



1
Sir William Orpen, R.A. (1878-1931) *A Seated Girl*, signed, dated 1905, pencil 30.5 x 23cm. *Sworders, Stansted Mountfitchet. Feb 07. HP: £26,000. ABP: £30,582.*



2
Paul Henry (1876-1958) *Western landscape* oil on board, signed lower right, 35.5 x 40.5cm. *Dreweatt Neate, Newbury. Feb 06. HP: £68,000. ABP: £79,985.*



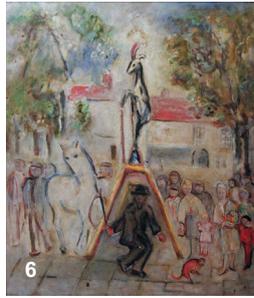
3
William Conor, *Portrait of a Young Woman*, inscribed Brigid, signed crayon, 9.5 x 7.5in, gilt frame. *Hartleys, Ilkley. Apr 08. HP: £980. ABP: £1,152.*



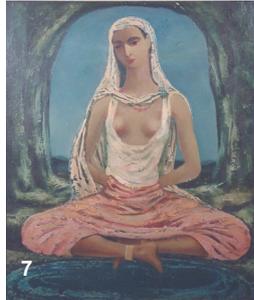
4
Nathaniel Hone, RHA (Irish, 1831-1917) *Cattle Grazing, Malahide* signed with initials lower left 'NH', oil on canvas laid down on board 33 x 55cm. *Cheffins, Cambridge. Feb 05. HP: £11,500. ABP: £13,526.*



5
Percy French (1854-1921) *Irish*, watercolour, *Extensive landscape*, signed, 15.5 x 21.25in. *Gorrings, Lewes. Apr 06. HP: £13,000. ABP: £15,291.*



6
May Guinness (1863-1955) *'Sunday Afternoon'*, inscribed on label verso, oil on hard-board, 58 x 50cm. *Sworders, Stansted Mountfitchet. Feb 07. HP: £3,500. ABP: £4,116.*



7
Daniel O'Neill (1920-1974) *Irish*, oil on board, *'The Captive'*, Signed, inscribed title verso, 23.5 x 19.5in. *Gorrings, Lewes. Apr 03. HP: £21,000. ABP: £24,701.*



8
Albert Victor Ormsby Wood (Irish 1904-1977) *Mother and Child*, pencil study, squared for transfer, 87 x 31cm. *Sworders, Stansted Mountfitchet. Sep 07. HP: £420. ABP: £494.*



9
Markey Robinson, (Irish School, 1917-1999), *'Country Road'*, oil on board, signed, 18 x 24in. *Halls Fine Art, Shrewsbury. Nov 04. HP: £5,100. ABP: £5,998.*

The Irish and Australian art market in the UK

by Chris Murray

The sub-prime fiasco, two of America's biggest mortgage lenders having to be rescued, soaring fuel prices, and even the Bank of England making gloomy predictions. The art market is of course sensitive to a nation's economic performance, but interestingly its response is not always easy to predict: a marked improvement is good news, but a decline hits different areas of the market differently. For one thing, as shares and property suffer, some investors may be keener to put their money elsewhere, and art may be a significant beneficiary. Moreover, if the art market generally is set to slow down, it's not necessarily a bad thing: it depends by how much and for how long. A 'period of readjustment' can certainly help focus minds on the two cornerstones of intelligent buying, quality and the long-term view. For those who take this approach, a slow down, even a decline, in some areas may well be a good opportunity to buy at lower prices. It's an ill wind..... We'll have to wait and see. In the meantime, the market is as fascinating as ever.

As we've begun with the art market's relationship to the economy, we can look briefly at Irish art. Irish artists have long played a significant role in the UK market. Such establishment figures like John Lavery (1856-1941) and William Orpen (1878-1931) come to mind immediately. Orpen is represented here with a stunning drawing (1). Though many twentieth century Irish artists sought to create a national school, there are no distinctively Irish schools - rather (as elsewhere) a range of individual styles. Simply being Irish was not in itself particularly significant in the market. This changed dramatically with the Irish economic boom of the 1980s and 1990s. As a keen home market developed, energetically promoted by new galleries, dealers and specialist sales in the UK as well as in Eire, prices rose sharply and across the board. This market has slowed down (as it had to), but works by Irish artists still do well, in the right sales. It is still possible to find them at good prices, as this selection shows.

