

15



OLSEN'S FIVE BELLS SELLS FOR \$258,000

The Art Gallery of NSW last night paid an auction-record price of \$258,000 for a 1963 John Olsen painting which the artist hailed as one of his four or five best works.

Art Gallery spokesman Mr Barry Pearce said *Five Bells* was "one of, if not, the Olsen masterpiece of the sixties". "We were overwhelmed by its freshness and its clarity of expression. It is an art-museum picture and a Sydney picture."

The artist's son, Sydney gallery owner Mr Tim Olsen, said *Five Bells* (detail, above) was the first major John Olsen painting to come on the market.

Inspired by the Kenneth Slessor poem, it shows Sydney Harbour in sunlight.

Ten years later Olsen painted the harbour by moonlight. That work, *Salute to Five Bells*, is hung in the Opera House.

³ page 3 SMH
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