


Top Heavy First 50 in Menzies' First Fine Art Sale Packs a Punch

By Jane Raffan, on 10-Mar-2011


Hoping to secure a knock-out first blow in the season's auction calendar, Menzies Art Brands is delivering a whopping \$7.2–\$9.5 million sale for its first outing. With only one hundred lots on offer, and \$6.5 million loaded into the first fifty, the 24 March Australian & International Fine Art auction catalogue looks lean and mean.





The significant Whiteley, 'Washing the Salt Off I', 1985, being offered in Menzies Art Brands March 24 sale, with an estimate of \$1.25 -1.75 million is well placed to secure a spot in the artist's top ten sale results.

The catalogue is book-ended by fresh-to-the-market Whiteleys. The cover lot, *Washing the Salt off I*, 1985 (Lot 42 ) , est.


\$1,250-1,750,000, is a significant work amongst the artist's Bondi Beach subjects. Having considerable more to offer than *Arkie Under the Shower*, which sold last year for \$1.1 million, the beach painting is well placed to secure a spot in the artist's top ten.

The other major Whiteley, *Feeding the Doves (Lavender Bay)*, 1979 (Lot 37 ) , is a less obvious prospect at \$450-550,000 given its small scale, but its vibrant orange is compelling, and the interesting compositional plane is peppered with classic Whiteley iconography.


Gary Shead's Queen pictures are not broadly appealing, but Menzies' major work from the Royal Site series, *Revelation*, 1997 (Lot 36 ) , est. \$250-320,000, is suitably grand in scale, much more lyrical than many, and far less frenetic. Its altar-like staging and reverence accords the work a sincerity and gravitas often lacking in this suite.


Gravitas might not work as well for Jeffrey Smart's *Mother and Child*, 2000 (Lot 38 ) , est. \$300-400,000, which has a very sombre palette and offers less quirks than the most popular contrivances by the artist.


The first fifty also includes well priced fresh works by crowd favourites Charles Blackman (Lot 1 ) , John Perceval (Lot 20 ) , Margaret Olley (Lot 30 ) , Lloyd Rees (Lot 34 ) and Sidney Nolan (Lot 31 and 49). The Nolans both reference Kelly, although only *Crucifix and Armour* (Lot 31 ) , est. \$60-80,000, offers the iconic and highly desirable black helmeted shape.

The major Nolan in the auction is a late and sketchy *Burial of Burke*, 1985 (Lot 45 ) , est. \$180-240,000. A huge work in three panels,








and sans camels, this might be a tough ask for anyone other than devotees, although its hefty exhibition provenance will entice.

Menzies is braving the waters with other difficult works by major artists, including the collaborative three-panel *Linked Portrait: Brett Whiteley, Tony Woods and William Pidgeon*, 1970 (Lot 48 ) , which carries a price tag of \$140-180,000 and which has, no doubt, been promoted ahead of its public airing to the National Portrait Gallery in Canberra.

And with a subject to rival Jeffrey Smart's surreal pictures, *Arthur Boyd's, Skier with Aboriginal Pointing*, 1985 (Lot 51 ) , est. 90-120,000 heralds the second half of the sale.

The sale's major 3D highlight, Robert Klippel's impressive *448 Birdbath* (Lot 50 ) , est. \$110-160,000, should set sculptor collectors aflutter, given that the last work traded from this edition sold in 2006 for \$170,000 hammer. Three other fresh works by the artist also feature in the first 50 lots (5, 29 and 32).

And in a sign that Menzies is keen for a fresh start to 2011, only a handful of major lots have been seen in recent times, although their cumulative total at \$2.7 million is considerable and weighs heavily on the sale's ultimate success:

Fred Williams *Lysterfield Hillside II*, 1974 (Lot 39 ) , \$400-500,000 (2009/2007)
 Ian Fairweather *Balinese Woman*, 1933 (Lot 35 ) , est. \$140-180,000 (2009/2005)
 John Brack *The Scissors Shop*, 1963 (Lot 40 ) , \$550-700,000 (2008/2005)
 Russel Drysdale *Diver, Broome*, 1959 (Lot 41 ) , est. \$700-900,000 (2007/2005)
 Arthur Boyd *Death of a Husband*, 1958 (Lot 43 ) , est. \$650-850,000 (2008/2007)
 Albert Tucker *Gamblers and Parrots*, 1968 (Lot 46 ) , est. \$180-240,000 (2009)
 Rosalie Gascoigne *Amber*, 1992 (Lot 47 ) , est. \$110-140,000 (2008)

Sale Referenced: [Australian & International Fine Art, Menzies, Sydney, 24/03/2011](#)

About The Author

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