate: Blackman's *Alice* Set to Break Auction Record

Important Australian Art | Auction in Sydney 23 November 2016



CHARLES BLACKMAN, born 1928, *The Game of Chess* 1956. Estimate \$1,000,000-1,200,000

Charles Blackman's *The Game of Chess* (estimate \$1,000,000-1,200,000, lot 47, pictured) is set to break an auction world record on 23 November by Sotheby's Australia at the InterContinental Sydney. Sotheby's Australia established the current auction record of \$1,020,000 in 2006 and holds the top two auction results for the artist.

Geoffrey Smith, Chairman of Sotheby's Australia commented: 'The paintings of Charles Blackman's 1956-1957 Alice in Wonderland series are amongst the most beloved and admired in twentieth century Australian Art. In *The Game of Chess*, Blackman blends highly personal and universal iconography and creates an image that is simultaneously literal, poetic, and illusory.'

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Despite being ostensibly illustrations to Lewis Carroll's classic children's story, Blackman's Alice paintings contain a distinct autobiographical resonance, where the White Rabbit represents the artist and Alice, the symbolic avatar of his adored Barbara. The series captured the intimates truths of the couple, Alice's constant growing and shrinking and the 'Drink Me' and 'Eat Me' medicines reference Barbara's first pregnancy, which was coincident with the development of the series, while the recurrent images of table settings reflect Charles then current 'day job' as a short order cook at Georges Mora's Eastbourne Café. The couple even owned their own white rabbit, a knitted toy they called Dosty Wovsky.

The current record price for the artist was achieved by Sotheby's Australia for *Alice's Journey* 1957 in November 2006. This year has witnessed a renewed interest in the most significant works by the artist with *The Ceremony* 1959 realising \$610,000 against an estimate of \$250,000-300,000 in May 2016 with Sotheby's Australia.

AT A GLANCE

CHARLES BLACKMAN, BORN 1928

The Game of Chess 1956

106.7 x 121.9 cm

tempera and oil on composition board

Estimate \$1,000,000-1,200,000

Important Australian Art

Auction in Sydney, 23 November 2016, 6.30 pm

InterContinental Sydney, 117 Macquarie Street, Sydney

Total auction estimate \$6,699,000-9,265,000 | 102 lots

Exhibition in Melbourne 9-13 November, 10 am to 5 pm, 41 Exhibition Street, Melbourne

Exhibition in Sydney 17-23 November, 10 am to 5 pm, 30 & 34 Queen Street, Woollahra

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