

Anonymous bookie offloads ceramic collection

Decorative arts More than 400 works collected over 50 years.

Peter Fish

Collections of ceramics are rarely as dazzling and diverse as that of a retired bookmaker from Newcastle in NSW. The collection goes under the hammer on Tuesday at Leonard Joel in Sydney's Woollahra.

The 439 lots on offer range from Royal Doulton flambé vessels and figures, with their unctuous iridescent red glazes, to the Doulton Lambeth mouse figures sculpted by George Tinworth. There are even rare and finely decorated 18th and 19th century scent bottles in Wedgwood's trademark jasperware – launched in the 1770s and still made today – where the design stands out in white from the traditional "biscuit" blue or brown body.

Hamish Clark of Joel's Sydney office, who catalogued the bookie's collection, says the anonymous owner began collecting after his wife made a few ceramic purchases.

After that, he bought extensively more than 50 years, turning from one specialist ceramic area to another, always insisting on pieces in excellent condition.

"He wasn't passionate about aesthetics, but he wouldn't buy damaged pieces," Clark says.

Many of his purchases were from the Whitley Collection in Florida, and from

Sydney dealer and authority Alan Landis.

Clark says some pieces have already attracted international interest, with one potential buyer flying out from England to view the sale.

Among the major attractions is a rare Doulton cream-glazed seated figure of Salome, circa 1925, which Clark believes will attract at least \$10,000 to \$15,000.

Among the other pricier pieces in a sale where most wares carry estimates of a relatively modest \$1000 or less are pieces designed by one of Doulton's pre-eminent figures, Charles Noke (1858 to 1941) who is regarded as a great innovator and a key figure in the firm's success.

After spending his early years at Royal Worcester, Noke joined Doulton in 1889. Many of his earlier pieces feature elephants and jester jugs, several of which are included in the sale. His figures, often sizeable, are widely associated with the revival of the potteries after the 1890s. He is credited with the introduction of Doulton's Flambé wares, first introduced in 1904, and followed by the further refined Sung glaze.

Rarities include a number of Noke "Chinese jade" porcelains, so called because of their subtle green and white decoration. These figures mostly date from the 1880s and are scarce because they were hard to produce and made in limited quantities.

Among them is a rare *Mother with Child* group, the pair depicted seated in front of a fire, purchased from the Whitley Collection. A mere 12cm wide, it is estimated at \$3000 to \$5000.



From left, a Wedgwood Dragon Lustre meiping vase; a Wedgwood Sunset Fairyland Lustre vase; a Doulton Lambeth jug; and a Royal Doulton cream glaze seated figure of Salome.

Among Noke's figures is the imposing and imperious *The Moor*, 46cm high, introduced in 1938. This piece, described as an early example with superb colouring, is estimated at \$1000 to \$1500.

George Tinworth, who worked for Doulton from 1867 for more than 40 years, was born in great poverty but achieved considerable fame at Doulton's Lambeth potteries, many of his large works being commissions for churches. Among the modest-sized saltglaze wares he designed in the 1880s is a rare figure group from the Going to the Derby series, titled *Lost and Serves them Right for Betting*. It depicts Tinworth's trademark mice in a carriage, pulled by a rat with a frog on its back. Some 15cm long it is estimated

at \$8000 to \$12,000. Other Tinworth wares include a group of stoneware Boy Musicians, 12cm high, of which the potter made a number between 1889 and 1910. The catalogue notes that 100 of such figures, with white faces, were made in 1910 and 1911, a number of which came to Australia.

Modestly priced items include a large Doulton Lambeth jug circa 1900 in the form of a bird of prey estimated at \$300 to \$500.

Among the eye-catching Wedgwood is a large meiping-shaped covered vase, the blue ground with mother of pearl lustre, painted with sinuous dragons and cloudbands. Dating from 1925, it is 51cm high and estimated at \$3000 to \$5000.

Also from Wedgwood is a Sunset

Fairyland Lustre vase with *Imps on a Bridge* design and raised beads around foot and inside rim. Dating from circa 1925, it is 25cm high and is estimated at \$1500 to \$2500.

Jasperware scent bottles dating from the 18th century and later are estimated at up to \$1200 each. Also well represented are wares as diverse as vases by the Stinton brothers, Bernard Moore, the Martin Brothers, William and Walter Moorcroft and Hannah Barlow.

The owner spent serious money on various loving and commemorative cups – one of which purportedly cost \$18,000, as well as an oddball array of modern facsimile books and Penfold's Grange Hermitage wines that are also included in the sale.

prfish8@gmail.com

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Dreaming Alice finds a buyer

Peter Fish

A bargain hunter has managed to secure Charles Blackman's *Dreaming Alice* after it was unsold at the big art auctions last month in Sydney.

Such deals are almost inevitably signed off at a negotiated price below the original catalogue estimates. The pre-sale estimate on the Blackman was \$1 million to \$1.2 million.

Sotheby's chairman Geoffrey Smith confirmed a buyer had been found almost a week after the work had gone unsold at auction. It had been offered for open sale to all comers on the auctioneer's website.

In such circumstances the sale price is not disclosed and the picture goes into the art auction records as unsold.

Dreaming Alice, a pensive view of Alice in Wonderland asleep at a table bearing flowers and a teapot, is part of a much acclaimed series painted by Blackman in 1956. The artist was still working until near his death in August last year.

Another work from the same period, *Alice on the Table*, brought \$1.65 million at rival auction house Deutscher and Hackett.

This work, which had been in a UK collection, last changed hands for \$151,000 some 23 years ago.

Deutscher and Hackett's Blackman was not its only big scorer. Ian Fairweather's *Barbecue*, depicting a row of figures in almost abstract form, fetched \$1.71 million, a record for the artist, its value enhanced by its provenance to Fairweather's friend, artist Len French, from whose estate it had been consigned.

Meanwhile William Dobell's *Woman in Restaurant* from 1934 proved a sensation at Sotheby's, selling for \$939,400, against an estimate of just \$80,000 to \$120,000.

The diminutive portrait of a dowdy dowager seated, cigarette in hand – for all the world like a smartened up Vera from the ABC TV series – had been in the collection of Sydney developer Dick Dusseldorp and his wife Joanna for almost 60 years. Originally owned by cosmetics king Norman Schureck, it was sold in 1962 for the then sensational price of 4500 guineas at the landmark Schureck sale in Sydney. It will almost certainly go to an institution or public gallery.

Sotheby's raised a total of \$8.63 million including premium and Deutscher \$9 million.

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