

Deutscher & Hackett adds two new substantial artist records to the autumn sales round in an otherwise steady-as-she-goes event

By Jane Raffan, on 11-May-2017

The recent Laverty sale was a clear highlight for Deutscher & Hackett's autumnal calendar, but their 10 May mixed vendor *Important Australian and International Fine Art Sale* added another solid \$4.8 million-dollar tranche to the company's bottom line and included some excellent results in what was a rather underwhelming affair, ambience-wise.

The 132 lot sale cleared well at 80% by volume and 90% by value, and a breakdown of these stats account for the sale's tenor: works that sold at or below their low-end comprised 34% of the total; those selling within estimate at 26%; and those that performed over-estimate equalling the tally of unsold works around 20% each.



The Deutscher & Hackett mixed vendor Important Australian and International Fine Art Sale on 10 May added another solid \$4.8 million-dollar tranche to the company's turnover and included some excellent results in what was a rather underwhelming affair, ambience-wise. The 132 lot sale cleared well at 80% by volume and 90% by value. As expected, the top lot on the night was Lin Onus' *Riddle of the Koi*, 1994, which sold just over its low-end estimate, making \$460,000; a new high price for the artist's work.

As expected, the top lot on the night was Lin Onus' *Riddle of the Koi*, 1994 (Lot 10 🎯), which sold just over its low-end estimate, making \$460,000; a deserved new high price for the artist's work. Also within estimate was Ian Fairweather's scrum-like *Native Group, Davao, Philippines*, 1934 (Lot 5 🎯), which also went to the phones, for \$200,000 (est. \$180–240K).

Amongst the openers, best performing (against estimate) in the sale's top ten was Brett Whiteley's tranquil *Pink Dove I*, 1983 (Lot 7 🎯), which sold to the phones for \$155,000 (est. \$80–120K). This was followed by a burst of bidding for Bronwyn Oliver's *Blaze*, 2003 (Lot 9 🎯), which went to art consultant David Hulme for \$240,000 (est. \$150–200K).

Bringing up the tail of the all-important first 50 lots (after which point reps from Sotheby's left the room), Gary

Shead's *The Presentation*, 1995 (Lot 49 🎯) was chased to \$110,000 by agent Alison Renwick against a conservative estimate of \$55–75K.

From the *Sherman Collection Capsule Collection III* (lots 12-24), the Australian works fared best, with Brett Whiteley's erudite and academic *Portrait of (Verlaine as) Rimbaud*, 1970 (Lot 13 🎯) generating the first real tussle of the night, almost doubling its low-end estimate to make \$56,000 (est. \$30-40K), while bidding for John Olsen's *Kitchen Story*, 1993 (Lot 15 🎯), crawled above its high end to make \$180,000 (est. 120-160K).

For Immants Tillers' under-priced *Sanctuary II*, 2003 (Lot 19 🎯), auctioneer Roger McIroy declared there were "telephones galore on this one". A few minutes later they dissipated to two, finally selling for \$30,000 (est. \$18–24K).

The international component of the sale had quite a few works fall short of any bids, but the New Zealand works all sold.

Interesting paintings by Shane Cotton and Colin McCahon were chased by a New Zealander in the room, who was happy to exaggerate his accent and vocalise a bid of "forty-six thousand" for Cotton's *Gallery Forest*, 2005 (Lot 17 🎯). Outbid on the Cotton, he later claimed McCahon's *Painting*, 1956 (Lot 41 🎯) under estimate for \$55,000 using his paddle.

British artist Lyn Chadwick's ominous *Cloaked Figure VI*, 1977 (Lot 27 🎯) sold to a couple in the room for \$26,000. Isle of Man born David Hulme chased fellow 'Manx' born Raynor Hoff's *Faun and Nymph*, 1924 (Lot 31 🎯) to \$45,000 (est. \$15–20K). Drilling down on connections, Hulme was particularly pleased that he secured the work amidst Hoff's Alma Mater, the National Art School. The Hoff offerings were well-timed, with a newly published book on the sculptor by NAS lecturer Deborah Beck almost sold out. Both pieces in the sale were salacious; no surprise they heralded from the estate of Norman Lindsay.

