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# Pivotal Paintings from Brett Whiteley's Career Emerge for Auction

IMPORTANT AUSTRALIAN ART | IMPORTANT AUSTRALIAN ART FROM THE J.G.L. COLLECTION | AUCTION IN SYDNEY 16 MAY 2018

Six major paintings by Brett Whiteley will be auctioned by Sotheby's Australia on 16 May 2018 with combined estimate of \$2.9 million to \$3.6 million

Historically significant and lost to historians and scholars for decades *Around Bathurst* 1959 and *Requite* 1967 reproduced for the first time

*The Meeting* 1981 formerly in the collection of Bob Ansett, Melbourne

Acquired directly from the artist *Moreton Bay Fig, Botanic Gardens* (1984) debuts for exhibition



BRETT WHITELEY 1939-1992 *Moreton Bay Fig, Botanic Gardens* (1984). Estimate \$900,000-1,100,000 © Wendy Whiteley

Masterpieces by celebrated Australian artist Brett Whiteley will be offered for auction by Sotheby's Australia on Wednesday 16 May in Sydney. Tightly held in distinguished private and corporate collections, many have remained hidden from public view since they were first acquired either directly from the artist or from exhibitions. With a combined estimate of \$2.9 million to \$3.6 million the works are anticipated to generate strong interest with collectors.

A major rediscovery in the artist's oeuvre is *Around Bathurst* 1959; its whereabouts had eluded scholars for several decades. Forming the centrepiece of the artist's winning entry for the Italian Government Travelling Art Scholarship in 1959, the painting is a commanding and confident pictorial statement that fuses figurative references to the Australian landscape with bold abstract forms and diverse textural qualities that enliven the surface (estimate \$150,000-250,000, lot 102, pictured).

*Bathroom and Figure* 1963 (estimate \$350,000-450,000, lot 23, pictured) is one of the earliest paintings in an extended sequence of charcoals and oils in the highly acclaimed *Bathroom Series* depicting the artist's wife, Wendy, bathing, and merged abstract and figurative forms. When initially exhibited, the series caused a sensation and *Woman in a Bath 2* 1963 was promptly acquired by the Tate, London. Sotheby's Australia sold *Woman in a Bath 1* 1963 for \$976,000 in May 2013 (estimate \$200,000-300,000) to an international collector.

*Requite* 1967 (estimate \$300,000-400,000, lot 108, pictured), a highly graphic, violent and nightmarish composition is Whiteley's major anti-war statement replete with his desperate plea for peace. Dedicated to his mentor and friend, Francis Bacon, its whereabouts has been unknown to historians and scholars since the 1970s and Sotheby's Australia has reproduced the painting for the first time.



BRETT WHITELEY 1939-1992, *Around Bathurst* (1959). Estimate \$150,000-250,000. © Wendy Whiteley



BRETT WHITELEY 1939-1992, *Bathroom and Figure* 1963. Estimate \$350,000-450,000. © Wendy Whiteley



BRETT WHITELEY 1939-1992, *Requite* 1967. Estimate \$300,000-400,000. © Wendy Whiteley

Formerly in the collection of the prominent businessman Bob Ansett, *The Meeting* (1981) (estimate \$1,200,000-1,400,000, lot 36, pictured) is an exemplary work by the artist where he extracts from the harsh dry environment a strange, tough beauty, peculiarly Australian, with crystalline poetry of scattered boulders and dead tree-trunks, high horizons, of deep blue skies and white trailing clouds.

A major example of Whiteley's Harbour-side series, *Moreton Bay Fig, Botanic Gardens* (1984) (estimate \$900,000-1,100,000, lot 7, pictured first page) has remained hidden from public view since it was acquired directly from the artist. The painting is one of the artist's most arresting, striking and intimate works of his beloved Sydney.

Geoffrey Smith, Chairman of Sotheby's Australia commented: 'Sotheby's Australia is thrilled to have six masterpieces by Brett Whiteley in our forthcoming sales of *Important Australian & New Zealand Art* and *Important Australian Art from The J.G.L. Collection*. Many of these works have remained hidden or eluded art historians and curators for many years. The works exemplify Whiteley's skill as an artist, from abstraction through to landscape artist. We anticipate great excitement from collectors in Australia and internationally.'

Brett Whiteley remains one of Australia's most collectable artists, and has been the subject of a recent biography and film. Strong demand for works by the artist continues with Sotheby's Australia selling 17 works of art by Whiteley in 2017, all exceeding their lower estimates and 5 achieving in excess of \$500,000.



BRETT WHITELEY 1939-1992, *The Meeting* 1981.  
Estimate \$1,200,000-1,400,000. © Wendy Whiteley

## AT A GLANCE

Important Australian & New Zealand Art | Important Australian Art from The J.G.L. Collection  
Auction in Sydney, 16 May 2018, 6.30 pm  
InterContinental Sydney, 117 Macquarie Street, Sydney  
Estimate \$10,732,000-14,277,000 | 137 lots

Exhibition in Melbourne 4-6 May, 1 Spring Street, Melbourne & 41 Exhibition Street, Melbourne  
Exhibition in Sydney 10-16 May, 30 & 34 Queen Street, Woollahra

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