

## Press Release

### For Immediate Release

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## CHRISTIE'S PAINTINGS AUCTION TOPS \$7.6 MILLION IN MELBOURNE

**\$750,000 Secures 1953 Drysdale Icon 'Group Of Aborigines' For Art Gallery of NSW**

**Buoyant Market Continues as Prices Surge for Traditional, Modern and Contemporary Work**

**Melbourne, Australia** – Christie's first multi-vendor paintings sale of 2003 engendered a bidding frenzy which saw individual prices soar well above estimate and total sales in excess of \$7.6 million, significantly above pre-sale expectations in one of the strongest multi-vendor sale results ever in Australia.

Jon Dwyer, Christie's Director of Paintings said *"A thrilling start to the new season of auctions and indicative that the market for works of quality is maintaining it's vigor following Christie's success with the Bladin Collection in April. It was particularly pleasing to see strong prices for the Dusseldorp paintings subsequent to the sale of the top lot, Drysdale's 'Group of Aborigines' to the Art Gallery of New South Wales. Many new records individual artists' record prices were set, including some outstanding results for sales of British and European artists in an Australian auction. This sale lays testimony to the underlying strength, stability and genuine confidence in the Australian art market."*

The total of the first evening's offering (105 lots) was \$7.1 million and the second session, strongly supported by investors interested in securing works of quality by emerging artists, and paintings at more accessible price points by established names, saw another half a million dollars exchanged for fine art.

Support was strong in all genres of collecting with some exciting new price points established for contemporary artists who are only recent additions to auction catalogues. The resurgence in interest in traditional paintings, evidenced in Christie's recent sale of the Bladin Collection, continued and competition between private, trade and institutional buyers for works by well-established artists was very strong.

Seven paintings sold for in excess of \$200,000 and fourteen more realised prices between \$100,000 and \$200,000. Major individual prices achieved were:

**Sir Russell Drysdale's** *"Group of Aborigines"* (1953), from the Dusseldorp Collection, was sold to the Art Gallery of New South Wales for \$750,000 and has been described by its Director, Edmund Capon as *'one of Drysdale's most powerful images'*.

An equally powerful set of twelve watercolour and gouache images, painted by **George French Angas** (1822-86) in 1844 & 45, of aborigines from the Coorong area of South Australia sold for a record price for the artist when purchased for \$298,125 by an anonymous private collector.

An early work by **Brett Whiteley** "*Untitled Painting*" (1961), consigned by his mother Beryl, sold for \$214,650 whilst the catalogue cover lot, "*Queen of Hearts*" by **Ian Fairweather** sold for \$193,185.

At the other end of the chronological spectrum, a new record price was set for a work by recently emergent contemporary artist **John Kelly** when a painted bronze sculpture, "*Three Cows Stacked*", which was created in 2001, sold for \$155,100.

Two paintings by **Arthur Streeton** featured prominently, a Venice cityscape "*Santa Maria della Salute [Sunny]*" (1908) selling for \$250,425 and a Heidelberg view "*Shall we gather at the River*" (1938) changing hands for \$208,688.

Other artists whose works sold for in excess of \$200,000 were **Rupert Bunny**, **Lloyd Rees** and **Frederick McCubbin**.

More information about Christie's sale of Australian, International & Contemporary Art on 6 & 7 May can be found on [www.christies.com](http://www.christies.com). All lots from the sale can be viewed online along with full catalogue descriptions on Lotfinder®, which also allows clients to leave absentee bids. [www.christies.com](http://www.christies.com) provides information on more than 80 sale categories, buying and selling at auction, complete auction results, and Christie's international auction calendar.