Master's strokes: Louise Smith from Leonard Joel with *Olive Yard*, which was bought in a second-hand shop.

$20,000 masterpiece — for $50

IT can still happen: a Melbourne couple should receive about $20,000 for a small painting they found in a second-hand shop in country Victoria.

The couple, who have asked to remain anonymous, paid less than $50 for the painting by Melbourne-born master Rupert Bunny.

The work — an oil on canvas called *Olive Yard* — was painted by Bunny during a period after World War I when he lived in France and concentrated on landscapes in Provence, based on the work of Cezanne.

"It's a remarkable find," said Louise Smith, art manager for Leonard Joel, South Yarra, yesterday.

"The buyers bought it because they liked it, and without knowing what it was," she said.

"Then they happened to see a Rupert Bunny painting in an old Joel's catalogue and thought it looked very similar.

"They brought it in to us and it was easy to identify.

"They were astonished — but rather pleased, I think.

"Rupert Bunny paintings crop up from time to time, but I can't remember anyone ever having bought one for a song in a second-hand shop."

Rupert Charles Wulsten Bunny was born in St Kilda in 1864 and died in 1947. He studied architecture and engineering at Melbourne University and art at the National Gallery of Victoria School.

He travelled to Europe with his father, a Melbourne judge, in 1884 and studied first in London and later in Paris, where he decided to live.

Bunny finally returned to Melbourne to live in 1933 and decided his real interest was music: he spent the last few years of his life composing it in a South Yarra studio.

Olive Yard will be offered for sale at Leonard Joel on the evening of Tuesday, November 10.