

# Smith&Singer

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SMITH & SINGER LEAD THE MARKET FOLLOWING SEPTEMBER AUCTION  
TOTAL OF \$6,304,375, WITH 149% SOLD BY VALUE AND 87% BY VOLUME

*Smith & Singer (Formerly Trading as Sotheby's Australia) Achieves the Highest  
Sold Rates at the Company in More than a Decade*

*Whiteley Masterpiece 'White Corella' 1987 Leads Auction with \$750,000*

*Monumental Shoalhaven Canvas by Arthur Boyd Realises \$550,000*

*Auction Records for Elioth Gruner & Russell Drysdale (Work on Paper)*



BRETT WHITELEY 1939-1992

**White Corella** 1987

oil on canvas, 106.3 x 91.1 cm

frame: original, Brett Lichtenstein, Sydney

Estimate \$600,000–800,000

Sold for \$750,000

© Wendy Whiteley

**SYDNEY, 3 September 2020** – Bidders from across Australia and the around the globe vied for the works of art on offer at Smith & Singer's auction of *Important Australian & International Art* last night. Clients in the Sydney saleroom competed against those watching the auction online and speaking via telephones, resulting in an outstanding sold rate of 149.43% by value and 87% by volume – the highest in more than a decade at Smith & Singer (formerly trading as Sotheby's Australia). Totalling \$6,304,375, the auction far exceeded the pre-sale low estimate with strong results for leading Australian traditional, modern and contemporary artists – including Arthur Boyd, Rupert Bunny, Ethel Carrick, Elioth Gruner,

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Akio Makigawa, Frederick McCubbin, William Robinson, Arthur Streeton, and Brett Whiteley, amongst others.

The evening sale commenced with a delicate duo of Arthur Boyd Shoalhaven small-scale oils on board, which sold for \$53,750 and \$52,500 respectively, both exceeding their pre-sale \$40,000 high estimates. Exceptional results continued throughout the sale and include: the auction debut of Russell Drysdale's *Midnight Osborne* (1941) (lot 7, estimate \$50,000–70,000) which sold for \$156,250; Brett Whiteley's ebullient *White Corella* 1987 (lot 12, estimate \$600,000–800,000) which also made its auction debut when it realised the highest price of the night, selling for \$750,000; Ethel Carrick's charming horticultural canvas, *In Sydney Botanical Gardens* (lot 17, estimate \$60,000–80,000), which reflected the Spring mood in the saleroom when it sold for \$187,500; a world auction record for Elioth Gruner's *A Land of Wide Horizons, Michelago* (1922) (lot 24, estimate \$80,000–100,000) when it sold for \$393,750; Arthur Streeton's transcendent *Lagoon and Salute* (1908) (lot 25, estimate \$150,000–250,000) which lit up the room when it was hammered down at \$337,500; Akio Makigawa's *Untitled* (1992) (lot 32, estimate \$40,000–60,000) which sold to a buyer on the telephone for \$100,000; the magisterial *Back Creek Gorge to the Coomera* 1994 by William Robinson, which realised an impressive \$512,500 (lot 39, estimate \$250,000–350,000) and was shortly followed by Arthur Boyd's monumental *Bathers, Shoalhaven Riverbank and Clouds* (1984-1985), which sold for \$550,000, well in excess of its \$300,000–400,000 estimate; and Andy Warhol's *Giant Panda* (1983), which sold for \$100,000 (lot 43, estimate \$70,000–90,000).

## 1 WORLD AUCTION RECORD

- Lot 25, Elioth Gruner 1882-1939, *A Land of Wide Horizons, Michelago* (1922), estimate \$80,000–100,000, sold for \$393,750

## 1 AUCTION RECORD BY MEDIUM

- Lot 7, Russell Drysdale 1912-1981, *Midnight Osborne* (1941), estimate \$50,000–70,000, sold for \$156,250 – Auction Record for a Work on Paper by the Artist

## WHITELEY MASTERPIECE, *WHITE CORELLA* 1987 (PICTURED ABOVE), MAKES A SPLASH AT AUCTION DEBUT

The highest price of the night was for Brett Whiteley's *White Corella* 1987 (lot 12, estimate \$600,000–800,000, pictured above), which sold for \$750,000. Undoubtedly one of the most exuberant, joyous and irreverent of all of Whiteley's avian subjects, the eponymous bird appears cross-eyed, bathing in a waterhole on the top of Uluru, or Ayers Rock as it was known then, with the curve of the massive sandstone monolith offset by the clarity of the expansive blue sky.

