

Lawson~Menzies' Fine Art Sale First to Test the Waters

By Jane Raffan, on 18-Feb-2011

And they are hoping to make a splash. The 23 February *Quarterly Fine Art Auction* carries a pre-sale estimate of \$1.5–2.1 million. Given all the major houses have scheduled their sales well beyond the March 26 NSW state election, Lawson's will be looking to catch the attention of collectors itching to spend after the summer hiatus.

The 322 works on offer span all genres, with sale highlights firmly situated in the Modern and Contemporary offering.

Amongst the top lots are three fresh works by Sidney Nolan from the Estate of Lady Nolan through a private collection: *Bather* from 1975 (Lot 25 ) , est. \$16,000-20,000; an interesting work from his *Baptism* series (Lot 37 ) , est. \$25,000-35,000, and a still life, *Flowers IV*, 1977 (Lot 43 ) , est. \$25,000-35,000. A fourth work, *Ayers Rock* (Lot 30 ) , will likely also have broad appeal at \$20,000-30,000, having been in private hands since 1998.

Two other 1970s works from across the conceptual divide make notable highlights:

A rare Ken Unsworth 3D piece from his *Suspended Stone series* (Lot 45 ) is on offer at \$16,000-18,000. A sale at low end will see a new record for the artist at auction.

And if the results from Joel's December Hogarth Galleries sale are any indication, Richard Larter's pulp fiction-esque take on NSW politics, crime and corruption in the Wran era, *Untitled*, 1979 (Lot 125 ) should lure strong competition at \$9,000-14,000.

A few of the major lots are on the market again with reasonable expectations after gaps of two to five years, including John Perceval's small but striking *Still Life, Flowers*, 1937 (Lot 42 ) est. \$12,000-16,000, which carries exhibition provenance from the artist's retrospective held at the NGV and AGNSW in 1992. Also Margaret Olley's *Wooden Horses* (Lot 27 ) ; Charles Blackman's *Portrait of Barbara* (Lot 31 ) , John Olsen's *Salt Pans* (Lot 36 ) , Fred Williams' *Upwey Landscape* (Lot 32 ) and John Coburn's *Indian Journey*, 1976 (Lot 29 ) .

Amongst the Indigenous art is a group of works bearing Galleries Direct provenance, a former trading entity of the failed art investment group Smith & Hall. Stay tuned to the AASD over the coming weeks for an update on the Smith & Hall fallout, including the Administrator's activities and court action.

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

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.