

**nanda\hobbs**

Contemporary

**PROVENANCE INFORMATION**

Peter Booth

*Painting (Head with Cloth Wrap)*

**Peter Booth***Painting (Head with Cloth Wrap)*

1989-2002

Signed &amp; dated verso: Booth 1989-2002

Oil on canvas

40.5x71cm

## Provenance:

Greer Collection.

Rex Irwin Art Dealer, Sydney

Private collection, Brisbane, Deutscher and Hackett, Melbourne, 30 November 2011, lot 22.

Private Collection, Sydney.

## Exhibited:

Peter Booth, Rex Irwin Art Dealer, Sydney, 24 June - 19 July 2003, cat.9 (label attached verso)

Essay: The art of Peter Booth is inextricably linked to nature, the human condition and the interrelationship between the two. At times it is a relationship of alienation and destruction and at times one of nourishment and renewal. Nature gives almost as soon as she takes away just as humankind can degrade or conversely nurture the environment.

At all times this contradiction prevails and Booth's art explores this ambiguity with an eye free of judgement. *Painting (Head with cloth wrap)* typifies this preoccupation with man's ambiguous place on earth. Is this character running away or into something? Are his eyes deliberately shrouded from some horror in a protective guise or is it pure accident that his vision is obscured? Is his mouth laughing at the universe or clenched in anguish? And the ultimate question of what lies beyond the frame of the canvas, which may explain all to us.

Indeed Peter Booth's art is not for the soul who needs immediate answers. Much has been spoken of the colour black in Booth's work and its prevalence has almost made the colour a subject in its

own right in his work. In our painting black is not only the night sky but the juxtaposition to the shrouded head, evincing a sense of alienation and highlighting the man's presumed nakedness and vulnerability.

Booth's black has been linked to depression and his childhood in the industrial wasteland of Sheffield and further it has been described by one writer as 'congealed as if it were black bile'. However, Booth describes the black he applies using a wide array of black pigments as 'strong and beautiful – the colour of the universe'.<sup>1</sup> Certainly much of the power inherent in his, at times difficult, images resides with the artist's passion for the inky, void-like qualities of this colour.

*Painting (Head with cloth wrap)* is unmistakably part of Booth's ongoing continuum of male heads of all guises. Dismembered heads suspended in the landscape appeared as though a part of a dream sequence in his work as early as 1979. During the 1980s and well into his current practice the male head became a constant muse. At times autobiographical and at times simply archetypal, the head appears as the repository of all that it is to be human – a summation of mankind's innermost thoughts. A vessel for his fears, joys, sorrows, memories, anxieties, loves, losses, pain and elation – our single most powerful and influential part of our body and the one that controls all our actions, reactions and at times inactions. In the face of this, the body is rendered irrelevant in these paintings, in much the same way as it is in the honed portrait busts of the philosophers of Greek and Roman antiquity.

1. Smith J., Peter Booth – Human/Nature, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2003 p. 11