Important twentieth century figures whose works can reach many thousands, include Jack Yeats (1871-1957), Sean Keating (1889-1978), Charles Lamb (1893-1965), Mary Swanzy (1882-1978), William John Leech (1881-1968), and Louis de Brocquy (1916-). There's also the Belfast-born Paul Henry (1876-1958), noted for his landscapes, his distinctive colour harmonies suggesting French influences (2).

If Henry focused on Irish landscapes, another noted Belfast artist, William Conor (1881-1968), became famous for depicting the city's working classes with a keen but compassionate and often humorous eye for detail (3). Typical of popular Irish artists are Nathaniel Hone (this example of the 'cows in a field' theme is particularly fine (4), which explains its £11,500 hammer price); and Percy French, who specialised in atmospheric 'hills reflected in water' (5).

The sense of form and the strong colours evident in May Guinness (1863-1955) also indicate French influences. As she is often seen as painter of solidly constructed still-lives, the humour and Chagall-like charm of (6) may explain what was a good result for what is really a sketch.

Daniel O'Neill (1920-1974) was a self-taught Belfast artist with a taste for romantic imagery featuring pale, slender, rather ethereal women. His works are now keenly collected, as the extraordinary hammer price of (7) shows. Another artist whose works also have an otherworldly quality, at times vaguely reminiscent of Stanley Spencer, is Albert Victor Ormsby Wood, (1904-1977) who very often used unusually narrow vertical formats (8). The contrast between these two is interesting, for Wood has not attracted attention (been as well marketed) and so his works are still very modestly priced. Perhaps the most easily recognized Irish artists is Markey Robinson. (1917-1999) His works are characterised by simple forms with flat areas of rather chalky colours boldly outlined. His depictions of whitewashed cottages and women in shawls can verge on the ironic (9).

Among successful contemporaries there's Camille Souter (1929-), who paints in several styles but is best known for her abstract works (10), which now have an established place in the market (earlier this year one of her works sold at auction in Dublin for 60,000 Euros, about £48,000). There's also Padraig MacMiadhachain (1929-) whose simplified forms tend towards the abstract



10
Camille Souter, Irish School 20thC. Untitled abstract composition, red, blue, brown and black, oil on paper, signed, inscribed 'Dublin', and dated '57, 34.5 x 23.3cm, unframed. Rosebery's, London. Sep 04. HP: £6,000. ABP: £7,057.



11
Padraig MacMiadhachain, Irish b1929- 'Lights across wet Sand', oil on board, signed, inscribed and titled on the reverse, 30.7 x 31cm. Rosebery's, London. Dec 05. HP: £480. ABP: £564.



12
Brian Ballard, (Irish b1943) Irises, oil on canvas, signed, 44 x 57cm, framed. Lots Road Auctions, Chelsea. Feb 03. HP: £3,000. ABP: £3,528.



13
Thomas Watling (fl.1801-3) Australian, unframed oil on ivory, Miniature of John White Esq, Surgeon General of New South Walesigned and dated N.S.Wales 1792, 2 x 1.5in. and a tassie type plaque of Nelson. Gorrings, Lewes. Dec 07. HP: £90,000. ABP: £105,862.



14
Arthur Boyd 'Figure in a Bushland Landscape', oil on board, bears a signature, 34 x 42in. Amersham Auction Rooms, Bucks. Feb 08. HP: £50,000. ABP: £58,812.



15
Sir Sidney Robert Nolan, Burke and Wills V, synthetic polymer paint on hardboard, 56 x 65cm. Henry Adams, Chichester. Jan 03. HP: £3,200. ABP: £3,764.

Chris Murray has selected these images, descriptions & prices from our database at www.antiques-info.co.uk which contains over 100,000 results across all categories from auction sales during the last few years.



16
William Dobell, Australian School (1899-1970), New Guinea Tribesmen, gouache, signed, 6 x 9.5in. Halls Fine Art, Shrewsbury. Apr 04. HP: £1,500. ABP: £1,764.



