

Bonhams set for record-smashing South African art auction

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The end of this month will see Bonhams Auction House in London host its third sale of South African art, with hopes of breaking the records set at the last two.

Bonhams is the leading seller of South African art, having already hosted two previous auctions with record-breaking results. In March this year the auction house set the record for the highest price of a South African artwork with Irma Stern's *Arab Priest* sold for £3m. Another Stern work is the star drawcard of this show as well. *Watussi Woman*, painted during Stern's inspiration-seeking travels in the Belgian Congo during the 1940s, has drawn critical acclaim and is expected to fetch £1m – £1.5m, although could potentially draw a lot more from enthusiastic collectors of South African art.

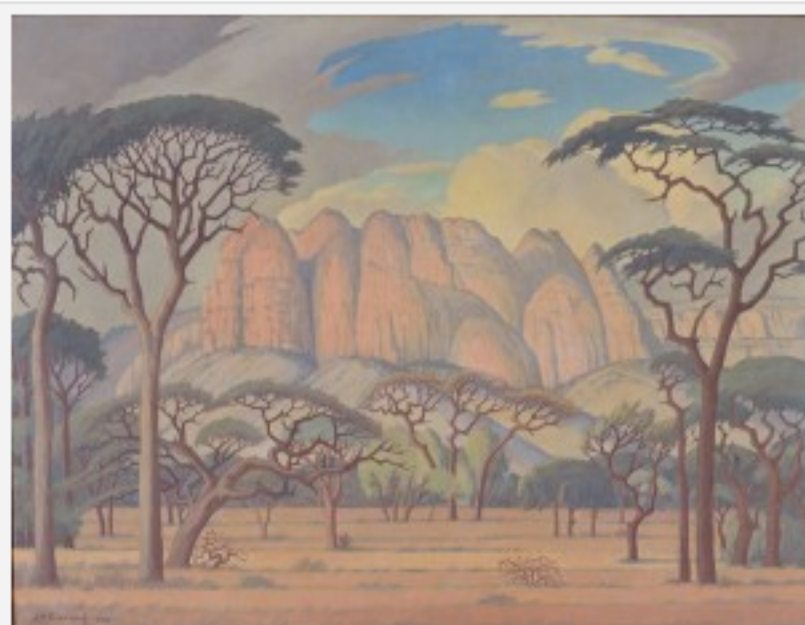
Director of South African art at Bonhams, Giles Pepiatt, said "We are honoured to be selling this masterpiece... It will doubtless attract a great deal of enthusiastic attention for South Africa's leading artist."

While it is indeed doubtless that Stern's work will garner a great deal of interest, it will be fascinating to see how buyers receive work by more marginal artists. With global interest in South African art on a steady incline, this sale could quite easily see Bonhams breaking further records.

15 works, carefully selected from the Ifa Lethu Foundation's *'Coming Home'* show will also be moved to Bonhams for the auction on 25 and 26 October, although they will not be for sale.

The Ifa Lethu Foundation is a South African non-profit organisation set up in 2005 to tackle problems in the cultural heritage sector. The Foundation concerns itself with the location, protection and repatriation of South African cultural works created during the struggle era. In the last three year it has successfully trained over 2,000 young practitioners in the arts sector, and has used art repatriated from around the globe to educate the youth of South Africa.

The *'Coming Home'* exhibition assembled by the Ifa Lethu Foundation consists of artworks that were taken out of South Africa during the apartheid period. Work by black South African artists, and work that displayed an opposition to apartheid, was generally not promoted and found very little marketing potential with people unwilling to buy it. Many of the black artists either remained in poverty or else went into exile, working in other parts of the world. Artists such as Dumile Feni, Ezrom Legae and Lucky Sibiya subsequently became famous, but the Foundation's collection will also showcase works by marginalised artists that will astonish.



Pierneef's *Kransberg near Rustenburg in the Transvaal*, is estimated to sell for between £400,000 and 600,000 at the Bonhams auction.



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