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Blackman's *Alice in Wonderland* Poised to Astonish

Important Australian Art | Auction in Sydney 21 November 2017

One of the most compelling and beguiling compositions of the entire Alice in Wonderland series



CHARLES BLACKMAN, born 1928, *Mad Hatter's Tea Party* 1956. Estimate \$1,400,000-1,800,000

Charles Blackman's *Mad Hatter's Tea Party* 1956 (estimate \$1,400,000-1,800,000, lot 26, pictured) is poised to generate significant interest and establish a new benchmark for the artist when offered for auction on 21 November by Sotheby's Australia at the InterContinental Sydney. Sotheby's Australia established the world auction record of \$1,799,500 in 2016 for another painting from this series and holds the top three auction results for the artist.

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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 *Mad Hatter's Tea Party*, Blackman blends highly personal and universal iconography and creates an image that is simultaneously literal, poetic, and illusory.'

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 intimate truths of the couple including the recurrent images of table settings that reflected 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.



CHARLES BLACKMAN, born 1928, *Mad Hatter's Tea Party* 1956. Sold for \$1,799,500 November 2016. ***Auction Record for the Artist***

Blackman's Alice in Wonderland series have assumed iconic status within the history and development of Australian art and together with Arthur Boyd's Bride series, Sidney Nolan's Ned Kelly series, and Albert Tucker's Images of Modern Evil series, form the cornerstones of iconography in the story of twentieth century Australian art.

The current world auction record for the artist was achieved by Sotheby's Australia for *The Game of Chess* 1956 in November 2016 for \$1,799,500 (pictured above).

AT A GLANCE

CHARLES BLACKMAN, BORN 1928

Mad Hatter's Tea Party 1956

tempera and oil on composition board

105 x 121 cm

Estimate \$1,400,000-1,800,000

Important Australian Art

Auction in Sydney, 21 November 2017, 6.30 pm

InterContinental Sydney, 117 Macquarie Street, Sydney

Total auction estimate \$9,400,000-12,123,000 | 82 lots

Exhibition in Melbourne 8-12 November, 10 am to 5 pm, 41 Exhibition Street, Melbourne

Exhibition in Sydney 16-21 November, 10 am to 5 pm, 30 & 34 Queen Street, Woollahra

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