17
Dorrit Black (1891-1951) Australian, gouache, pencil and ink on board, Tennis, monogrammed, 15 x 15in. Gorrings, Lewes. Apr 08. HP: £2,900. ABP: £3,411.



18
Horace Ascher Brodzky (Australian, 1885-1969) Landscape, signed, oil on canvas, 41 x 51cm. Swordsers, Stansted Mountfitchet. Nov 07. HP: £2,540. ABP: £2,987.



19
Horace Brodzky, Australian/British LG 1885-1969, 'Make Up', 1919, linocut, signed with monogram within plate, 24 x 16.5cm with 3 other linocuts by same hand, 'Festa', 1919, signed with monogram and dated 19 within the plate, 24 x 18cm, 'Labourers', c1919, signed with initials within plate, 17.7 x 22cm, 'Standing Woman', signed with initials within the plate, 20 x 15cm. (4) Rosebery's, London. Mar 08. HP: £360. ABP: £423.



20
Ernest William Buckmaster, Australian 1897-1968, Sunshine & Shadow over Silvan, Victoria, oil on canvas, signed, inscribed verso, 66 x 87cm. Rosebery's, London. Apr 07. HP: £3,600. ABP: £4,234.



21
James Randolph Jackson (1882-1975) Australian oil on canvas, Marley Beach, Sidney, signed, 16 x 20in. Gorrings, Lewes. Jan 04. HP: £4,800. ABP: £5,646.



22
Sir Hans Heysen (1877-1968) Australian, watercolour, 'Evalyne Glacier, Paradise, Head of Lake Wakatipu, New Zealand, South Island', signed, 11 x 14,25in. Gorrings, Lewes. Apr 07. HP: £4,400. ABP: £5,175.

(11), and Brian Ballard (1943-), whose bright colours are bring to mind the Scottish Colourists (12). It's an area of the market well worth watching.

Australian art is also an example of the relationship between prices, economic growth and a sense of nationhood. This is dramatically illustrated by a small miniature by Thomas Watling (13). It's not the finest quality, and it's not an attractive face, though full of character. But its Australian credentials are impeccable: Watling was a convict, sent to Australia for forging banknotes, and the subject was John White, the chief surgeon for the First Fleet, which in 1786 sailed to Australia to establish a convict settlement. The estimate was £200-400. The hammer went down at £90,000. But it doesn't follow that everything Australian will fetch good prices. The first wave of nationalistic buying is long over, and the success of state-sponsored Aboriginal art has complicated the market.

Landscapes feature heavily in defining Australian identity, and among the non-Aboriginal artists who became famous for creating iconic images of the Outback are Arthur Boyd (1920-1999), Sidney Nolan (1917-1992), and William Dobell (1899-1970). The differences in price are interesting: the Boyd (14) is high but a few years ago (or in a different sale) it could have been higher. The Nolan (15) is much lower, but he was prolific and there are dozens of his works around. Dobell, though a few works have soared, usually remains at a few thousand pounds (16). Dorrit (Dorothy) Black (1891-1951) is another important artist from this generation, somewhat overshadowed by the others. (17) is unusual in being semi-abstract, which may account for the modest result. An Aussie who (unusually) is perhaps better known for his figure subjects than his landscapes, and for fine prints as well oils, is Horace Brodzky (1885-1969), who spent much of his life in the UK (18, 19) so his works are not hard to find. Typical of more traditional, well-crafted landscape artists are Ernest William Buckmaster (1877-1968), James Randolph Jackson (1882-1975), and Hans Heysen (1877-1968), all of whom command respectable prices (20, 21, 22). Among the many now neglected figures is Norman Lloyd (1897-1985). A fascinating man with a long career, he may have failed to benefit from the general success of Australian art because he lived for many years in England and then France (though he did indeed retain links with his homeland). His works are undervalued (23) - and I've seen them go for less. Not a straightforward market, but an intriguing one when viewed from the UK.

Norman Lloyd (1897-1985) Summer river landscape with figure in a rowing boat, oil on board, 12 x 16in, signed, moulded and swept frame. Canterbury Auction Galleries, Kent. Dec 03. HP: £450. ABP: £529.

