AUSTRALIAN ART collector

AUSTRALIA'S 50 Most Collectable ARTISTS

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Paddy Bedford (Nyunkuny)

Born on Bedford Downs Station in the East Kimberley, Paddy Bedford's early life was spent working as a stockman for tea, flour and tobacco stations on the old Greenvale and Bow River Stations. He later returned to work at Bedford Downs and eventually settled with his family at Turkey Creek. From the language group Kia (or Gija), Bedford has the skin name Jawalyi and has painted ceremonially all his life. He only began painting on canvas in 1997 after the Jirrawun art cooperative was formed, but his technical skill and conceptual sophistication were immediately apparent. His work continues to attract the attention of both critics and collectors.

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"While relatively new to the art market, Bedford exhibits an authority and confidence not seen since Rover Thomas," says Aboriginal art specialist at Phillips Auctioneers, Jane Raffan. With his dealer showing selling out, not a lot of material is coming onto the market but works are starting to appear at auction. Phillips offered four works at their June 2000 sale including the artist's current soloshow benchmark, Twenty Mile, which sold for $11,500. Raffan says Bedford's price range of $7,000-$10,000 for a typical work is "a very strong showing for an entry level artist."

collections AGNSW, Macquarie Bank, Sydney, several private and corporate collections

born c.1922
price range paintings $7,000-10,000
dealers Jirrawun Aboriginal Art Corporation, Martin Browne Fine Art, Sydney, William Mora Galleries, Melbourne
secondary market Chapman Gallery, Framed - The Dawn Gallery

John Brack

Since his death in 1999 John Brack's stature as one of this country's most important exponents of figurative modernism has only grown. Following service in World War II, Brack returned to full-time study at the National Gallery of Victoria School, where he would eventually head the painting department from 1952 until 1966. The influence on his students -- the caustic humour, the mastery of line and composition, and the bravura use of colour -- is manifest. Brack's meticulous technique realised a select, if mesmeric, output -- estimated at only 350 paintings and a similar number of prints and drawings. From that output can be culled a select group of images which have entered the national psyche including his most famous work, Collins Street at 8pm (1953). Auctioneer Chris Deutscher believes Brack is "one of the few Australian artists who is clearly of international standard."

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The subject of no less than five major retrospectives — the last opening at the NGA just after his death — Brack enjoyed a significant academic and critical following throughout his career. However he remained in the popular shadow of his modernist contemporaries and under-appreciated in the market place until very late in his life. Christie's sale of The Bathroom in 1997 for $497,000 (still his solo show record) marks the moment of his rejuvenation. Christie's landmark Merz sale in June 2000, where his Self Portrait (1955) brought $442,500 including buyer's premium, confirmed that Brack's works are now in greater demand than ever — and, due to his small output, are just as hard to come by. A major travelling exhibition concluding at the Queensland Art Gallery in May has only broadened Bracks appeal.

collections AGNSW, AGSA, AGWA, MAGNT, NGA, NYS, OAIC, TMAG, and numerous regional, tertiary, corporate and private collections

1920-1999
price range paintings up to $500,000; drawings $20,000-$60,000; prints $1,000-$5,000
secondary market Australian Galleries, Chapman Gallery, Christopher Day Gallery, Eva Brauer Art Dealer, Gould Galleries, Lauraine Diggle Fine Art, Listor Calder Gallery, Niagara Galleries, Rex Irwin Art Dealer, Savill Galleries

Paddy Bedford, Emptied 2000. Ochres on canvas, 120x122 cm. COURTESY WILLIAM MORA GALLERIES