



Bob Hart

Auction signals end of an era

TREASURES collected by two refugees who have made an indelible mark on Melbourne will be sold next week.

The Gregurek collection — furniture and artefacts valued at more than \$1 million — will be auctioned by Leonard Joel on Tuesday.

The collection belongs to Vlado and Nina Gregurek — assembled over four decades by Mrs Gregurek, the former model and actor, now painter, Nina Gregory.

Mr Gregurek is the man

behind Australia's finest steakhouse — Vlado's, which opened in Richmond in 1964. His passion for prime beef inspired the collection.

"Vlado is a workaholic," Mrs Gregurek told me yesterday.

"He was never at home, so collecting these things became my life.

"To me they are almost alive, and sometimes I found myself talking to them."

The Gregureks — a devoted couple who met in their teens and were married

in their native Croatia in 1953 — fled communism and came to Australia in 1959.

"We had nothing," said Mrs Gregurek. "We worked in factories and couldn't afford new furniture.

"I combed secondhand shops for bits and pieces, and never lost the habit."

Some habit. Mrs Gregurek, who appeared in such classic Australian TV series as *Homicide* and *Hunter*, collected oil lamps, vases, decanters, candelabra and precious porcelain.

She unearthed urns, bronzes, French clocks, chandeliers, Persian rugs and fine antique furniture.

"But now it's time for it all to go," she said yesterday.

"We're going to renovate the central Melbourne house we've lived in for 30 years and start again.

"At the moment, it looks like an army barracks it's so bare. I am lost in it.

"But we are looking forward to the next phase in our lives." Me too.



Fond farewell: Nina and Vlado take one last look at a bust.