

Fax

Please deliver immediately to: Tim Olsen

of: 6 Queen St

Fax number: 93282260

Voice number: 93286365

Fax received from: George Clarke

of: 15 Albion Ave Paddington 2021

Fax number: (61-2) 9357 3285

Voice number: (61-2) 9360 4849

Date: 12/07/99

Time: 7:41:03

Number of Pages: 3

Subject: 8 p.m. Monday 12.7.99 update of Five Bells

Message:

I have further improved, corrected and shortened the Catalogue entry.

I've emailed this 8 p.m. update to Tim Goodman and Dick Brett.

Please acknowledge, and comment.

Fax

Please deliver immediately to: Tim Goodman
of: Goodmans Auctioneers & Valuers
Fax number: 9327 2917
Voice number: 9327 7311

Fax received from: George Clarke
of: 15 Albion Ave, Paddington 2021 Australia
Fax number: (61-2) 9357 3285
Voice number: (61-2) 9360 4849

Date: 7/09/99
Time: 12:41:54
Number of Pages: 1
Subject: Overdue EF Transfer to my Account for "Five

Message:

Attention also John Shiell : The Buyer's cheque for \$255,500 was drawn and sent to you on 26 August.

The deposit in your Bank Account was cleared on 30 August, eight days ago.

Please therefore, in accord with our special contract,
and my written instruction dated 4 August, faxed and refaxed to you:-

Electronically Transfer the funds to my Account at BSB 182 222, Account 117
020 479 named the
W.G. Clarke Portfolio Account, with Macquarie Bank, Sydney Head Office.

Stephen Fennelly
Tim Mitchell
Richard Moore
ABC TV Arts
Melb.

re: Conservation of "Five Bells"
& Move to Sydney Customs
House Fri 16.7.99

SEE ATTACHED ART HISTORY
DOCUMENTATION 2PP

Move is from 28 Apsart Ave
Vaucluse to Customs House
Square, Circular Quay
Phone Steve Colburn
0416203520

Richard Moore
Stephen Fennelly
Tim Mitchell
ABC TV Arts Mello.

re Cokurn's conservation &
removal of Five Bells to
the Sydney Customs House
from which Joe Lynch
embarked on his fateful
ferry ride 60 or 70 years
ago.

re CAMERA CREW FOR FRIDAY
16.7.99 in Sydney

9am Van
10am Customs
Hse

CHANGE OF SCHEDULE

Cokurn (0416203520) says
he's ordered the TRUCK for 9a.m.
at rear 28 Alphet, Vancluse,
Customs Hse 10am, carrying in,
unpack, hang, conserve,
→ clean on wall in Customs Hse
- Cokurn will work all day.

From: george clarke <gc.kl@bigpond.com>
To: Dick Brett <fss@ozemail.com.au>
Cc: Tim Goodman <goodmans@one.net.au>
Date: Monday, 12 July 1999 11:45
Subject: FINAL AGREED TEXT OF CATALOGUE & BROCHURE FOR FIVE BELLS

George Clarke and Tim Goodman agreed at 11 p.m. Monday 12.7.99 on the FINAL AGREED TEXT of all Catalogue text material for Lot 94 *Five Bells* for both the standard Goodmans Catalogue; and also for the separate special A3 size colour brochure of which Goodmans is contracted to produce and distributed by mail 7000 copies. They agreed that, for postage, those copies to be posted can be folded to A4 size, and then to A5 size. Those copies not to be posted should not be folded to A5 size.

Goodmans agreed to advise Dick Brett that the attached Windows 98 file **FIVE BELLS FINAL 11 p.m.doc** Emailed to Dick Brett after 11 p.m. tonight, **SHALL BE THE FINAL TEXT** to be used, subject to minor formatting refinements by Dick Brett. Also agreed that Clarke is to deliver his **ARTWORK** to Brett at 10 a.m. Tuesday at 210 Glenmore Rd.

19/09/99

Broome, 9 July 1999

Saw my long hidden "Five Bells" last week...stunned to see the oil paint - colours, tones, impasto - so fresh, even better than when I finished it 36 years ago.

This was my first commission to paint in situ to cover a wall. My clients, friends, said only: "Yes! Five Bells, Sydney Harbour". This freedom, scale and scope challenged me. My psychic drive dared disaster, to try for a masterpiece. Hesitation would have shattered the dream.

I wanted to paint directly, spontaneously. I put a line around the seed-burst, the life burst, the sea harbour, the city's lung. The sea is like the earth breathing! Then I worked quickly inside and around this to express feelings of the moving spuming sea-suck, the sea creatures and seaweeds, the "waves that arched their mackerel backs and smacked the sand" and some of the other metaphors and similes of Slessor's poetry.

