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Three tenors give antiques a noteworthy finish



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Terry Ingram

The Three Tenors are being given some of the credit for the antique market reaching a high note at Joel's decorative arts sale in Melbourne last week.

Antique dealers bought strongly because their stock had been depleted by interstate buyers who came to Melbourne a few weeks ago for the big concert.

Melbourne dealer Mr Ed Clark, who bought a mirror at Joel's, also pointed out the antique furniture market tended to follow the real estate market, which had been rising sharply.

Armada High Street dealer Mr Gary Kaye gave \$11,000 for a 19th-century oak and ebony brass

inlaid bonheur du jour and \$9,350 for a 19th-century Italian marquetry inlaid serpentine wardrobe.

Telephone bidders sunk their lines into the grotto furniture from the estate of the late Violet Dulieu, a leading Melbourne art dealer. Since Lord McAlpine quit this market it has been made largely by Melbourne dealer Mr Grahame Geddes, who was assumed to have an interest in last week's action.

Best price for the grottoesque offering was \$7,150 for a double shell-back seat with dolphin-like arms.

Sydney dealer Mrs Veronica Bunda was the buyer of a late 19th-century walnut display cabinet, which almost tripled its top estimate to make \$28,400.

The cabinet was not even illustrated in the catalogue, but Mrs Bunda pointed out it would cost a fortune to ship such a piece from Britain, and it made an excellent display vehicle for any fine collection of porcelain.

Buyers for the 55 lots at Joel's from the estate of the opera singer Sylvia Fisher tended to be heavily motivated by nostalgia. The offering brought out a solid showing of music buffs.

The Gordons bought a bust of Wagner for \$935 and Father Peter of Fitzroy bought a 19th-century open carved giltwood framed religious tapestry depicting the Descent from the Cross for \$594 and a French terra cotta study of a lady.

Not so curiously, the rosewood

grand piano by Bechstein went unsold. It was very tired.

The catalogue of Phillips' design sale in Sydney on March 24 and 25 also enjoyed international dispersal. Much of the bidding on the Clarice Cliff pottery came from overseas and a Wiener Werkstatte candlestick went to New York for \$15,400.

Local institutions, however, pitched in to save some of Australia's international design heritage when the Historic Houses Trust (of NSW) gave \$1,045 for a pair of printed linen curtains designed by John Colborn, the Art Gallery of Western Australia paid \$3,300 for a Walter Burley Griffin chair and the Powerhouse Museum spent \$5,940 for a Marcel Breuer chair and \$1,100 for a Peter Behrens copper teapot.