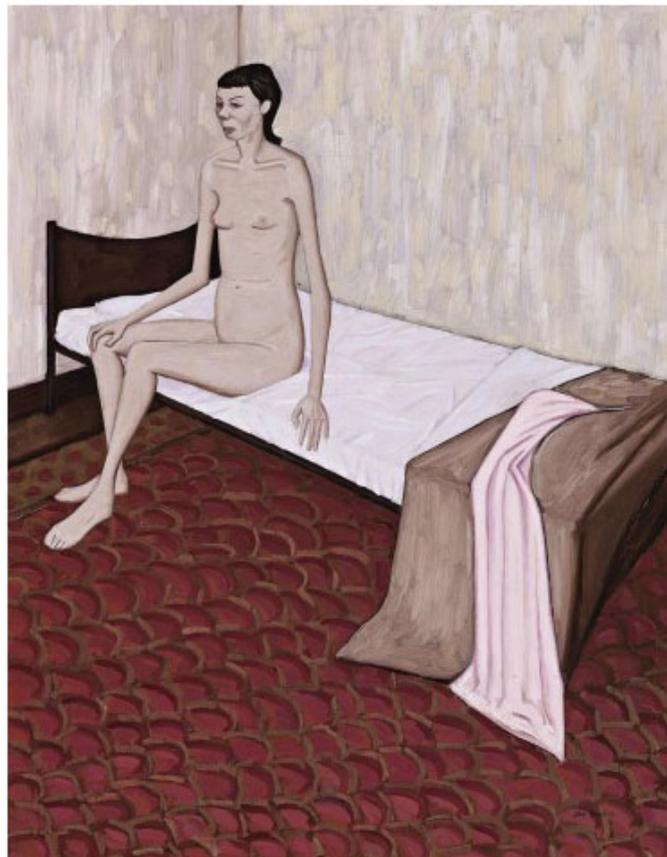


## Deutscher and Hackett chalk up another four million dollars in a matter-of-fact/no fanfare sale titled 'Important Australian & International Art'

By Jane Raffan, on 31-Aug-2018

With the revitalised and relaunched Melbourne Art Fair recently a wrap, and the Sydney Contemporary Art Fair just around the corner, the August round of sales for the big players was always going to test art buying budgets, if not appetites.

Deutscher and Hackett's Sydney sale of *Important Australian & International Art* attracted a full room (120 people), and while the ambience was hardly buoyant, the sale's 149 lots cleared well enough at 81% by number, including the cover/top lot, John Brack's *Nude with Nightgown* (lot 5), which sold to the phone for its low-end of \$500,000 after a run of vendor bids from the podium.



With the relaunched Melbourne Art Fair recently a wrap, and the Sydney Contemporary art fair just around the corner, the August round of sales was always going to test art buying budgets, if not appetites. While Deutscher and Hackett's Sydney sale of *Important Australian & International Art* was hardly buoyant, it cleared well enough, including the cover lot, John Brack's 'Nude with Nightgown' (above), which sold to the phone for its low-end of \$500,000 after a run of vendor bids.

The major lots (carrying estimates \$100K and over) had the toughest time of it; with 58% still in vendors' hands at the close of the night. Falling within the first thirty on the books, the seven biggest unsolds instilled a pall over the room, which wasn't countered by the sales in this category, which were mostly made at or below the low-end estimate (and with only one among them sold to the room).

Successful lots from this cache included Ralph Balson's *Constructive Painting*, 1955 (Lot 1 🍷), which made \$90,000 (est. \$100-150K) and Charles Blackman's *Playground*, 1962 (Lot 3 🍷), which also fell short of its \$100K low end, selling at \$95,000. And while Jeffrey Smart's *Entrance to the Autostrada*, 1966-7 (Lot 6 🍷) achieved its mark of \$250,000 without fanfare, Eugene Von Guerard's *Ravine near Glenlyon, Upper Loddon*, 1870 (Lot 30 🍷) was contested to its upper end of \$200,000.

In the \$50-99K range there were few surprises, and surprisingly few lots (4), with all works selling. The top three of four were Ian Fairweather's interesting psychoanalytical narrative, *Self Portrait*, c. 1950 (Lot 8 🍷), which made its low-end of \$60,000, while *Summer Day, Beaumaris*, c. 1933 (Lot 17 🍷) by Clarice Beckett came close, realising \$48,000. And a more typical self-portrait by Albert Tucker from 1940 (Lot 19 🍷), sold to the telephone for \$65,000 against expectations of \$60-90K.

