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# Masterpieces by Lin Onus Poised to Establish World Auction Record at Sotheby's Australia

IMPORTANT AUSTRALIAN & NEW ZEALAND ART  
AUCTION IN SYDNEY 16 MAY 2018

Two of the finest paintings created by one of Australia's most acclaimed artists will be auctioned in May 2018

Consigned by Melbourne Airport, the paintings were commissioned in the last two years of Lin Onus' life and represent the summation of his remarkable career



LIN ONUS 1948-1996, *Fish, Ferns and Rocks* (1995). Estimate \$450,000-650,000

Two highly significant paintings by Lin Onus are set to break auction records when offered by Sotheby's Australia on Wednesday 16 May in Sydney. Commissioned by Melbourne Airport, *Fish, Ferns and Rocks* (1995) (estimate \$450,000-650,000, pictured) and *Fish at Dusk* (1996) (estimate \$450,000-650,000, pictured following) were painted in the last two years of Lin Onus' life, and represent the artist's most ambitious paintings in their scale, complexity and visual impact.

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Geoffrey Smith, Chairman of Sotheby's Australia commented: 'In 2007 Sotheby's Australia auctioned the Qantas Collection, and we are honoured that Australia Pacific Airports, who operate Melbourne Airport, has entrusted us with these most significant paintings by Lin Onus. Melbourne Airport was innovative and ambitious with this commission and for the last 22 years has been the careful custodian of these magnificent works. For many years the paintings have remained hidden from public view and they are being released so they may be appreciated by others and will facilitate new cultural activities and installations at Melbourne Airport.'

Melbourne Airport Chief Executive, Lyell Strambi, said: 'We are pleased to have the opportunity to place these works on sale, in order that they may be enjoyed by a new generation of Australians. While it will be a sad day for the Airport to relinquish these works from our care, the cultural legacy of Lin Onus will be extended beyond the boundaries of Melbourne Airport and into the community. The proceeds from the auction of these pieces will be reinvested by Melbourne Airport into a range of initiatives, to provide social benefits in the areas of employment and education for local and indigenous communities.'

Lin Onus had a diverse and multicultural heritage. Born of Scottish and Indigenous parents, his father, William (Bill) Onus, was a founder of the Aboriginal Advancement League. Through his pursuit in raising awareness of Aboriginal rights and re-affirming his own sense of Indigenous identity, Onus spent time in Arnhem Land in 1986 with artist Jack Wunuwun, a Yulungu Elder. Onus was taught about the culture and art of the Yulungu people. A man of mixed descent, he developed a unique painting style that harmoniously integrated 'western' realistic painting styles with Indigenous culture.

*Fish, Ferns and Rocks* and *Fish at Dusk* were commissioned for Melbourne Airport by Dr Jean Battersby AO in her role as an arts advisor to the airport corporation. The compositions are diaphanous waterscapes, in part transparent, in part solid, and remain Lin Onus's most accomplished works. They combine technical virtuosity with Aboriginal concepts of country and knowledge. On the visual plane, the paintings are optical puzzles of light reflecting and refracting off and through the water, of mirror images of objects viewed within the perimeters of the canvas, and the reflections of trees, ferns and sun that stretch beyond the picture plane into the space occupied by the viewer.

Lin Onus remains one of Australia's most collectable artists. Rare to the auction market, strong demand for works by the artist continues with Sotheby's Australia selling *Frogs on Waterlilies* for \$512,400 (estimate \$100,000-150,000) in 2015 and *Robyn* (1995) for \$414,800 (160,000-180,000) in 2013, both establishing auction records at their respective sale time.



LIN ONUS 1948-1996, *Fish at Dusk* (1996). Estimate \$450,000-650,000

## AT A GLANCE

LIN ONUS 1948-1996

*Fish, Ferns and Rocks* (1995)

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

200 x 550 cm (diptych)

Estimate \$450,000-650,000

LIN ONUS 1948-1996

*Fish at Dusk* (1996)

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

200 x 550 cm (diptych)

Estimate \$450,000-650,000

Important Australian & New Zealand Art | Important Australian Art from The J.G.L. Collection

Auction in Sydney, 16 May 2018, 6.30 pm

InterContinental Sydney, 117 Macquarie Street, Sydney

Estimate \$10,732,000-14,277,000 | 137 lots

Exhibition in Melbourne 2-6 May, 1 Spring Street & 41 Exhibition Street, Melbourne

Exhibition in Sydney 10-16 May, 30 & 34 Queen Street, Woollahra

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