

THE AUSTRALIAN

Mossgreen, Leonard Joel clash over call to ban ivory, rhino horn sales



John Albrecht of Leonard Joel with a Japanese ivory sword. Picture: Aaron Francis

MICHAELA BOLAND THE AUSTRALIAN 12:00AM January 3, 2017

Two of the nation's leading auction houses have locked horns after an International Fund for Animal Welfare report revealed the trade in fresh ivory and rhinoceros horn was rife in Australia.

IFAW found Leonard Joel and Mossgreen were Australia's biggest ivory and rhino horn dealers, each company grossing approximately \$150,000 in nine months, from 212 and 78 individual sales respectively.

The investigation found 2400 ivory and seven rhino horn items offered by 17 auction houses during the investigation period with little or no provenance information, leaving purchasers at risk of breaking the law.

China's decision this week to phase out its domestic trade in fresh ivory during 2017 was welcomed by IFAW, which has urged Australian auction houses to stop selling all ivory including antique ivory on the grounds it provided a cover for the sale of fresh products. Leonard Joel managing director John Albrecht reacted to the report by announcing his company would phase out ivory sales over two years, starting with an immediate ban on rhino horn and non-antique ivory.

He has called on the industry to follow suit.

"I'd never looked at it statistically before, then one of my kids said: 'Ew, what are you doing?' " Mr Albrecht said. "I'm not grandstanding, it'll cost me about \$400,000 but you've got to start somewhere."

Leonard Joel holds 300 auctions of about 65,000 lots a year and has announced it will continue to sell musical instruments, cutlery and certified pieces.

Mossgreen managing director Paul Sumner called Mr Albrecht's announcement "blatant opportunism" and said Mossgreen would continue to sell ivory because "it is a natural material (that) exists alongside shells".

"A couple of years ago we introduced a policy where we don't deal with uncarved ivory or rhino horn," Mr Sumner said. "There's got to be a restriction on modern ivory; everyone agrees there's got to be a blanket ban on everything that's not antiquities."

Mr Sumner said he would "absolutely" continue selling antique rhino horn; "Some pieces date back to the Ming Dynasty".

Mr Albrecht said: "Most of the other auction houses argue pieces are socially, historically and culturally important — if they were, they'd be gobbled up by public museums of the world but they're not. It's the argument I bought but it's not true ...

"I'll try everything next year to apply pressure for them to follow suit," he said.

Other ivory-trading auction houses named by IFAW are Lawsons, David Barsby, Aalders, Vickers and Hoad, Raffan, Kelaher and Thomas, Bonhams, Bargain Hunt and Sotheby's Australia.



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