






Market Resilience Promoted in London by Buoyant Results at Christie's Australian Art Sale


By Jane Raffan, on 27-Sep-2010

As the adage goes, 'statistics can be made to prove anything – even the truth'. In the case of Christie's Modern and Contemporary Australian Art sale held in London on 23 September 2010, the statistics speak for themselves: an overall clearance of 100% by value and 83% by lot for a total of AUD \$888,072 (incl. BP). In general, most of the modern works realised above pre-sale expectations, and while this was predictable due to highly reasonable estimates, the success of the sale was also borne out in a cache of new stats for individual artists.

A painting by Arthur Boyd not seen since its debut exhibition in 1977 topped the sale's highlights: *Reflected Tree, 1976* (Lot 35 ) easily exceeded its low end estimate of £70,000 to secure a final price of £109,250; the best result for a work from the artist's 1970s oeuvre since June 2008 and third best on record.

The other Arthur Boyd, *Bush Landscape* (Lot 34 ) quadrupled its low end estimate to reach £32,450. Both paintings were purchased by Sydney dealer, Denis Savill, who also snapped up Charles Blackman's *Child, 1961* (Lot 30 ) for £25,000.

This trend was also apparent with the more traditional works, although less consistently. The pre-sale fanfare surrounding the Blamire Young military pictures proved warranted: *Australian Light Horse and Battery Royal* (Lot 7 ) sold to an anonymous bidder for £49,250, setting a new record for the artist. Albert Namatjira's central desert watercolour (Lot 24 ) doubled its low end, making the equivalent of \$36,884; the best year-to-date price for the artist.

While the unsold works fell equally in both modern and traditional categories, the only significant work among the eight that failed to find buyers was the sale's traditional major highlight, John Peter Russell's *Belle-Ile-en-mer* (Lot 4 ) estimated at £150,000-250,000.

With regard to the remaining sales in the Australian calendar, repeating the statistics and keeping up the trend on show in London will chiefly depend on the ability of local houses to encourage appetite by negotiating conservative estimates and reserves with vendors.

Top Lots, including Buyer Premium

35 – Arthur Boyd, *Reflected Tree, 1976*, £109,250 (AUD \$179,094), est. £70,000-100,000

7 – William Blamire Young, *Australian Light Horse and Battery Royal, 1904*, £49,250 (AUD \$80,736), est. £20,000-30,000

32 – Leonard French, *Man and Woman in the Garden*, £34,850 (AUD \$57,130), est. £25,000-35,000

34 – Arthur Boyd, *Bush Landscape*, £32,450 (AUD \$53,195), est. £8,000-12,000

22 – Grace Cossington Smith, *Flowers in a Jug, 1931*, £30,000 (AUD \$49,179), est. £18,000-22,000

30 – Charles Blackman, *Child, 1961*, £25,000 (AUD \$40,983), est. £15,000-20,000

24 – Albert Namatjira, *The Valley, Macdonnell Ranges, NT*, £22,500 (AUD \$36,884), est. £10,000-15,000

5 – Tudor St George Tucker, *Portrait of a Young Lady in a White Dress*, £20,000 (AUD \$32,786), est. £7,000-10,000

29 – Robert Dickerson, *Man and Boy*, £20,000 (AUD \$32,786), est. £7,000-10,000

Sale Referenced: [Modern + Contemporary Australian Art, Christies, London, 23/09/2010](#)

About The Author

Jane Raffan runs ArtiFacts, an Art Services Consultancy based in Sydney, with a specialist focus in the field of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art. Jane is an accredited valuer in Aboriginal Art for the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program. She has over 20 years experience in the arts sector, working initially for the Art Gallery of New South Wales, and then over twelve years in the auction industry. www.artifacts.net.au.