In the chunk of works with low-end estimates in the \$20-49K range, most sold within their stated range; a few attracted strong competition, driving results above their high end: *Emu*, 1960, by Clifton Pugh (Lot 57 🍷) made \$28,000 (est. \$20-25K), while yet another fresh *Sunbaker* by Max Dupain, signed and dated 1937 (Lot 65 🍷), made \$42,000 (est. \$30-40K).

Overall, the category clearances were much better than was reflected by the atmosphere, with contemporary and traditional works clearing 80%, and the staple (and usually stable) moderns, which comprised the biggest dollar core, at 73%.

The auction had its usual tactically-interruptive call-outs from usual suspects in the back rows, as well as a few surprise shrieks and loud interjections from an apparently afflicted audience member who seemed to think that everything was being sold cheaply, despite never having attended an auction before. The greatest appetite on show, however, came from people chasing rarities and conservatively priced fresh-to-the-market treats, which were spread across all categories, and all estimated under \$50,000; the majority under \$10K. Unsurprisingly, this component proffered the best performing lots.

The most beautiful among them, and one of the best performers, was Frank Hinder's Modernist *Painting*, 1949 (Lot 16 🍷), which deservedly made \$55,000 against its promise of \$25-35K; the result catapulting to number two position in the artist's oeuvre at auction (number one by scale).

From amongst the small selection of other early 20th century works, Roland Wakelin's *The Fruit Seller, Martin Place* (Lot 72 🍷) vaulted 20% over its high end to make \$18,000, while Peter Purves Smith's *Botanic Gardens*, c. 1949 (Lot 106 🍷) doubled its low-end to sell at \$16,000, and the relatively recently executed study by Jeffrey Smart, *Study for 'New York (View from the Artists' Window)'*, 2004 (Lot 51 🍷), was fought-over in the room to reach \$20,000 against a teasing estimate of \$7,000-9,000.

On the other end of the sale's chronological spectrum, George Carter's (attributed) rare and dramatic *Death of Captain James Cook*, c. 1781-84 (Lot 27 🍷), was fast bid to \$100,000, doubling its mid estimate, and setting a likely unreachable benchmark for the artist at auction.

Haughton Forrest's *To the Rescue* (Lot 127 🍷) saw solid bidding against its estimate of \$10-15K, achieving \$25,000, as did Charles Bryant's *Camouflaged Hospital Ship, Le Havre*, 1918 (Lot 128 🍷), which sold to the internet for \$8,500 (est. \$3-5K), while Julian Rossi Ashton's excellent exercise in finishing-point perspective, *Shipping on the Yarra, Early Morning*, c. 1880 (Lot 125 🍷), made \$9,000 (est. \$4-6K). And John Peter Russell's watery watercolour *Bois de Bologne, Paris*, 1905 (Lot 114 🍷), easily eclipsed its estimate of \$6-8,000, with the hammer falling at \$13K; no surprise there, given the rave reviews of his current Art Gallery of New South Wales retrospective.

An attractive countryside picture, *Near Rokeby House* (Lot 120 🍷), by Mabel Hookey doubled its low-end to make \$8,000, claiming a new top result for this 'dug up'[i] female artist, whereas old boy Rupert Bunny's *Spring Landscape, South of France* (Lot 115 🍷) made the same against an estimate of \$3-5K.

Mid-century moderns proved their resilience and popularity, with Sydney Ball's *Samara Turn*, 1968 (Lot 58 🍷)

making \$22,000 against a modest estimate of \$10-15K. Leonard French's *Footscray Brickworks*, 1951 (Lot 111 🎯) dashed to \$12,000 (est. \$3-5K), while Jon Molvig's Kelly-like *Adam and Eve*, 1962 (Lot 131 🎯), attracted very busy bidding to achieve \$12,000, double its low-end.

The recent passing of Charles Blackman made no notable difference to competition for his work, other than a very strong drawing of Barbara Blackman from c. 1967 (Lot 137 🎯), which was hotly contested to \$5,500 against a paltry estimate of \$1-1,500.

The contemporary core followed suit, with Ben Quilty's *Skull Rorschach #2*, 2008 (Lot 43 🎯) making \$24,000 (est. \$15-20K), and competition for Peter Booth's *Drawing (Figure in Water)*, 1996 (Lot 94 🎯) saw it reach \$4,600 (est. \$1.5-2.5K).

