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John Brack | Melbourne | 1950s

EXHIBITION IN MELBOURNE | UNTIL 2 MARCH 2019

Twenty years since the artist's death, Sotheby's Australia presents a major exhibition celebrating one of Australia's most influential and enduring artists.

More than twenty exceptional oil paintings from private collections, with several not seen in public for decades, created during the 1950s comprise the exhibition.

Open to the public the exhibition will raise funds for Castlemaine Art Museum.



JOHN BRACK 1920-1999, *Two Running Girls* 1959, oil on canvas, 104.5 x 96.5 cm. © Helen Brack.

Sotheby's Australia is hosting the most significant exhibition of works by John Brack ever held outside a public institution. Curated by Geoffrey Smith, Chairman of Sotheby's Australia, *John Brack | Melbourne | 1950s* reunites major compositions tightly held in private collections, several which have not been seen in public for many decades. John Brack is a central figure in Australian Modernist painting and the exhibition celebrates Brack's unique visual vocabulary that deftly critiqued Australian society in the dramatic aftermath of the Second World War that witnessed new prosperity and change in the social dynamic of metropolitan Melbourne.

Geoffrey Smith, Chairman of Sotheby's Australia commented: 'John Brack remains one of Australia's most significant creative practitioners of the twentieth century whose images of the rituals of everyday life and living continue to educate and inspire. To celebrate the opening of Sotheby's Australia's flagship premises in Collins Street, Melbourne, we are hosting a major loan exhibition *John Brack | Melbourne | 1950s*. The exhibition of 23 seminal works from private collections that were created by Brack in Melbourne during the 1950s represent a selection of the very finest works that the artist created. We respectfully acknowledge the support of the artist's widow Helen Brack in realising our vision for this exhibition.'

By the late 1950s Brack returned to the theme of childhood, exploring the dynamics of children in the schoolyard, in their natural environment, away from adult supervision and intervention. *Two Running Girls* 1959 (pictured previous) delves into the duality of childhood – the fragility and resilience, innocence and experience. A compositional highlight is the tiny, clenched fists and open hand that represents compressed power and energy – and the determination to succeed.



JOHN BRACK 1920-1999

Christmas Lilies 1955

oil on canvas

91.5 x 40.8 cm

© Helen Brack

John Brack's floral still life subjects produced in the 1950s have been largely overlooked in the public discussion of his art. By constraining his vision to within this small physical and perceptual compass, Brack explored the physical and technical properties of painting – composition, line, tone and colour – which are his central focus as an artist, without the sentimental or political complications that inevitably arise from using the figurative form.

JOHN BRACK 1920-1999
First Daughter 1955
oil on canvas on composition board
75.5 x 55.4 cm
© Helen Brack

John Brack had an unerring eye for the ritual pleasures of Australian suburban society, and his sardonic images of jockeys, brides, schoolchildren, ballroom dancers, gymnasts and nudes are a form of social realism without politics. *First Daughter* is an important precursor of Brack's schoolgirls and schoolyard pictures of the later 1950s. The painting is a delightful domestic portrait of the artist's eldest daughter Clara, who is resolutely drawing her own portrait composition.



AT A GLANCE

John Brack | Melbourne | 1950s

Exhibition to raise funds for Castlemaine Art Museum

Admission: \$25, Concession \$10

Exhibition venue: Sotheby's Australia 14-16 Collins Street, Melbourne

Exhibition Dates: Until 2 March 2019, 10 am to 5 pm, Monday to Saturday

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