

Del Kathryn Barton's prices put her in Australia's top 10 living artists

By national arts reporter [Michaela Boland](#)

Updated yesterday at 9:24pm



PHOTO: *Satellite Fade-Out 7 (2011)* by Del Kathryn Barton sold for almost \$240,000 on April 26. (Del Kathryn Barton)

A run of record prices has made Sydney painter and filmmaker Del Kathryn Barton an art world sensation, confirming her as the nation's most sought-after female artist.

At an auction in Melbourne this week, a seven-year-old painting of a nightingale by her sold for \$280,000, a huge increase on what the original collector paid for it.

The price would have been a record — except, in mid-May a five-year-old Barton portrait, *Of Pollen*, sold at Sotheby's Australia for \$378,000.

Boland, Michael. "Del Kathryn Barton's prices put her in Australia's top 10 living artists," ABC. June 15, 2018.

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That price established a new high watermark for living women artists in Australia, a market similar to the UK and US, where male artists dominate all the top price brackets.

Deutscher and Hackett's co-owner Damian Hackett oversaw this week's sale.

He compared the excitement being generated by Barton to an emerging Brett Whiteley, whose artworks, 20 years after his death, continue to attract among the highest prices at auction in Australia.

"The first time a [Barton] painting appeared at auction was in 2008 and it had an estimate of \$8,000 to \$10,000 which was pretty much in line with her gallery prices. It achieved a result of nearly \$50,000," he said.



INFOGRAPHIC: *Of Pollen* (2013) by Del Kathryn Barton sold in May for a record \$378,000. (Source: Sotheby's Australia)

The sale of *Of Pollen* did not break a long-standing record — but it did trump a record set by yet another Barton painting just a few weeks earlier when, at Menzies Art, *Satellite Fade-Out 7* sold for \$243,000.

It was the sale of *Satellite Fade-Out 7* on April 26 which recalibrated the market for Barton's work, breaking a record held for 14 years by Tracey Moffatt's famous photograph *Something More*.

In the early 2000s, that Moffatt work was the most sought-after photograph on the buoyant Australian art market.

It created a bubble of demand that has not been replicated since.

Some art dealers are worried a similar bubble has grown around Barton's work, but two other results at the Deutscher and Hackett sale indicate collectors want only specific works of hers.

Girl 11 sold just above its reserve and a third picture, *Dawn*, depicting a man with a long beard, did not attract any bidders.

Prices put her in the same camp as Tim Storrier

The Barton boom follows a survey of her career held last summer at the National Gallery of Victoria. She recently had a commercial show in New York and has taken time away from painting to make art films.

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Highest prices for Australian living artists

NAME	TITLE OF WORK	PRICE	YEAR SOLD	GENDER
Charles Blackman	Mad Hatter's Tea Party, 1956	\$1 891 000	2017	MALE
John Olsen	Love in the Kitchen, 1969	\$1 075 500	2006	MALE
William Robinson	Landscape with Sunset and Self Portrait, 1988	\$696 000	2007	MALE
Michael Nelson Tjakamarra	Five Stories, 1984	\$687 875	2016	MALE
Garry Shead	Queen of Suburbia, 1997	\$432 000	2007	MALE
Timothy Maguire	Untitled 20020901, 2002	\$420 000	2007	MALE
Tim Storrier	The Fall (Incendiary Detritus), 2000	\$390 400	2013	MALE
Del Kathryn Barton	Of Pollen, 2013	\$378 000	2018	FEMALE

These new prices have seen Barton become the first woman to enter an elite echelon of Australia's top 10-selling living artists, which includes Charles Blackman and John Olsen.

Both men are 90 years old, double her age.

Depiction of strong women eyed by bidders

Art valuer David Hulme said collectors were beginning to see the value in women's art.

He said Barton's work "appeals to a lot of women art collectors".

"Strong women are depicted in her work [which also has] strong craftsmanship, colour, brightness. The overall appeal is very strong and we're likely to see great things in the future as well," he said.

Barton, who has won the Archibald Prize twice, was a finalist again this year in the Art Gallery of NSW (AGNSW)'s portraiture competition.

AGNSW curator Anne Ryan said "Del Kathryn Barton is very popular. Her work is beautifully decorative and I think that appeals to people on aesthetic level. She's also honest and raw in her expression."

"Her style traverses painting but also a lot of graphic design [and] illustration, so I think that broadens her audience," she said.

"Women have always been found in art school but often once they left art school the journey between men artists and women artists was often quite different.

"In more recent times as our society has caught up, women are getting more of a voice and Del Kathryn Barton is a shining light for a generation of younger artists."

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