

Deutscher and Hackett's sale of Contemporary Indigenous Photography from the Corrigan Collection breaks new ground and leaves a legacy for a new generation of collectors in this exciting field.

By Jane Raffan, on 02-Dec-2020

Patrick Corrigan AM is a renowned philanthropist and collector/patron. Drawn from his prestigious collection of Indigenous photography, Deutscher and Hackett's online select sale of *Contemporary Indigenous Photography from the Corrigan Collection* provided a unique opportunity to acquire forty works in this specialist field carrying notable provenance.

At its recent peak, The Corrigan Collection of Indigenous Photography (The Collection) comprised over one hundred images by eighteen pre-eminent exponents of Indigenous photography and multi-media practice working from the 1980s through to today; a comprehensive catalogue of acclaimed artists with many of their most celebrated representative works.



Drawn from collector/patron/philanthropist Patrick Corrigan's prestigious collections, Deutscher and Hackett's online sale of select works: Contemporary Indigenous Photography from the Corrigan Collection, broke new ground for many artists, such as Mervyn Bishop, whose iconic image of Prime Minister Whitlam and elder Vincent Lingiari (Lot 39) sold for \$19,000. Now a new generation of collectors are carrying the Corrigan imprimatur on an array of signature works by leading artists in this exciting field.

As a testament to the stature of Indigenous photography today, and The Collection's representative status in this field, a large core (44 works) was showcased in *Over the Fence: Contemporary Indigenous Photography from the Corrigan Collection*, at the University of Queensland Art Museum (Brisbane, 2016).

Notably, nearly all works in The Collection were on long-term loan to the prestigious University of Technology, Sydney, and Monash University, Melbourne, where they were on public display and also formed part of faculty teaching resources. This is a direct result of the artists' significance in the fields of post-colonialism and Indigenous studies, contemporary art, photography and film studies, and it is precisely this capacity to straddle such broad critical discourse that underpinned The Collection's importance.

Significantly, The Collection featured over fifty critically lauded works – many of which in complete series – by avant-garde practitioners Tracey Moffatt and Michael Riley, who both burst onto the contemporary art scene in the mid-to-late 1980s, and paved the way for today's growing field of highly collectable and in-demand artists, including Tony Albert, Christian Thompson, Vernon Ah Kee and Brook Andrew, all of whom were represented in The Collection.

The Collection also featured several acclaimed iconic images and series in the artists' respective oeuvres: Tracey Moffatt's *Something More #1* and *Up in the Sky* series, Michael Riley's *Cloud* and *Sacrifice* series, and Brook Andrew's bold breakthrough work from 1996, *Sexy and Dangerous*, which resonates with Tracey Moffatt's vintage *Beauties* from 1994.

Major works from The Collection by Tony Albert, Michael Riley and Tracey Moffatt have now entered another prominent and as yet undisclosed international collection.

Following the successful sale of black and white photography from the Corrigan collection's non-Indigenous photography core in June[1], Deutscher and Hackett was given the privilege of handling the balance from the Corrigan collection of contemporary Indigenous photography.

The Deutscher and Hackett sale of *Contemporary Indigenous Photography from the Corrigan Collection* (The Sale) cleared 70% in the online format. More importantly, it established new top prices for several artists, as well as for individual prints from their oeuvre, and increased the depth of representation at auction for many others.

Brook Andrew's *Sexy and Dangerous*, 1996 (Lot 1 🍷) – a smaller inkjet on paper editioned version of his large Duraclear film image mounted on acrylic – drew extended bidding to sell just under its \$20K low-end for \$18,000, setting a benchmark for this image in this medium.

The Sale's two images by Christian Thompson – both new entries in the artist's representation at auction – sold within estimate for \$9,000 each: *Untitled #4 (Yellow Kangaroo Paw)* (Lot 5 🍷) and (Lot 6 🍷) *Invaded Dreams*, 2012.

Tracey Moffatt's *Something More #8*, 1989 (Lot 9 🍷) – the second most coveted image in her most famous series – was the top lot, selling for \$65,000, a significant jump from its last best price in 2018 of \$39K. Her *Something More #1* came in second at \$60,000.

The Sale featured a solid core from the second wave of ground-breaking Indigenous photographers, such as Brenda Croft, Destiny Deacon (who coined the term 'Blak'), and Fiona Foley, all of whom built on Moffatt's and Riley's early success with dynamic, varied and academically acclaimed oeuvres in the 1990s through 2000s.

Deacon's work was showcased this year in a retrospective at the National Gallery of Victoria. Her early work is rare to come by, and critically acclaimed for its radical translations of hegemonic cultural norms from a Blak perspective. From among this core, *Peach Blossom's Revenge*, 1995 (Lot 37 🍷) – easily pictured hanging on Quentin Tarantino's walls – made \$1,500, while *Koori Gothic – Waiting for Brad*, 1995 (Lot 15 🍷), was bought mid-estimate for \$4,500. From among the artist's more familiar doll images, *Over the Fence*, 2000 (Lot 13 🍷) set a new record for her oeuvre at \$16,000 (est. \$4-6K).