From amongst the Australian sculpture, top lots and top prices were secured by works from both traditional and modern artists whose vendors were exploiting the profit-making possibilities of arbitrage.

Bertram Mackennal's *Diana Wounded*, 1905 (Lot 35 🎯), made equal fifth top price for the artist, with competitive bidding chasing the Edwardian model cum goddess to \$70,000 against modest expectations of \$25–35,000. The vendor had bought the work for £11,000 (approx. AUD \$19,300) less than a year ago through a regional English sale.

So too, for Bertram Mackennal's, *Vesta*, c. 1900 (Lot 34 🎯), which sold for \$22,000 against an estimate of \$12–18K. It featured in the same regional English sale, where it sold for £6,000 (approx. AUD \$10,500).

Clement Meadmore's *Wallflower*, 1987 (Lot 60 🎯), claimed a new record price for the artist, selling for \$140,000 against a rather too-shy-methinks estimate of \$40–60,000. The Meadmore had surfaced in NY as recently as November 2016, where it sold through a second-tier firm for US \$37,500 (incl. BP). With shipping costs to factor, the D&H estimate was a risk, but one that paid off handsomely.

That two of the sale's top ten lots came about through arbitrage with a turnover of less than a year says a lot about the parochial nature of markets across the pond.

The Whitely top lot, *Pink Dove*, 1983 (sold \$155,000), was offered at Christie's London in December 2016 for £30–40,000 in an online sale. Its purchase price has not been disclosed, but I'm guessing it's a safe bet the buyer has done well.

The colonial works showed mixed results, with the top lot by Augustus Earle selling below estimate (\$120–180K) for \$100,000 to art consultant Adrienne Carlson. Carlson bought Earle's "very high quality" *Portrait of Elizabeth Ann Wilson Potter, Mrs Frances Barnes, Hobart*, 1825 (Lot 69 🎯) for a private client "at a very good price".

Carlson was also successful on two early documentary Adelaide watercolours by Jeffrey Smart: *Kapunda Church*, 1946 (Lot 1 🎯), which was hard won at \$36,000 (est. \$20–30K), and *The Torrens Weir*, c. 1946-48 (Lot 98 🎯), which doubled its high end to sell for \$16,000.

And what's a successful sale without a good old fashioned sleeper?

A determined woman in the room fought a phone bidder for an unidentified c. 1850 'American School' oil painting depicting a whaling scene. The catalogue entry noted that the picture had a contemporaneous related lithograph published in New York (now widely available as a giclée reproduction and as a stock image). This was, of course, a

clue to the work's potential esteem ...

It is likely that the painting is by Frenchman Ambroise Loius Garneray (aka Garnerey, 1783-1857), whose images of whale hunts were much admired by Herman Melville of *Moby Dick* fame[1]. In chapters 55/56 of the acclaimed masterpiece, Ishmael ponders various whale hunt illustrators and concludes that Garneray's (sic) action scenes of men in longboats fighting sperm and right whales are the best. Room for arbitrage? The woman buyer didn't think so, conceding the work (Lot 88 🗳️) to a phone bidder at \$20,000 (est. \$4–6K).

At the sale's weary tail end, David Hulme bought Sidney Nolan's mummy-like *Kelly*, 1954 (Lot 111 🗳️) for \$26,000, nearly double its high-end estimate (\$10–15K). The work bore an intriguing inscription that suggested Nolan highly valued it in his oeuvre. Auctioneer Scott Livesey bid quickly from the book to \$15K while pointedly leaning over the podium staring directly at consultant Paul Auckett. Auckett had impatiently called for an opening bid of \$5K while the room was waiting for a phone connection; Livesey was more than happy to scold the stalwart with a stream of numbers.

