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Icon of 20th Century Australian Design Set to Establish Auction Record at Sotheby's Australia

AUCTION IN SYDNEY | 20 MARCH 2019

The most significant and singular design created by Australia's most important furniture designer of the mid-twentieth century debuts for auction on 20 March 2019.

Privately owned for over 60 years, Schulim Krimper's black bean *Desk* (1955) represents a *tour de force* of Australian Mid-Century Modern Design.

Commissioned from the artist by Raoul and Ester Kaplan for their son, the desk was reputedly exhibited at the Rockefeller Center, New York in 1956.



SCHULIM KRIMPER 1893-1971, *Desk* (1955). Estimate \$20,000-30,000.

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Schulim Krimper's *Desk* (1955) (estimate \$20,000-30,000, pictured previous) is poised to generate significant interest and establish a world auction record when offered by Sotheby's Australia on 20 March in Sydney. In the mid-1950s, Raoul and Ester Kaplan were searching for a desk that was suitable to present as a gift to their son, Dan, to use while completing his medical studies. In their minds, they were not just commissioning a piece of furniture; they were acquiring a work of art. The commissioned desk would become a permanent fixture in the Melbourne surgery of Dr Dan Kaplan for the next fifty years.

Geoffrey Smith, Chairman of Sotheby's Australia commented: 'From the late 1940s to the 1960s Schulim Krimper was the master craftsman of mid-century furniture design in Australia. His passion for Australian timber, sleek lines and the belief that aesthetic beauty and functionality could harmoniously co-exist, led to the creation of some of the most compelling and enduring objects created in Australia during the decades immediately following World War 2. Krimper's *Desk* (1955) has long been considered as the exemplar of his creativity and we are honoured to offer this exceptional item for auction on behalf of the family of the original owners.'

In 1956, twelve works by Krimper were exhibited in New York at the Rockefeller Center. The exhibition *Furniture Individually Designed and Built by Krimper, Australia* was arranged by the Department of Trade of the Commonwealth of Australia, supported and accompanied by Robert Haines, then Director of the Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane. The Kaplan's desk is believed to have been included of the Rockefeller Center exhibition. When telling relatives and friends of its history, Ester Kaplan had often recounted the fact that she and her husband had had to wait on the delivery of their desk until after the Rockefeller Center exhibition had taken place.

A period photograph (pictured below) depicting Raoul and Ester Kaplan sitting at the desk around the time of its purchase, gives an indication of their reverence for their gift to their son and its place in the overall aesthetic of their living environment. Similarly, in its later home in the surgery of Dr Dan Kaplan, the desk was a focal point of his office and a conversation piece with his patients.

In 1948 the National Gallery of Victoria acquired two cabinets by Schulim Krimper, becoming the first contemporary Australian furniture designer to be acquired by an Australian public institution.

Schulim Krimper's work is held in numerous Australian public collections, including the Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide; Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences, Sydney, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra and National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

The current auction record for a piece of furniture by Schulim Krimper was established in 2009 for \$36,000. Sotheby's Australia recently sold a *Cocktail Cabinet* to the Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide for \$23,180 in March 2018.



PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN

Mrs Ester Kaplan & Mr Raoul Kaplan
behind Schulim Krimper's *Desk*
35mm slide, digitally archived

SCHULIM KRIMPER 1893-1971

Cocktail Cabinet (circa 1965)

teak

158 cm high, 101.5 cm wide, 43 cm deep

Sold Sotheby's Australia, 21 March 2018

for \$23,180 to the Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

Gift of William J. S. Boyle, Mary Choate, Kathy Crosby,
Dr Peter Dobson, Barbara Fargher, Shane Le Plastrier,
Joan Lyons, David McKee AO and Tom Pearce through the
Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation Collectors Club 2018,
Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide



AT A GLANCE

SCHULIM KRIMPER 1893-1971

Desk (1955)

black bean

190 cm long, 75.5 cm high, 76 cm deep

Estimate \$20,000-30,000

Collections: Important Asian, Australian & European Arts & Design

Auction in Sydney, 20 March 2019, 6 pm

Hughenden Boutique Hotel, 14 Queen Street, Woollahra

Exhibition in Sydney, 14-20 March 2019, 10 am to 5 pm, 30 & 34 Queen Street, Woollahra

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