

Deutscher and Hackett Bets on Colonial Comfort atop a Contemporary Core

By Jane Raffan, on 19-Apr-2012

Roger McIlroy will be brandishing the gavel for Deutscher and Hackett's first major painting sale of the year on 2nd May, and you can bet he's been hoping to have the chance to bring it down on a million dollar lot. Luckily for him, and also the outfit, they have one in the line-up, if not the bag. Their \$5-6.5 million dollar auction features a crop of colonial works in the opening set of its 162 lot sale. Totalling just over 30% of the auction's pre-sale tally, the top three are all significant works by Arthur Streeton, with *Settlers Camp* headlining at \$1-1.5 million.



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gutsy in the current climate[3], should be more than reasonably supported in any public due diligence acquittal process.

The other works in the colonial crux are both Sydney scenes: Streeton's *Sirius Cove*, 1895 (Lot 9 [img]), estimate \$250,000-350,000, depicts the other famed artist camp of Streeton and Tom Roberts located at Little Sirius Cove, Mosman. And for those that like their old masters by the square inch, *The Harbour from Mosman*, 1926 (Lot 10 [img]), estimate \$350,000-450,000, is one of the largest paintings of Sydney harbour ever painted by Streeton and has the added appeal of having been tightly held in a family collection since the 1930s. Apart from the top three, the colonial core includes works by McCubbin (Lot 11 [img]), Tom Roberts (Lot 12 [img]) and Elioth Gruner (Lot 13 [img]).

And while Australian tycoons with an itch for a so-called bush picture in a gold frame might be few and far between these days, it is quite possible that the sale will benefit from the burgeoning changes in economic demographics in Russia and India, where tycoons and tech barons are both numerous and intent on reclaiming patrimony.

The auction features two early paintings by the Indian master, Jehangir Sabavala, *The Water Pump, Jaipur*, c.1955 (Lot 24 [img]), estimate \$80,000-120,000 and *The Bundi Courtyard*, c.1957 (Lot 25 [img]), estimate \$30,000-40,000, both purchased in Mumbai in the 1960s by the late Sir Kenneth Willis, notable army officer and businessman. Vladimir Tretchikoff's *Clowns*, 1969 (Lot 26 [img]), estimate \$30,000-40,000, was also purchased offshore by its current owner, from the Kendal Milne department store in Manchester, United Kingdom. The other international work of note is Bridget Riley's *Green Surrounded by Violet and Orange*, 1969 (Lot 1 [img]), which boldly opens the sale with an estimate of \$80,000-120,000.

Million dollar colonial bets aside, Deutscher and Hackett isn't about to abandon their bread and butter: select works of quality in the modern and contemporary range.

Notable amongst the moderns is John Perceval's *Wheatfield and Potato Diggers*, (Lot 15 [img]), estimate \$250,000-350,000, which the auction house tells us was first began by the artist in 1947 and then left under a friend's bed until retrieved and completed three decades later. This picture illustrates the cover of the 1971 Perceval book by Margaret Plant and, significantly, despite being worked across a 30 year span and bearing both dates, still carries the important hallmarks of a forties work.

The moderns group also features a major early work by Charles Blackman: *Alice*, 1957 (Lot 6 [img]), estimate \$160,000-200,000, is a strong portrait, devoid of the nonsense literature's iconographic accoutrement. Other highlights in this echelon are Lloyd Rees' *Tuscany*, 1957 (Lot 14 [img]), estimate: \$180,000-220,000, which offers the artist's favoured Italian reminiscence in hazy sun-bleached hews, and John Brack's hard edged battle series work, *U and I*, 1983-84 (Lot 17 [img]), which tops the non colonial core at estimate \$500,000-600,000.

Kathryn Del Barton's *Come Forth with Love*, 2004 (Lot 22 [img]), estimate \$100,000-140,000, sets the bar for the contemporary core, followed by Rosalie Gascoigne's *Banana Yellow*, 1998 (Lot 3 [img]), estimate \$80,000-100,000 and Tim Maguire's *Untitled 20051202, 2005* (Lot 23 [img]), estimate \$70,000-90,000.

In the \$25-50K range there are solid works by Peter Booth (Lot 5 [img]), John Olsen (Lot 19 [img]) and Bronwyn Oliver (Lot 35 [img]). If records are to go by, Stephen Bush's *The Lure of Paris #17, 1999* (Lot 4 [img]) should reach its upper end of \$45K. Deutscher and Hackett hold the record for the artist with another work from this series (virtually identical), which sold last year for a hammer of \$44K.

And proving the enduring popularity of an Australian anti-establishment mythic, the catalogue offers two homages: Gary Shead's Ern Malley picture, *The Black Swan of Trespass* (Lot 20 [img]), estimate \$55,000-75,000, and Guan Wei's beautiful and cheeky rice paper scroll, *Police Pursue Ned Kelly, 2004* (Lot 78 [img]). Estimated at \$5,500-7,500, it is in my view the best priced Kelly picture to have appeared on the market this year.

The Guan Wei is typical of Deutscher and Hackett fine art sales content: quirky contemporary works by both seasoned and emerging artists at reasonable prices. And there are plenty more along this vein, including works by Gwyn Hanssen Pigott (Lot 34 ) , Shaun Gladwell (lots 87, 88), Tim Silver (lots 85, 86), Callum Morton (Lot 84 ) , Michael Parekowhai (Lot 91 ) , Jon Campbell (Lot 105 ) , Donna Marcus (Lot 106 ) , Neil Taylor (lots 107, 108), Brendan Huntley (Lot 109 ) , and just because...Kathy Temin's *Duck-Rabbit Problem*, 1993 (Lot 110 ) and David Griggs' *Who Really Gives a Shit?* 2006 (Lot 83 ) .

The sale also includes a raft of populist works in the form of Lindsay boobs (19 works), David Boyd kiddies (2), Olsen frogs (4), Dickerson faces (3), Whiteley prints (4) and bringing up the tail end a suite of eight Pro Hart and Hugh Sawrey outback genre pictures.

Without the three major pictures at the colonial core the genesis of this sale seems, on the face of it, like it might have been a tougher ask than many past, but it has them ... so in the end it offers up a little something for everyone and a possible PR coup – first snatch at the million mark this year. We'll just have to wait and see if they can grab it.

[1] Katrina Strickland, 'NGV has a hand in this Glover saga', *The Australian Financial Review*, 22 March 2012. [2] Katrina Strickland, 'Institutions snare Aboriginal art', *The Australian Financial Review*, 12 April 2012. [3] Terry Ingram, 'Making an impression, again', *The Australian Financial Review*, 19 April 2012.

Sale Referenced: [Important Australian + International Fine Art](#) , [Deutscher and Hackett](#) , Sydney, 02/05/2012

About The Author

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