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Brett Whiteley's Multi-Million Dollar Sydney Harbour View to Lead Sotheby's Australia's August Auction

The most important Sydney Harbour painting by the artist to appear at auction since *The Jacaranda Tree* sold for just under \$2 million in 1999

Painted in 1978, the year Whiteley won the trifecta of the Art Gallery of New South Wales painting prizes – the Archibald, Sulman and Wynne – the only artist ever to do so

To be unveiled in public for the first time in four decades since acquired from Whiteley's 1978 solo exhibition



BRETT WHITELEY 1939-1992, *Harbour (Grey Day)* (1978). Estimate \$2,000,000-3,000,000. © Wendy Whiteley

Geoffrey Smith, Chairman of Sotheby's Australia commented: '*Harbour (Grey Day)* (1978) comes to auction having remained unseen in public for 40 years. The painting beautifully articulates aspects of the Asian aesthetic that appealed so greatly to Whiteley. Here each element of the composition – palm trees, boats, promontories, buildings, Sydney Harbour Bridge, Sydney Opera House, wharves, bays, together with the great expanse of Sydney Harbour, are applied in a deliberate kind of a calligraphic gesture against a simple, flat, empty background. The painting is a literate, sensual, elegant, and quietly joyous celebration of the good art and the good life; the composition is a quiet exhalation that elevates the soul. Sotheby's Australia is honoured to offer this rare masterpiece in our August sale of *Important Australian Art* and we anticipate great excitement from collectors in Australia and internationally.'



Brett Whiteley and Stuart Purves AM stand in front of *Harbour (Grey Day)* 1978 at the artist's solo exhibition at Australian Galleries, Melbourne, July 1978. Image courtesy of Australian Galleries Archive, Melbourne

The most important Sydney Harbour painting by Brett Whiteley to appear at auction since 1999, *Harbour (Grey Day)* (1978) (estimate \$2,000,000-3,000,000) was painted the same year Whiteley became the first and only artist to win the trifecta of the Art Gallery of New South Wales' prestigious painting prizes: the Archibald (portraiture), the Wynne (landscape) and the Sulman (subject/genre). The painting was exhibited for only two weeks in July 1978 at Australian Galleries, Melbourne, before entering a Melbourne private collection, where it has remained for 40 years. Appearing at auction for the first time, *Harbour (Grey Day)* will lead Sotheby's Australia's *Important Australian Art* sale in Sydney on 28 August 2018.

There are a number of persistent, recurrent motifs and symbols in Whiteley's work. The most renowned and idolised of these are the supremely seductive and beguiling images of Sydney Harbour and its surrounding spectacular scenery. Taken from an aerial (almost avian) vantage point *Harbour (Grey Day)* looks across Sydney Harbour towards the Sydney Harbour Bridge, past the Sydney Opera House and out through Sydney Heads in the distance. The scintillating and magical atmospheric quality of an overcast day creates one of the finest and most accomplished paintings by the artist.

Represented in national and international public collections, 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 24 works of art by Whiteley over 2017 and 2018, with 6 achieving in excess of \$500,000 and 3 exceeding \$1,000,000.

AT A GLANCE

BRETT WHITELEY 1939-1992
Harbour (Grey Day) (1978)
oil on canvas, 168 x 153 cm
Estimate \$2,000,000-3,000,000

Important Australian Art
Auction in Sydney, 28 August 2018, 6.30 pm
InterContinental Sydney, 117 Macquarie Street, Sydney

Exhibition in Melbourne, 16-19 August 2018, 10 am to 5 pm, 14-16 Collins Street, Melbourne
Exhibition in Sydney, 23-28 August 2018, 10 am to 5 pm, 30 Queen Street, Woollahra

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