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Within Whiteley's protean output – landscapes, interiors and still lifes, figure paintings, nudes and animals – there is nevertheless a number of persistent, recurrent motifs and symbols, Birds are a particular favourite, representing for the artist 'the essential symbol of the song of creation.' (1) The poet Robert Gray shared the artist's enthusiasm, declaring that '... Whiteley's bird paintings ... embodied his finest feeling; they are to me his best work. I like in the bird shapes that clarity; that classical, haptic shapeliness; that calm – those clear, perfect lines of a Chinese vase. The breasts of his birds swell with the most attractive emotion in his work. It is bold, vulnerable and tender.' (2)

## MONUMENTAL BOYD FROM THE DONALD HAY COLLECTION ILLUSTRATES DEMAND IN THE MARKET



ARTHUR BOYD 1920-1999

**Bathers, Shoalhaven Riverbank and Clouds** (1984-1985)

oil on canvas, 259 x 305 cm

Estimate \$300,000–400,000

Sold for \$550,000

Among the most significant results of the evening was Arthur Boyd's long celebrated *Bathers, Shoalhaven Riverbank and Clouds* (1984-1985) (lot 40, estimate \$300,000–400,000), which sold for \$550,000 after a fierce bidding war.

Boyd's Shoalhaven paintings are born from his obsession with, and exploration of, a particular landscape. These paintings of the river and the bush-covered escarpment behind have entered the Australian psyche, becoming some of the most recognisable images of the Australian landscape. *Bathers, Shoalhaven Riverbank and Clouds* (1984-1985) has long been regarded as the *magnum opus* of the Shoalhaven series.

Magnificent is its immersive scale and dramatically varied in its use of exquisitely refined and expressively vigorous application of pigment, the composition featured on the cover of Ursula Hoff's monograph on the artist published in 1986.

*Geoffrey Smith, Chairman of Smith & Singer, commented: 'We are thrilled with last night's result of \$6,304,375, with a sold rate by value of 149% and 87% by volume, it represents the highest equivalent rates for more than 10 years at our company and positions us at the head of the auction market for*

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fine art in Australia. The depth of spirited bidding confirmed our June 2020 results and the continued demand from our clients for the most discerning selection of historical, modern and contemporary art. We are proud to have achieved such results on behalf of our consignors and thank all our clients for their trust during these challenging times, and our colleagues for their ongoing dedication over the last few months.'

## RECORD RESULTS



ELIOTH GRUNER 1882-1939

**A Land of Wide Horizons,  
Michelago (1922)**

oil on canvas, 71.2 x 102 cm

Estimate \$80,000–100,000

Sold for \$393,750

AUCTION RECORD FOR THE  
ARTIST



RUSSELL DRYSDALE 1912-1981

**Midnight Osborne (1941)**

ink, crayon and watercolour on  
paper on composition board, 38 x  
22 cm

Estimate \$50,000–70,000

Sold for \$156,250

AUCTION RECORD FOR A WORK  
ON PAPER BY THE ARTIST

© The Estate of Russell Drysdale

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## COLLECTION HIGHLIGHTS

ETHEL CARRICK 1872-1952  
**In Sydney Botanical Gardens**  
oil on canvas, 50.7 x 61 cm  
Estimate \$60,000–80,000  
Sold for \$187,500



ARTHUR STREETON 1867-1943  
**Lagoon and Salute (1908)**  
oil on canvas  
63.5 x 76.5 cm  
Estimate \$150,000–250,000  
Sold for \$337,500



WILLIAM ROBINSON  
born 1936  
**Back Creek Gorge to the Coomera** 1994  
oil on canvas, 137 x 182.5 cm  
Estimate \$250,000–350,000  
Sold for \$512,500  
© William Robinson



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(1) Barry Pearce, Australian Artists, Australian Birds, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1989, p. 144

(2) Robert Gray, 'A Few Takes on Brett Whiteley', Art and Australia, Sydney, Vol. 24, No. 2, Summer 1986, p. 222

## AT A GLANCE

Important Australian & International Art

Auction, Sydney, 2 September 2020, 6.30 pm

National Council of Jewish Women of Australia, 111 Queen Street, Woollahra NSW 2025

Lots on offer: 55

Total sold: \$6,304,375 including buyer's premium

Sold by value: 149.43% including buyer's premium

Sold by volume: 87%

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Please note all prices include buyer's premium. Sale session totals are net aggregate figures inclusive of premiums. Smith & Singer's buyer's premium is 25% of the hammer price including GST. \*\* Estimates do not include buyer's premium\*\*

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