The poem and the painting celebrate the simultaneity of so many perspective of space and time, of friendship, of many lives lived, and "one life, of Joe, long dead, who lives between five bells".

The painting says directly what I wanted it to say: "I and you and all of us are in the sea-harbour; and the sea harbour is in each of us." So too are memories and metaphors of a dead friend, "gone from earth", but imagined to be "squeezing your face in agonies of speech on speechless panes", with "your gaunt chin and pricked eye" "long sucked away in mud" where "the sea pinks bend like lilies".

Water is so wonderful, why did our species ever leave it?

"Five Bells" shows the harbour and sea by sunlight. Ten years on, "Salute to Five Bells" in the Opera House, is by moonlight. Slessor's "deep and dissolving verticals of light" at the top of the 1963 painting, are of sunshine. The Harbour is more alive if you leave white around it as I did here, with flutters of blue in the sky.

Life is change. Each artist reinvents Sydney city and harbour. Streeton and Roberts saw foreground, middle distance and background, in particular moods at particular moments. For me, painting became intrinsically more poetic.

I paint images of feelings, not photo images. I show many views simultaneously, aerial and sectional views, and the relativity of time.

Each of us who knows the Harbour is moved by the endless magnetic power and mystery of our experiences of being on, in, over, under and around this beautiful blue "bitch goddess".

Lot No ?? The property of Mr George Clarke

John Henry Olsen (b 1928)

Five Bells Monday
8 p.m. (filename)

Five Bells

Signed and dated lower right 'John Olsen 1963'
Oil on board, 267.5 x 275.5 cm. (105 x 108 in.)

Provenance:

Commissioned 1963 by George and Eva Clarke

Exhibited:

Five Bells, The Sydney Customs House, Circular Quay, 17 to 28 July 1999.

Literature and Television Documentaries:

ABC TV Documentary *Not a job for boys* 1973, *Five Bells & Salute to Five Bells*, illus.;
John Olsen, *Salute to Five Bells*, *John Olsen's Opera House Journal*, A & R 1973; pp. 5-12;
Sandra McGrath & Robert Walker, *Sydney Harbour Paintings since 1794*, Jacaranda Press
1979; Introduction by John Olsen; & pp. 86-87 illus.;
Deborah Hart, *John Olsen*, Craftsman House 1991; pp. 77-79, 113-114 illus.;
Ben Holgate, "Olsen's seminal harbour scene comes into view" *The Australian* 6 July 1999,
p 5 illus.;
Melissa Hoyer, "Sensitive guys at art" *Sunday Telegraph* 11 July 1999, p 201 illus.;
Anabel Dean, "Water of life" *The Bulletin* 13 July 1999, p 116 illus.;
ABC TV *Arts Show Report* (in production), July 1999, illus.;
Dick Collingridge Video Documentary *John Olsen and Five Bells 1963-1999* (in production)
July 1999, (for deposit in the Australian National Film and Sound Archive).

References:

Kenneth Slessor, *Five Bells*, 1939;
Robert Hughes, "Irrational Imagery in Australian Painting" & John Olsen, "Sir Arthur
Streeton" in *ART and Australia*, November 1963;
Kenneth Slessor, "A Portrait of Sydney" & "Background of Five Bells" in *Bread and Wine*
-Selected Prose, A & R 1970;
Laurie Thomas, "Foreword" & Douglas Stewart, "Kenneth Slessor" in *Salute to Five
Bells*, *John Olsen's Opera House Journal*, 1973 op cit;
ABC TV Documentary *John Olsen - A Life*; with Peter Ross, May 1995.

John Olsen re-visited Five Bells in July 1999. He said to one of his interviewers:-

"I was stunned to see it again. I'd forgotten how good it is. I'm delighted to see it in such great shape. The oil paint is as fresh as the day I finished it, even better. I feel it's one of my four or five best paintings. It was the genesis of many of my later works.

"*Five Bells* was my first commission to paint *in situ* to cover a wall. The freedom, scale and scope of the commission challenged me to dare to try for a masterpiece. I didn't hesitate. I brushed a line around the core theme, the seed-burst, the life-burst, the sea-harbour, the source of life. Inside and around this core, I painted images drawn from metaphors and similes in Slessor's poem of our harbour-city, and from my own emotional and physical involvement with the harbour, and with my young family in Watsons Bay, my 'Milkwood' fishing village. ? I wanted to show the Harbour as a movement, a sea suck, the sound of the water as though I am part of the sea. Water is so wonderful, why did our species ever leave it

"This painting says directly what I wanted it to say: 'I am in the sea-harbour, and the sea-harbour is in me' So too is much of Slessor's poem of 'one life, of Joe, long dead, who lives between five bells'. Joe, 'long sucked away in mud', has become part of the harbour where

'the sea pinks bend like lilies'. Among the crabs, anemones, sea urchins, squid, mussels, and seaweeds of the rockpools and the harbour bottom, one can believe one sees a dead friend's *'gaunt chin and pricked eye'* *'squeezing your face in agonies of speech on speechless panes'*.

