

Lawson~Menzies' Results Suggest Bolstered Confidence from its Base

By Jane Raffan, on 23-Feb-2011

The 23 February Quarterly Fine Art Auction produced clearances just shy of 80%, in both volume and value. While fresh top lots have sold well over the past two years, critics have bemoaned the market's diffidence across other stock profiles. Given the make-up of the 253 sales last night, the statistics augur well for renewed interest from Lawson's traditional support base in re-engaging with the market.



The top lot of the night went to Tim Storrier's *Starline and Blaze* (Lot 34), close to its low-end estimate at \$57,500.

With a sale total of \$1.3 Million (incl. BP), and 90% of sales falling in the \$10,000 and under category, this base demographic was obviously very active. Chris Cullity, General Manager of Menzies Art Brands' Southern Group, indicated that web-based auction bidding through *Artifact* assisted in this regard, bringing in an extra volume of bidders. Last year Deutscher & Hackett enjoyed success selling low valued works to a similar demographic through their association with Gray's Online.

The vaunted pre-sale highlights by Sidney Nolan from the Estate of Lady Nolan all sold, but the top lot went to Tim Storrier's *Starline and Blaze* (Lot 34) close to its low-end at \$57,500.

As for the Nolans, *Bather*, 1975 (Lot 25) sold at the top end for \$20,000; the *Baptism* series work (Lot 37) went as expected at \$27,000; and *Flowers IV*, 1977 (Lot 43) didn't

quite make low-end at \$22,000. The *Ayers Rock* picture (Lot 30) also cleared just shy of low-end at \$19,500.

The best performing work from amongst the contemporary offering was Howard Arkley's *Zappo (Cityscape Mural)*, 1984 (Lot 33), which sold for \$27,000. Clearly the conceptual chasm was too vast for patrons to cope with Ken Unsworth's 3D work; his *Suspended Stone* series was one of only two highlights in the key first 50 to remain unsold. The other was Charles Blackman's moody moonlight picture (Lot 40), adding to a raft of sombre works by the artist failing to sell over the past two years.

The usual populist works by David Boyd, Pro Hart, Norman Lindsay, Brett Whiteley and David Bromley bolstered the middle order, as did modest works by Ray Croke, Arthur Boyd and Sidney Nolan. Robert Dickerson was the only one in this class to outperform estimates with *Jockey* (Lot 70) selling for \$10,000.

Amongst the Aboriginal works Smith & Hall provenance proved to be a disincentive, with all but one of the five works with a stated connection failing to sell. Most of the other sales of Indigenous works only managed results at half estimate; an indication of the quality of the works in most cases rather than market fragility, although this factor cannot be completely discounted at this early stage.

The other major lots from amongst re-offers all sold, mostly under estimate, indicating vendors were read the riot act over reserves. Fred Williams, *Upwey Landscape* (Lot 32) was the best performing of these, selling for \$32,000 against a low end of \$35K.

Lot 27 - Margaret Olley, *Wooden Horses* - \$12,000 (L/E \$18K)
Lot 29 - John Coburn's, *Indian Journey*, 1976 - \$14,000 (L/E \$16K)
Lot 31 - Charles Blackman, *Portrait of Barbara* - \$28,000 (L/E \$30K)
Lot 36 - John Olsen, *Salt Pans* - \$15,000 (L/E \$20K)
Lot 42 - John Perceval, *Still Life, Flowers*, 1937 - \$10,500 (L/E \$12K)

Sale Referenced: [Quarterly Fine Art Auction, Lawson~Menzies, Sydney, 23/02/2011](#)

About The Author

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