

A piece of Sydney Olympic history could be yours

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A culturally eloquent object from the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games will be offered in one of two interesting auctions next week.

If you think it might be Cathy Freeman's aerodynamic running suit or Thorpey's swimming cap, you're on the wrong track.

It's a *Suburbia* shirt from the Mambo clothing range, designed by **Reg Mombassa** for Australian athletes to sport at the Olympic Games Closing Ceremony.



Suburbia, 2000, by Reg Mombassa, carries a pre-sale estimate of \$500 to \$700 in Shapiro's auction of works from the Dare Jennings Collection in Sydney on September 23.

Featuring a tangle of telegraph poles, overly pruned gumtrees and red roofs baking under a scorching sun, the shirt design was right in tune with Mambo's satirical swagger.

Almost exactly the same design by Mombassa adorned the lining of ochre-coloured jackets that were originally meant to be worn by Australia's athletes in the Closing Ceremony. But when authorities heard their athletes were planning to wear the jackets inside out, they rushed to get a batch of shirts made for them to wear instead.

One of the *Suburbia* shirts is now listed as lot 2 in the catalogue of a Shapiro auction in which almost 200 objects owned by the Mambo founder Dare Jennings will be offered for sale. The shirt carries a pre-sale estimate of \$500 to \$700.

The auction is titled "Adding Insult to Imagery, Selected Treasures and Other Fine Art Souvenirs from the Dare Jennings Collection". It will be held in Sydney on September 23.



Advance Mambo (Loud Shirt Design for Australian Beer Tree), 1999, by Reg Mombassa, is a work on paper with a pre-sale estimate of \$8000 to \$12,000.

Jennings, 75, set up Mambo [<https://www.afr.com/link/follow-20180101-p5jr3e>] in 1984, and it quickly became part of the pub and surf culture scene with its farting dog mascot and characters such as Mombassa's Australian Jesus handing out beer cans and pies at the footy.

Just before the Sydney Olympics, Mombassa (aka Mental as Anything band member and now prominent visual artist **Chris O'Doherty**) was invited to create

inflatables for the Closing Ceremony.

Another part of his commission was the design for the jacket linings. *Bush Suburb*, 2000, is lot 1 in the sale and is estimated at \$10,000 to \$15,000. It's in Mombassa's usual democratic art materials of charcoal and coloured pencil on paper.

Jennings told Saleroom he could not remember how he first met O'Doherty, but thought it must have been at the Civic Hotel in Sydney's Pitt Street, which was Mambo's "spiritual home". Mental as Anything, aka The Mentals, had been playing regular gigs at the Civic since the late 1970s.

For Jennings, the brilliance of Mambo art was its conscious engagement with current events.

"At its heart lay a real political point," he said.



Bedroom at Arles, 1990, by Garry Shead. The screenprint on paper has an estimate of \$1500 to \$3000.

Mombassa is one of the best-known artists to have worked for Mambo, but others included **Peter O'Doherty** (his younger brother who is also a well established fine artist), **Paul Worstead**, **Gerry Wedd**, **Robert Moore**, **Garry Shead** (who shows through the prestigious Australian Galleries), **David McKay**, **Jeff Raglus**, **Martin Sharp**, **Nick Seymour** and **Bruce Goold**.

Works by all these artists feature in the Shapiro auction.

Garry Shead's graphic brilliance is on display in lot 10, *Bedroom at Arles*, 1990, a screenprint on paper from an edition of 50. *Bedroom at Arles* riffs on **Vincent van Gogh's** painting of his bedroom in the Yellow House in the French town of Arles – except Shead has inserted Vincent himself into the picture, lying in bed with a beautiful Japanese woman. (It's well known that van Gogh was influenced by traditional Japanese printmaking.)



Cooking Fish and Chips in Paradise (blue face, green jacket), 1976, by Paul Worstead. The screenprint on paper carries an estimate of \$600 to \$800 in Shapiro's auction.

Paul Worstead, another Mambo artist, is the talent behind a suite of screenprints in the auction, including portraits of former NSW premier Neville Wran depicted in lurid, Warholian colours and titled *Cooking Fish and Chips in Paradise*.

Worstead's Wran portraits are estimated at \$600 to \$800 each.

Based on the totals of its low and high estimates, the sale could achieve a total hammer price of \$175,950 to \$268,590.

Mambo clothing designs, posters and other artworks often attracted howls of indignation from the more conservative side of the population, and even a bomb

threat. Nothing could be further removed from Mambo's "dick and bum jokes" (as O'Doherty likes to say) than the other auction next week.

Leonard Joel's annual Women Artists auction offers 160 lots featuring flowers and homely themes. It takes place in Melbourne on September 22.

Total estimates range between \$452,000 and \$672,400.



Looking East (Sydney Harbour), 1927, by Constance Tempe Manning, carries a pre-sale estimate of \$1200 to \$1800 in Leonard Joel's Women Artists auction in Melbourne on September 22.

There are some beautiful works by well-known historical names such as **Vida Lahey**, **Constance Tempe Manning**, **Nora Heysen** [<https://www.afr.com/link/follow-20180101-p5m12z>], **Janet Cumbrae-Stewart**, **Hilda Rix Nicholas** and **Eveline Syme**.

The ethos behind this annual sale is to elevate female artists, and some of the lesser-known names that could find their light shining more brightly after the auction include **Aileen Rose Dent**, **Mary Elizabeth Maude Chomley** and **Sara Lewis**.

Lewis (1865-1926) particularly deserves attention, according to Leonard Joel head of art Wiebke Brix.