Over the last thirty years, a greatly expanded field of appreciation for/collection of Indigenous photography forged a new trajectory in contemporary art and created a new critical paradigm for engaging with artists developing multi-media practices, such as the montage work of Leah King Smith and Darren Siwes, the performative art of Richard Bell, and more recently the clever work of Michael Cook, Bindi Cole, and the painterly digital images of Niki Cumpston.

Michael Cook's work proved highly sought-after, with *Civilised #13*, 2012 (Lot 3 🍷) running off to \$26,000 against its estimate of \$8-12K, and *Majority Rule*, 2014 (Lot 4 🍷) making \$16,000 (\$6-8K).

Emphasising the museum-quality importance and rarity of certain prints in The Collection, many featured in national touring solo survey and retrospective exhibitions produced by major public institutions and regional galleries, as well as national and international themed exhibitions (refer end notes).

The majority of The Collection's individual images have, in fact, featured in a multitude of important public institution exhibitions, with other examples drawn from their own collections or from other lenders. The same applies to acquisitions; most, if not images from The Collection are held by prominent public institutions.

One such image is the now iconic 1975 documentary photograph by Mervyn Bishop of Prime Minister Gough Whitlam ceremonially handing back land to elder Vincent Lingiari (Lot 39 🍷), which sold for \$19,000 (est. \$4-6K), establishing an important new benchmark for the photographer's work at auction.

The Corrigan Collection of Indigenous Photography was augmented through a special and long-held personal connection to several of the artists, from whom many of the works were sourced directly (and resulting in signed and vintage prints). This pattern grew from a decision made by Patrick Corrigan in the 1990s to only acquire works by living artists; to enjoy the support he was able to provide as well as the works themselves. And now this imprimatur has been handed on through Deutscher and Hackett to a whole new set of lucky collectors who, in total, exceeded the pre-sale low-end (\$221K) to offer up \$308,000 (excluding buyer premium) in support of this exciting work.

Select works from the sale of *Contemporary Indigenous Photography from the Corrigan Collection* have featured in the following:

Solo Surveys and Retrospective Exhibitions

- *Fiona Foley: Forbidden*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, and University of Queensland Art Museum (Brisbane, 2009/2010) – (7 works)
- *Tracey Moffatt*, Lismore Regional Gallery (Lismore, NSW, 2009) – (9 works)
- *MICHAEL RILEY sights unseen*, National Gallery of Australia (Canberra, 2006) – (5 works)
- *Tracey Moffatt*, Asialink (University of Melbourne) and Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane (Asia Pacific Triennial and toured to Seoul, South Korea, and Kyongju, Taipei, 1999-2001) – (3 works)

Themed Exhibitions

- *(In)visible: the First Peoples and War*, Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery (Lake Macquarie, New South Wales, 2015) — Tony Albert (3 works)
- *Half Light: Portraits from Black Australia*, Art Gallery of NSW (Sydney, 2008-2009) — Michael Riley (1 work)
- *Reveries: Photography and Mortality*, National Portrait Gallery (Canberra, 2007, and toured University Art Museum, University of Queensland, Brisbane and Mornington Peninsula Gallery, Victoria) — Michael Riley (5 works)
- *Contemporary Aboriginal Art 1990-From Australia*, Third Eye Centre, Glasgow, Scotland, 1990, Swansea and Manchester, United Kingdom, 1990/1991 — Michael Riley (2 works)
- *New Worlds: Localities of Desire*, Museum of Contemporary Art (Sydney, 1994) — Tracey Moffatt (2 works)

Exhibitions of Corrigan Photography Collections

- *Over the Fence: Contemporary Indigenous Photography from the Corrigan Collection*, University of Queensland Art Museum (Brisbane, 2016) — (48 works)
- *Under My Skin: Contemporary Australian Photography from the Corrigan Collection*, Rockhampton Art Gallery, Queensland (2013) — (8 works)
- *Written with Darkness: Selected photographs from the Corrigan Collection*, University of Technology, Sydney (2004) — (1 work)
- *The Enduring Glance: 20th Century Australian Photography from the Corrigan Collection*, Bendigo Regional Art Gallery, Victoria and Gold Coast City Gallery, Queensland (2002) — (12 works)

[1] *The Pat Corrigan Collection of Australian Black and White Photography* (60 lots), total \$336,518 (incl. BP) <https://www.aasd.com.au/index.cfm/single-owner-sales/?source=200602DHM>

<https://www.deutscherandhackett.com/pat-corrigan-collection-australian-black-and-white-photography>

Sale Referenced: Contemporary Indigenous Photography from the Corrigan Collection - Online, Deutscher and Hackett , Melbourne, 01/12/2020

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.

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

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