Cressida Campbell's *Wharfs (Woolloomooloo)*, 1984 (Lot 35 🎯) was chased to \$73,000, almost double its low-end, claiming a spot in the artist's top-ten. The artist is so hot at the moment<sup>[ii]</sup> that another work, last traded in September 2017, managed to increase its hammer result by nearly 50%. *Cacti Garden*, 1985 (Lot 81 🎯) sold for a hammer price of \$19,000, having cost the buyer \$15,600 including premium (\$13,000 hammer) at Sydney's Davidson Auctions less than a year ago.

And on a welcome note, works by Indigenous artists, and artefacts by once-known artists, fared well, with an 83% success rate. Best performing was Eubena Nampitjin's *Widji Rockhole*, 1995 (Lot 87 🎯), which almost doubled its high-end estimate to settle at \$11,000, and Bill Whiskey Tjapaltjarri's (Lot 42 🎯) which made \$47,000 (est. \$30-40K).

Other top lots from this crop included an Emily Kame Kngwarreye *Yam Awelye* with a mesmerising blue/black surface (Lot 39 🎯), which sold just under its low-end at \$45,000, and a 1990 Rover Thomas, *Small Creek Near Turkey Creek* (Lot 40 🎯), which achieved close to mid-estimate at \$38,000. And later in the sale, a small work from a popular and hard-to-get early series by Daniel Boyd, *Yo Ho Ho*, 2007 (Lot 92 🎯) made \$8,000 (est. \$6-9K).

The sale featured *International Art* prominently in its title, despite only having five lots in that category (unless you include works painted overseas by Australian ex-pats and works painted by immigrants). A drawing by Henry Moore failed to sell at \$20-30K, as did a Picasso etching of his famous dealer Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler at \$8-12K.

Picasso's incised and hand-painted ceramic *Yan Barbu*, 1963 (Lot 101 🎯) fared better, selling for its high-end of \$6,500, while an unremarkable, but rare-to-Australia gouache and charcoal on paper by Sonia Delaunay, *Abstraction aux Cercles*, c. 1960s (Lot 98 🎯) made its low-end of \$6,000. This was nearly double its recent June outing at McKenzies Auctioneers, Perth, but caused consternation for the aforementioned afflicted patron, who was overheard remonstrating that "you can't even buy a modern-day bicycle for that!"

Indeed. Pity she (and a few more of the chattering classes) didn't put up their hands instead. In the end, the sale cleared 71% by value and 81% by number for a respectable total of \$3.913 million, leaving Deutscher and Hackett in third place behind Sotheby's Australia and Menzies at the start of the race for the rest of the year.

Major Unsold Lots on the night (estimated \$100,000 and over)

Lot 4 – Sidney Nolan, *The Questioning (Kelly Series)*, 1954, est. \$200-300,000

Lot 7 – Jeffrey Smart, *The Lighthouse, Fuimicino*, 1968-9, est. \$250-350,000

Lot 21 – Ian Fairweather, *China Tea*, 1963, est. \$200-280,000

Lot 22 – John Brack, *Up in the Air*, 1973, est. \$250-350,000

Lot 24 – Lloyd Rees, *Song to Creation - Sky- 69*, est. \$160-200,000

Lot 26 – Brett Whiteley, *Nude and Necklace*, 1978, est. \$180-240,000

Lot 28 – Alexander Schramm, *Bush Visitors*, 1859, est. \$300-500,000

[i] Terry Ingram, 'Bin dispersals help refresh art market', AASD, 27 August 2018, <https://www.aasd.com.au/index.cfm/news/769-bin-dispersals-help-refresh-art-market/>

[ii] David Hulme & Brigitte Banziger, 'Hot or Not? at Sotheby's on a Chilly Sydney Winter Night', AASD, 29 August

2018, <https://www.aasd.com.au/index.cfm/news/770-hot-or-not-at-sothebys-on-a-chilly-sydney-winter-night/>

Sale Referenced: Important Australian & International Art, Deutscher and Hackett , Sydney, 29/08/2018

#### **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](http://www.artifacts.net.au).

---

The Australian Art Sales Digest is published by John Furphy Pty. Ltd., Melbourne, Australia.

[User Info](#) [Links](#) [Contact Us](#)