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‘The Pink’ – Charles Blackman’s 1953 masterpiece to be auctioned for the first time

Tightly held in a private collection for over 60 years

One of the most significant images from the ‘Schoolgirl’ series

Another composition discovered on the verso



CHARLES BLACKMAN, born 1928, *The Pink* 1953. Estimate \$250,000-350,000

Tightly held in a private collection since it was acquired over 60 years ago, an extraordinary painting by Charles Blackman, *The Pink* 1953 (estimate \$250,000-350,000, lot 34, pictured) will be auctioned by Sotheby’s Australia on 16 August 2017 in Sydney. Acquired directly from the artist’s solo exhibition in Adelaide in 1953, the composition was recently included in the comprehensive *Charles Blackman: Schoolgirls* exhibition at Heide Museum of Modern Art where, with the assistance of Sotheby’s Australia, it was fully catalogued and reproduced for the first time. During the process another painting of a schoolgirl at Kooyong Stadium was revealed on the reverse and is reproduced for the first time by Sotheby’s Australia.

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Geoffrey Smith, Chairman of Sotheby's Australia commented: '*The Pink* is one of the most significant images from the artist's schoolgirl series ever offered for auction. Blackman's *Schoolgirl* paintings are sensitive, powerful explorations of childhood. In urgent, streaky brushstrokes, in baby pinks and blues or in steely, near-monochrome grey-greens and pale ochres, Blackman's schoolgirls dance and float and cast their long shadows across claustrophobic inner city lanes and agoraphobic emptiness. We were thrilled to discover another painting on the verso of *The Pink*, a previously unknown work by the artist. We are honoured to be entrusted with such an important work by one of Australia's greatest living artists.'

Like much of Blackman's work, the *Schoolgirl* series has its origin in a synthesis of real-world experience and literary inspiration. In the early 1950s, Charles and Barbara Blackman were living in Hawthorn, and Charles would see flocks of independent schoolgirls in uniform in the streets of the neighbourhood and when walking to his casual gardening jobs. The imagery of everyday experience was focused, highlighted and shadowed in the artist's imagination by the story of the Gun Alley Murder of 1921, in which a 12 year old girl was raped and strangled in a city laneway this dark occurrence echoed another, recent murder closer to home, the bashing of his wife's university friend Betty Shanks.

One of the most subtle and beautiful touches in *The Pink* – and its companion composition *There Was* (sold Sotheby's Australia for \$840,000 May 2012) – is the careful placement of the delicate flower in the schoolgirls' hand. In an overall monotone composition, this burst of pink enhances the dreamlike quality of the work. It underscores the painting's tone of emotional fragility, its sense of imminent collapse – or flight.

Works from Charles Blackman's *Schoolgirl* series are held in Australia's major public collections, including the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney; Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne; Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin; National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; Parliament House Collection, Canberra; and TarraWarra Museum of Art, Victoria.



verso: CHARLES BLACKMAN, born 1928, *The Pink* 1953.



CHARLES BLACKMAN, born 1928, *There Was* 1953. Sold Sotheby's Australia for \$840,000 May 2017

AT A GLANCE

CHARLES BLACKMAN, born 1928

The Pink 1953

enamel paint on composition board

74.6 x 100 cm

Estimate \$250,000-350,000

Important Australian Art

Auction in Sydney, 16 August 2017, 6.30 pm

InterContinental Sydney, 117 Macquarie Street, Sydney

Total estimate \$9,021,000-11,768,000, 97 lots

Exhibition in Melbourne 2-6 August, 10 am to 5 pm, 41 Exhibition Street, Melbourne

Exhibition in Sydney 10-16 August, 10 am to 5 pm, 30 & 34 Queen Street, Woollahra

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