

Bay East Re-Branded: The Curious and Collectable Side by Side



Tim Goodman was recently trumpeted in the press about the expansion and development of Bonham's & Goodman and its Waterloo based subsidiary Bay East Auctions. The Sunday 20 September Art Sale at Bay East featured 199 lots, including lot 45, 'a pair of elephant paintings'. Not souvenir watercolours from a 19th century Grand Tour of the Far East, as one might expect, but actual works of art executed by elephants from the Training Centre at Chiang Mai, Thailand.

Aside from curiosities such as this, the sale also featured select items of interest to collectors; among them a group of late works by Sidney Nolan actually inspired by the Far East. Consigned to raise funds for Maitland

Regional Gallery, these works accounted for two of the sale's top ten lots.

Lot 81 (depicted), an untitled work from the *Silk Route* series, sold for \$7,500 against a low end of \$8,000; while *The Cave* sold for \$4,500 against \$6-10,000 (lot 145). Another untitled work from the series, lot 59 (depicted), is a fine example of the elderly artist's painterly command, being highly expressive while exhibiting great restraint. Its ethereal nature is also strongly suited to its subject, the Buddha. Despite its inherent qualities, it managed \$4,320 against expectations of \$7-10,000, proving that Nolan's late and often obscure output does not hold the same broad appeal as his outback works and historical narratives.



The core 71% of the sale's offering was estimated under \$1,000, while the top ten lots averaged a healthy hammer price around \$10,000. The inclusion of indigenous material, representing 15% of the total low end value for a mere 16 lots, assisted this tally, with lot 92 (depicted) by Tommy Watson achieving the top price.

Estimated at \$22–28,000, it was one of several Aboriginal works carrying the provenance of the Late Graeme Galt, who died on the anniversary of Apology Day, 13 February 2009, and who was a corporate veteran and supporter of indigenous issues and arts, including the Bangarra Dance Company. Watson recently declared he is too old and tired to continue painting large works and it is likely that prices for paintings on this scale and up will see steep increases. This painting, however, is not indicative of the artist's most popular works, usually ablaze with colour, which accounts for its modest hammer price of \$21,000.



The auction was also peppered with a number of small contemporary gems, such as two whimsical and melancholy works by Noel McKenna, with lot 30 *The Terminus* selling above the top end at \$2,200 (depicted); and a selection of 3D animal works by this year's Telstra Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award winner Danie Mellor, including the charming *Baby Kangaroo in a Dilly Bag (Pink)*, which also sold well above its estimate at \$2,200 (lot 118, depicted).

The remainder of top ten lots featured two works by Norman Lindsay (127 and 157), and others by Arthur Boyd (lot 75), Kenneth McQueen (lot 56), William Boissevain (lot 185), and the ever popular, or populist, Hugh Sawrey and Pro Hart (lots 34 and 134).

Despite its lack of pretension, it would seem that the rebranded Bay East Art sales intends to offer select works aimed to draw out collectors and raise the profile of the Waterloo premises, until now the sole preserve of fossickers and decorators.



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