

# Pippin Drysdale

## ART

BY JOHN MCDONALD



**LIVES: FREMANTLE, WESTERN AUSTRALIA AGE: 77 REPRESENTED BY: SABBIA GALLERY, SYDNEY; LINTON & KAY, PERTH; GALLERIES IN UK, USA, BELGIUM, FRANCE, GERMANY AND SWITZERLAND**

*Her thing.* Ceramic vases and marbles incorporating the colours of the Australian landscape. *Our take.* Last year in New York, Sotheby's held an exhibition of works from Chatsworth, the private estate of the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire. Among the old masters and antique furniture, Pippin Drysdale's brightly coloured ceramics made a striking impression. Few Australian artists can have enjoyed a better international showcase.

For more than 45 years Drysdale has been working in clay, producing elegant bowls and small, sculptural "marbles" that reflect the colours and textures of the Australian landscape. For the exhibition *Breakaway*, at Sydney's Sabbia Gallery, she's drawn on recent visits to the Karlu Karlu Conservation Reserve, near Katherine in the NT, and the Bungle Bungles in the Kimberley. As always with Drysdale, the colours of these works are breathtaking, ranging from vivid reds and blues to the most subtle gradations of tone.

Drysdale takes her inspiration from the land, the colours of the sky and the changing patterns of light and weather. Her works do not simply reflect observations of an environment, they convey a powerful sense of what it feels like to inhabit a country of great antiquity and bright, all-encompassing light. Few Australian landscape painters have been able to capture the spirit of a place on canvas more convincingly than Drysdale's achievements in porcelain. *Can I afford it?* Drysdale is Australia's most internationally successful ceramicist, and this is reflected in her prices. She has sold a suite of seven works for \$US83,000 (\$116,000), and another group of seven for £45,000 (\$81,000). In this show, the highestpriced items are vases such as *Breakaway Series – Palm Valley, NT* (41cm x 24cm) for \$16,000, and an ensemble of seven pieces called *Group 2 – Splendour at Black Rock* (above, tallest 29.5cm) for \$37,500. The cheapest is a small marble with a similar title: *Breakaway Series – Splendour at Black Rock*

(666) (6cm x 7cm) for \$2200. *Where can I have a squiz?* Sabbia Gallery, 609 Elizabeth Street, Redfern, Sydney, until August 22; [sabiagallery.com](http://sabiagallery.com).