

Melbourne 10 March 2014

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Russell Drysdale's Australia: Masterpieces from Private Collections



Russell Drysdale 1912-1981, *Anthills on a Rocky Plain* (1950). Private Collection, Courtesy of Sotheby's Australia

The most significant private loan exhibition ever staged in Australia will be launched at Sotheby's Australia's new Sydney premises on Monday 10 March. ***Russell Drysdale's Australia: Masterpieces from Private Collections*** features more than 40 paintings that have been exclusively sourced from Australian and international private collections for a strictly limited two week exhibition. Many of the works have been hidden from public view since they were created, whilst others have never been reproduced. No works of art are for sale and proceeds from the exhibition and associated events will be directed to support The Australian Ballet.

The art of Russell Drysdale is probably more familiar to the public than that of any other Australian artist of his generation. His images of rural country towns and outback landscapes, often with their inhabitants, were instrumental in defining a national identity at a time of tremendous social change in Australia, spanning depression, war and unprecedented immigration. For audiences in Australia and abroad, Drysdale's paintings of the 1940s to 1970s reflected the essence of Australia and its people.

Drysdale was one of Australia's least prolific artists. In a career spanning over four decades, he produced approximately 350 oil paintings. As one of the nation's rarest and most admired artists, his works were highly sought after by both local and international collectors. His most familiar images are those which reside in public collections, however, many of his greatest paintings remain in private ownership, at times remaining with the families of the original purchasers.

'The current exhibition is the most significant showing of Russell Drysdale's paintings since the artist's retrospective that I curated in 1997 that toured nationally' said Geoffrey Smith, Chairman of Sotheby's Australia. 'It is a privilege to curate and present this major exhibition that honours one of Australia's most influential and beloved artists. We are greatly indebted to the generosity of all the private lenders and their willingness to share their treasured works of art with the broader community and to raise funds for The Australian Ballet.'

A highlight of the exhibition is the repatriation to Australia of *Anthills on a Rocky Plain* (1950), one of the artist's finest works which was the cover image for the first book published on Drysdale in 1951, and has never been seen in Australia.

'The Australian Ballet is delighted to be the beneficiary of funds raised through this very special Sydney only event. It is a great honour to be linked with an exhibition of work by such a distinguished and cherished artist of the calibre of Russell Drysdale and we hope many of our subscribers and patrons will take the opportunity to visit the exhibition', said Ken Groves, Senior Manager, Philanthropy, The Australian Ballet, Sydney.

AT A GLANCE

Russell Drysdale's Australia: Masterpieces from Private Collections
Exhibition to raise funds for the Australian Ballet
Admission: \$20, Concession \$10

Exhibition venue: Sotheby's Australia, 30 Queen Street, Woollahra NSW

Exhibition dates: 10-23 March, 10am – 5pm

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