

## **For Immediate Release**

13 April 2005

Contact: *Robert Parsons +61 (0)412 566 300 rparsons@christies.com*

*or Shaun Dennison +61 (0)410 501 857 sdennison@christies.com*

### **HOLMES à COURT COLLECTION CONSIGNS \$1 MILLION ROVER THOMAS TO CHRISTIE'S TRADITIONAL & MODERN ABORIGINAL ART AUCTION**

**Melbourne, Australia** – The Holmes à Court Collection has consigned one of the most acclaimed works by Australian Aboriginal artist Rover Thomas to Christie's auction of Traditional & Modern Aboriginal Art scheduled in Melbourne on August 30.

Jon Dwyer, Director of Paintings, Christie's Australia, said. *"Christie's is delighted by the consignment of **Lundari (Baramundi Dreaming)** to our auction in August. Such is the reputation of the artist and this work that I anticipate it could be the first Modern Aboriginal painting to achieve in excess of AUD \$1 million at auction."*

***Lundari (Baramundi Dreaming)***, painted in 1985, and acquired by the Holmes à Court Collection in 1986, has recently been on tour with the Rover Thomas retrospective exhibition *'I Want To Paint'* wherein it cemented its reputation as one of the artist's most admired paintings. It is expected to again travel internationally when it accompanies other paintings from the sale to preview exhibitions at Christie's in New York and London.

Paul Holmes à Court, CEO of the Holmes à Court family's company Heytesbury said *"The Holmes à Court Collection has held **Lundari (Baramundi Dreaming)** by Rover Thomas since 1986. It is justly regarded as one of the artist's finest paintings, a reputation further enhanced by the global acclaim it received from its participation in the recent **'I Want To Paint'** Exhibition tour of 2003-2005. The decision to part with a work of this stature is never one made lightly, but **Lundari** has been in the Collection for nearly 20 years. We felt that now was an appropriate time to create the opportunity for the painting to be acquired by a public institution or another private collector."*

Rover Thomas's painting evocatively describes a particular Aboriginal legend, or 'Dreaming'. The picture is of the Barramundi Dreaming site on Dunham River. The white mark is where the Jabiru dropped fish poison (made from freshwater mangrove) in the wrong place.

After the poison fell on to the dry ground instead of into the water, the Barramundi escaped and made the white mark on the side of the hill we see today as he squeezed

through the fish trap made by the Ngarrangkarni people. The site is called *Nanjauwarr* or Rainbow Snake, which is the name for the Country around the site. *Lundari (Barramundi Dreaming)* 1985 has a pre-sale estimate of AUD\$800,000 to \$1,200,000.

Shaun Dennison, Christie's Specialist in Aboriginal Art said '***Lundari (Barramundi Dreaming)*** is arguably the most significant Rover Thomas painting to come on to the secondary market. It is a sophisticated work yet displays an elegant roughness. Rover Thomas' mastery of spatial organisation is clearly evident; the work is extraordinarily commanding. ***Lundari*** has exceptional provenance, has been widely and internationally exhibited, and is from a seminal period of Rover Thomas's painting career. Christie's is thrilled to be given the opportunity to offer such a fine painting to the market.'

Until 2004 Christie's had traditionally not separated streams of modern and contemporary Australian art ethnographically in auctions and incorporated works by Aboriginal artists within the context of the company's seasonal auctions of Australian, International & Contemporary Art. However, the outstanding success of the September 2004 auction in Sydney, following extensive international previews in New York and Paris quickly elevated Christie's to the highest level in international auctions of Australian Aboriginal art. This reputation has been cemented by the consignment to the 2005 auction of *Lundari (Barramundi Dreaming)* by The Holmes à Court Collection and several major works from **The John W. Kluge Morven Collection** in the United States (*see separate release*). This year's auction, in Melbourne will feature paintings, artifacts and sculptures of both traditional and modern origins.

Highlights of the collection will be on view at Christie's New York, 20 Rockefeller Plaza 14-18 July; Christie's London, 85 Old Brompton Road, South Kensington 21-25 July and Christie's Sydney, 287 New South Head Road, Edgecliff 18-22 August. The entire collection will be on view at Christie's Melbourne, 1 Darling Street, South Yarra from Friday 26 August prior to auction at 6.30pm on 30 August.

###

*Images available on request*  
*Visit Christie's Website at*  
[www.christies.com](http://www.christies.com)