"Five Bells shows the sea harbour by sunlight. Slessor's *'deep and dissolving verticals of light'* at the top of the 1963 painting are Sydney sunshine. The white background with flutters of blue in the sky, bring the Harbour to life. Ten years later in 1973, in *Salute to Five Bells* in the Sydney Opera House, I painted an elegy of the Harbour by moonlight.

"Life is change. New generations reinvent Sydney. Streeton and Roberts saw foreground, middle distance and background, in a particular mood at a particular moment. For me, painting became intrinsically more poetic and 'all-at-once'. I paint multiple images, aerial and underwater, metaphors of emotions, not photo images. Each of us who knows the Harbour is moved by the endless magnetic power and mystery of the experience of being on, in, under, over and around this beautiful blue bitch goddess and her siren city."

Other historical documentation relevant to this painting includes:-

"Irrational imagery in Australian art really begins with Nolan... The renewed interest is largely due to John Olsen's return from Europe and the impact of his new work. Olsen presents experience as flux... his manipulation of space catches us up in a web of linear energy, along which figurative incidents occur. Gaudi's architecture has deeply influenced Olsen's art since Olsen visited Barcelona with Cornille in 1957." (Robert Hughes, 1963)

In (Streeton's) *Circular Quay*, the dancing calligraphy plunges deeply and dramatically into the picture plane, the brush moves with hasty, joyous delight, punctuating empty space with accent, full stop, movement and nuance, exploiting everything Streeton had learnt of Whistler." (John Olsen, 1963)

"Olsen has created Sydney - its harbour, life, vulgarity, beauty, movement - in the way that Drysdale created the outback. His landscape teems with...everything, seen not from one point of view but from all points of view and as though everything from morning till night were happening at once. He lets the deep wells of his involvement with it all flood through his hand. A spontaneous image begets another, suggests another, becomes ambiguous, loaded with associations, complexities." (Laurie Thomas, 1973)

"Sydney the true aquarian city - air and water... the light of Sydney Harbour - the way the hills cradle light into the water... beautiful floppy basin, the suck and pull of light, tide and rocks... the harbour in the afternoon where it all turns coppery... the harbour in the evening where lights sparkle and dance, the loves of the seaport and the delights of the seaport, deaths in the seaport" (John Olsen, 1973)

"The sea is like the earth breathing.... I like to paint spontaneously, directly... I like paintings that are as light as a whisper and as fragile as a morning breeze. We want to say the most with the least.... (I like to) probe deeper into the hidden world... the rhythms in living in a big city such as Sydney" (John Olsen, 1973)

"Among all the painters who have been challenged or captivated by the harbour, it is perhaps in the work of John Olsen that we find the most complex, multidimensional, mysterious and provocative of images. Olsen found in thriving scenes of harbour life a rich bristling energy... a miraculously textured visual feast" (Sandra McGrath, 1979)

John Henry Olsen (b 1928)

Five Bells

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Oil on board, 267.5 x 275.5 cm. (105 x 108 in.)
Estimate upon request

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Bells*, *John Olsen's Opera House Journal*, 1973 *op cit*,
ABC TV Documentary *John Olsen - A Life*, with Peter Ross; May 1995.

On July 2, 1999, John Olsen re-visited *Five Bells*. He later said: -

"I was stunned to see it again. I'd forgotten how good it is. I'm delighted to see it in such great shape. The oil paint is as fresh as the day I finished it, even better. I feel it's one of my four or five best paintings. It was the genesis of many of my later works.

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'the sea pinks bend like lilies'. Among the crabs, anemones, sea urchins, squid, mussels, and seaweeds of the rockpools and the harbour bottom, one can believe one sees a dead friend's *'gaunt chin and pricked eye' 'squeezing your face in agonies of speech on speechless panes'.*

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Other documentation of the historic importance of this painting includes: -

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"The 1963 painting is full of youthful vigour and ebullience.... The incisively drawn, probing lines moving out from the circle, and the accentuation of the edge, foreshadow (work) of the following decade". (Deborah Hart, 1991)