

Deutscher & Hackett Overcomes Tough Room to Tally \$6.21 Million and Secure Second Spot in Year to Date Sales

By Jane Raffan, on 01-Sep-2010

The AASD calculated D and H auction clearances of 66% by value and 64% by volume illustrate the tenor of the sale, which had its highs and lows, and only a few surprises. The sale total of \$6.21 million brings the year to date total for Deutscher and Hackett to \$13.95 million, compared with \$12.78 million year to date for Sotheby's, both well behind the Menzies 2010 total of \$23.29 million.

With such a small margin between second and third ranking, they could well reverse positions before year's end, depending on the line up of sales completing their respective 2010 offerings.

Initially passed in, the catalogue front cover lot, Fred Williams *Hillside at Lysterfield II* (Lot 15 ) managed to hit the magic \$1M mark after a ten lot hiatus and determined *sotto voce* negotiation by Damien Hackett from the phone table.

The other two major works by Williams in the auction also sold, although did not fire, with lot 14 realising a hammer of \$360,000 and lot 20 at \$300,000.

As expected, the number two spot was claimed by the lot selected for the back cover illustration, John Brack's *Three of the Players* (Lot 16 ) selling to an agent in the room with a buyer on the phone for \$750,000. The same buyer was booked to bid on the Williams. Perhaps thinking a bargain was in the offing they were not drawn to enter the bidding, despite the typical frenetic urging from the agent ahead of the hammer fall.

Brack's image of a battle between lead pencils (Lot 17 ) drew the first protracted bidding war of the night and secured a hammer price of \$160,000, well above its estimate of \$80-120,000. The contemporary art component played true to form for the company, with Gascoigne pulling in total hammer of \$305,000. *Dowmbeat*, 1997 (Lot 18 ) provided the next upbeat moment as the work was chased over the high end estimate to sell in the room at \$215,000. Sculpture carried its weight, with Bronwyn Oliver's marvelous *Unity* (Lot 6 ) achieving \$110,000, and Robert Klippel's *Sentinel* (Lot 7 ) securing \$85,000.

The biggest surprise of the first 20 lots was Sam Fullbrook's Monet-esque *Landscape at Marcoola*, 1971 (Lot 12 ) which drew gasps as it was vigorously pursued to \$60,000 against an estimate of \$25-35,000, setting a new record for the artist. This pattern was rarely repeated, however, with most lots selling around low end estimates or below, and very few over the upper end.

Roy de Maistre's beautiful cubist homage, *Still life*, c1938, (Lot 23 ) was a worthy exception, which also enticed a slow and steely battle in the room to sell for a hammer of \$70,000 against expectations of \$45-65,000. And while Tim Maguire's bloom (Lot 42 ) and Margaret Preston's major work mixed bouquet (Lot 21 ) did not sell, Fullbrook's other flower pictures both performed well, with *Still Life* (Lot 85 ) quickly climbing over estimate to \$24,000.

The charms of the Mackennals and Lindsays were hit and miss, but the best of both offerings found solid support. *Circe* (Lot 25 ) claimed its expected \$80,000, as did *Truth* (Lot 26 ) at \$70,000, while *Incantation* (Lot 32 ) entranced another buyer to rack up \$140,000. Buyers were not in the mood for brown or grim works: the major Olsen, Nolan and Blackman failed to attract any interest whatsoever, as did Sali Herman's rather forlorn streetscape with vacant lots and demolitions. Along with two from the Sotheby's sale the night before, both works by Garry Shead failed to attract buyers, and while the Queen series is always a tricky prospect, the popularity of his Dance series has not previously wavered.

A run of passed lots was mercifully broken by a race to secure John Coburn's *Resurrection Tree*, 1973 (Lot 38 ) which flew to \$90,000 from its opening bid of \$42,000. And a second, longer stretch without the sound of a gavel was finally broken by another bout of protracted bidding on Rick Amor's early work *Wet Day*, 1973 (Lot 63 ) which topped out at \$27,000 against an overly modest \$8-12,000. Further palls were encountered over the next stretch until Emanuel Phillips Fox secured a satisfying \$34,000 for his rather sunny *Venice*, 1907 (Lot 76 )

At lot 80, the room was invited to embrace the auctioneering talents of Scott Livesey who took over from Anita Archer. And if the change of pace didn't keep the crowd on its toes, the antics of dealer Denis Savill provided amusing distractions throughout the course of the next twenty lots, including shouts of "Go tiger!" during the bidding on Fred Williams' Sydney Harbour (Lot 91 ) Presumably the buyer in the room wasn't fooled by Savill's fuelled verbal encouragement that the work was "as good as the Lysterfield": it sold mid range for \$22,000.

After subsequent admonishments from Livesey as to whether he was bidding, Savill jumped up as if to leave. Instead, he doggedly made his way to the phone table and planted a kiss on Chris Deutscher and then exited the room at lot 100, leaving Livesey to get back to business looking somewhat relieved. After all that excitement, the traditional fare in the next group of works appeared quite dull (matched by a 30% success rate) until a very pretty work by Clarice Beckett lifted spirits: *White Road*, Anglesea (Lot 120 ) secured \$28,000 against an ubiquitous estimate of \$15-25,000.

Overall, modern and contemporary works on paper fared better than traditional, with Olsen's major watercolour *Wet Season*, 1994 (Lot 13 ) selling for \$77,500; his other works on paper (lots 87 and 88) sold after auction under estimate. In the latter part of the sale Sidney Nolan's *Convict* and Mrs Fraser (Lot 133 ) drew steady interest to sell at \$9,000, but hopes that the

artist's series would find a new benchmark faded as the balance of the offerings all but passed in.

As the sale drew to a close a group of works by Rick Amor kept Sydney agent Bob Lavigne busy on the phone at the back of the room; all but one sold within estimate. And auction back-end stalwart Paul Auckett's endurance finally gave way when beaten on an interesting Whiteley drawing (Lot 163 ) , which sold for 3,200. The quirky and droll found ready takers amongst privates who stayed to the end, and the stuffed and staring animals of Rhode, Roet and McKenna all sold, as did Nicholas Harding's Dog and Wheelie Bin (Lot 61, \$14,000) and William Robinson's ceramic vase painted with farmers and goats earlier in the night (Lot 94, \$17,000).

Despite the drop in clearance by volume from their March outing, Deutscher & Hackett's September auction secured a sale tally that will be envied by Sotheby's. Furthermore, two positions in the annual coveted top ten highest prices achieved is also now assured. Once he recovers from Denis Savill's embrace, Chris Deutscher will surely have a spring in his step.

Sale Referenced: [Important Australian + International Art, Deutscher and Hackett , Sydney, 01/09/2010](#)

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