At the sale's end, one weary bidder was seen waving a paddle with one hand, with his other propping up his head as he leant on the back of the neighbouring chair. The buyer of Justin O'Brien's dainty and delicate study drawing (Lot 131 🗳️), however, sat upright and fixed with purpose. He secured *Madonna and Child Against Landscape*, 1974, for \$11,000 against a pallid estimate of \$3–5K.

Deutscher & Hackett's seasonal total brings their current year tally to just over \$15 million dollars. Sotheby's is sitting on \$14.25 million, with Menzies on \$6.9 million, plus a sale tonight (pitched at \$6.2–8.35 million). Menzies needs to clear more than 100% by value on its low-end to secure the leading spot. Place your bets! Regardless of who comes out on top, this augurs well for the market: at the same time in last year's calendar, the total was \$34 million industry wide.

The winter break for the majors should carry a welcomed air of calm confidence with regards to the health of the buying market, along with a solid dose of competitive nervousness to find vendors with seductive stock for their spring outings.

Top lots (\$100K and over) sold within estimates

- 11 – Howard Taylor, *Planet*, 1996, \$150,000 (est. \$150–200K)
- 28 – Norman Lindsay, *The Lute player*, c. 1924, \$160,000 (est. \$150–200K)
- 36 – Justin O'Brien, *Three Jugglers*, 1955, \$100,000 (est. \$100–140K)
- 37 – Arthur Boyd, *Burnt Stubble Wimmera*, c. 1975, \$100,000 (est. \$80–120K)

Major after-sales

Major unsold lots

- 06 – Ian Fairweather, *Sing Ging Village*, 1936, est. \$200–300K
- 16 – Tim Storrier, *Evening (Flowers for Nancy)*, 1993, est. \$200–300K
- 39 – Fred Williams, *Acacia Landscape with Clouds*, 1980, est. \$260–320K

Aboriginal Art top lots

- 43 – Johnny Warangkula Tjupurrula, *Women Camped at Kampurrula*, 1973, \$35,000 (est. \$35–55K)
- 45 – Paddy Bedford, *Lightning Creek – Bush Turkey*, 2003, \$90,000 (est. \$90–120K)
- 46 – Emily Kame Kngwarreye, *The First Flowers of Summer*, 1990, \$70,000 (est. 480–120K)

Major Aboriginal art unsolds

- 44 – Rover Thomas, *Guwaliwali Country*, 1989, est. \$50–70K

Other best performing sculpture (against estimate)

- 32 – Norma Lindsay, *Salome*, 1938, \$19,000 (est. \$10–15K)

33 – Sir Alfred Gilbert, *Perseus Arming*, 1882, \$26,000 (est. \$15–20K)

Other best performing paintings (against estimate)

48 – Tim Storrier, *The Wave and Garland*, 1999, \$75,000 (est. \$45–65K)

64 – Rick Amor, *Boy on the Beach*, 1999, \$42,000 (est. \$20–30k)

Unsold international lots

22 – Tony Oursler (est. \$20–40K)

25 – Chuck Close, est. \$25–35K

[1] See the following images for authorised works with similar compositions: <https://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21/21.705/f03/studymaterials/melvilleimages/garneray1.jpg>

<https://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21/21.705/f03/studymaterials/melvilleimages/garneray2.jpg>

<http://prints.rmg.co.uk/art/508621/south-sea-whale-fishery>

Sale Referenced: Important Australian & International Fine Art, Deutscher and Hackett , Sydney, 10/05/2017

About The Author

Jane Raffan runs ArtiFacts, an art services consultancy based in Sydney. Jane is an accredited valuer for the Australian government's highly vetted Cultural Gifts Program, and Vice President of the Auctioneers & Valuers Association of Australia. Jane's experience spans more 20 years working in public and commercial art sectors, initially with the AGNSW, and then over twelve years in the fine art auction industry. Her consultancy focuses on collection management, advisory services and valuations. She is the author of *Power + Colour: New Painting from the Corrigan Collection of Aboriginal Art*. www.artifacts.net.au.

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