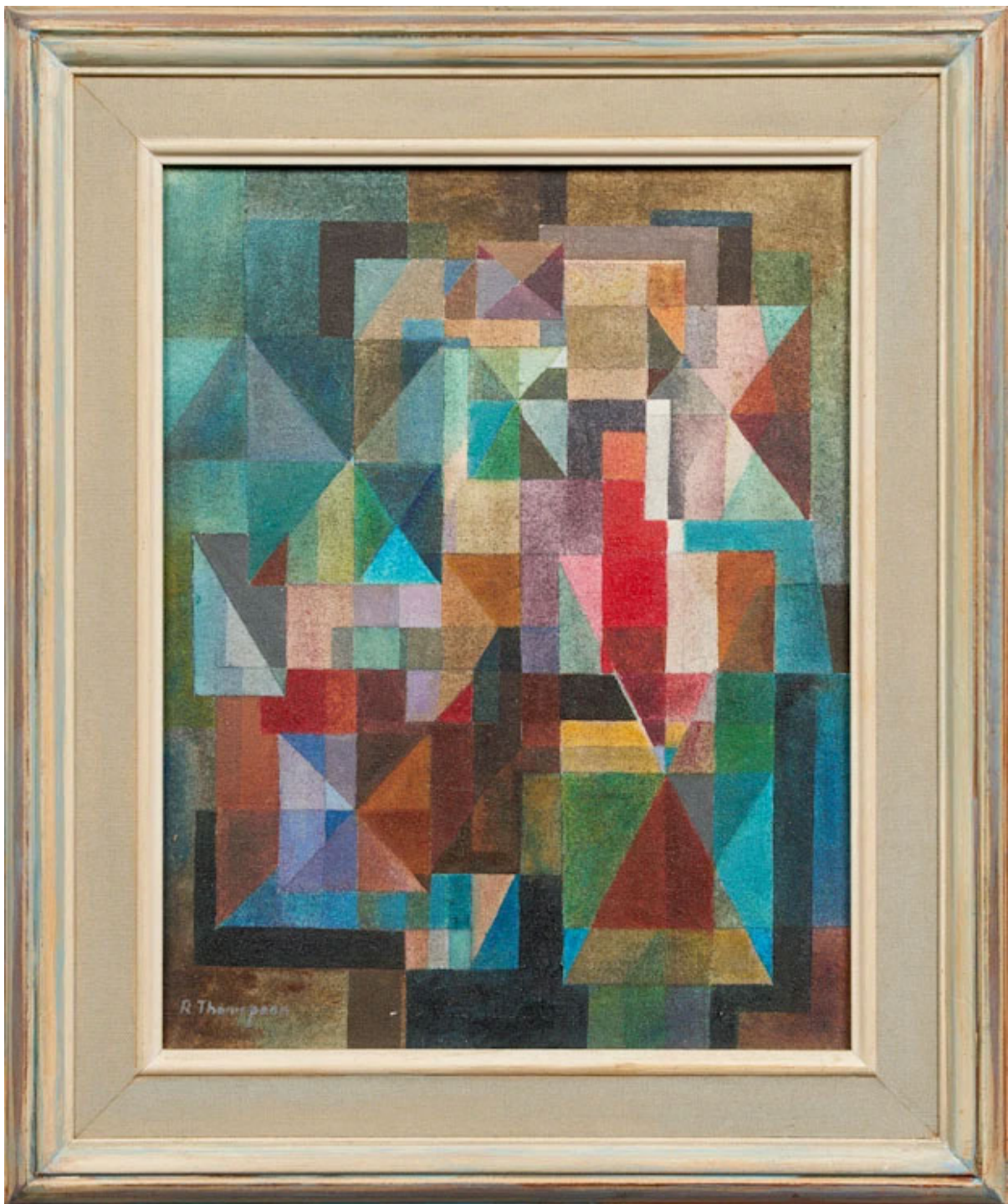
“In the 1950s, a group of paintings by the little-known artist **Sara Lewis** came to light when her family uncovered them in a pig shed on their Camperdown farm,” Brix said.



Grazing Cattle, 1895, by Sara Lewis, has a pre-sale estimate of \$900 to \$1200.

Lewis was a student of **Jan Hendrik Scheltema**, the Dutch-born Australian artist.

“Like many female artists of the period, little is recorded about Lewis in art history, yet the rediscovery of her work on the Camperdown farm brings her voice back into the conversation and reminds us how many stories are hidden,” Brix said.



Roma Thompson's *Geometric Composition I*, 1980, has a pre-sale estimate of \$800 to \$1200.

The works by Lewis in the auction are pastoral views with cattle. Both are estimated at \$900 to \$1200.

Other interesting works include *Geometric Composition I*, 1980, by **Roma Thompson** (1919-2020), who was born in the Melbourne bayside suburb of Mentone. This picture carries a pre-sale estimate of \$800 to \$1200. Thompson left school at 15 and trained at Melbourne Technical College.



Brisbane to Southbank, c.1930, by Vida Lahey, has a pre-sale estimate of \$40,000 to \$50,000.

The wonderful artist **Alison Rehfisch** (1900-1975) has one artwork in the auction. Titled *Blue and White Flowers*, c.1930, its estimate is \$4000 to \$6000.

The artistic Boyd clan is represented by **Arthur Boyd's** daughter **Lucy-Ellen Boyd** and by his grandmother **Emma Minnie Boyd**. **Celia Perceval** (daughter of **John Perceval**) has three canvases on offer.

The auction market in Australia still lags behind when it comes to female representation [<https://www.afr.com/life-and-luxury/arts-and-culture/the-unlikely-businessman-who-championed-women-artists-20230905-p5e27k>], so there is work to be done, Brix said.



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