



The collectables

What's in a name? For pre-owned luxury items bearing high-end labels, it could be a staggering sum, writes Leo Schofield.

In recent years a new field of collecting has sprung into being: luxury goods. Not second-hand, mind you, although that's essentially what they are, but more elegantly dubbed 'pre-owned'.

Perhaps the chief distinction lies in the brand. A much-travelled trunk by Louis Vuitton, for example, is worth a good deal more than an equally well-travelled Samsonite suitcase.

Melbourne auction house Leonard Joel schedules sales of what it calls 'pre-owned luxury' items. The term embraces watches, handbags, luggage, clothes and accessories but for an item to qualify it must have been luxurious, and costly, in the first place, and must carry a luxury name such as Cartier, Hermès or Louis Vuitton. Over the past year, these pieces have achieved staggering prices. Last December, an Hermès Birkin handbag fetched \$7200 (including buyer's premium), and it doesn't even carry the maker's logo. But then, everyone who's into fashion knows how much this bag costs now. Even a pair of men's braces by Hermès sold for \$312, bought no doubt by someone with aspirations to be another Gordon Gekko.

At a Leonard Joel sale in December, 2011, pre-owned watches by Cartier, Rolex, Patek Philippe and other major European makers sold like hotcakes. A gold Cartier watch with chippy little diamonds around the face went for \$13,200. The value wasn't in the diamonds

or the gold so much as in the name. Another hot item is vintage luggage, especially by Louis Vuitton. The most desirable pieces, fetching up to \$6000, are rectangular forms such as trunks, which some collectors recycle as coffee tables. Hat boxes are not so much in demand, however, and \$1000 could buy you a nice one that would hold at least half-a-dozen fascinators. **H&G**

Pieces of pre-owned Louis Vuitton luggage have proven to be hot-ticket collectables at Leonard Joel auction house in Melbourne.



\$600

Q Can you tell us anything about this piece? We bought it in the UK 30 years ago and use it as a centrepiece. It is Sheffield plate and marked 'EPNS'.

A You're right about this being a table centrepiece. Known as an 'epagne', it was designed to hold small dishes of fruit, nuts or confectionery. These were fashionable in the late 1700s and early 1800s, but your dates from the late 18th or early 19th century. 'EPNS' stands for electro-plated nickel-silver. Although not as valuable as those of sterling silver or early Sheffield plate, yours could fetch \$500 to \$1000 at auction.

WRITE TO US

If you have an object you would like valued, send us details, snaps (including markings) and your name and address. Write to H&G Advice, GPO Box 4188, Sydney, NSW 1028, or email h&g@houseandgarden.com.au.