

# Ron Walker's mansion clearance sale 'as good as it gets'

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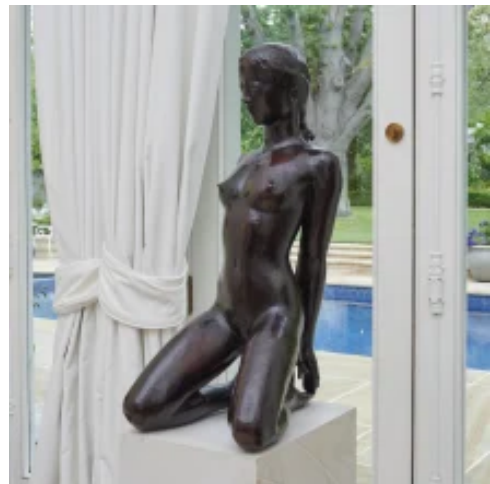
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It was pistols at 10 paces when objects and furniture from Ron Walker's Toorak mansion sold at auction this week, with collectors queuing for a shot at the late Melbourne Rich Lister's treasures.

The property titan and Liberal Party stalwart, who died in 2018 [<https://www.afr.com/link/follow-20180101-h0qvbt>], collected antique firearms including the flintlock pistols, percussion pistols, double-barrelled pistols and blunderbuss that found new homes among many other items in the auction.

Of the 21 firearms, the best price was achieved by a pair of late 18th century English decorated flintlock pistols which went for \$20,000 (including buyer's premium of 25 per cent on top of the hammer price) on a pre-sale estimate of just \$800 to \$1200.



Le Ruban, a bronze statue by Jacques Coquillay (born 1935), fetched \$16,250 (including buyer's premium) through Leonard Joel auction house on December 11, 2023. The work was in the collection of the late Melbourne businessman, Ron Walker.

Titled Furniture and Objects from the Estate of Ron Walker AC CBE, the auction was held by Leonard Joel auctioneers who decided to make the offering online, rather than in the auction room.

Part of the auction's success was son Campbell Walker's willingness to let the auction house set the pre-sale estimates, which were deliberately conservative in order to attract widespread bidding, Leonard Joel chairman and proprietor John Albrecht said.

The auctioneer also created a frisson of exclusivity by not holding a general viewing, but by offering viewings at the Walker house by appointment only.

“The family understandably didn’t want the general public moving through the property,” Albrecht said.

“We had appointments booked every 15 minutes for two days, and we were completely booked out within a day or two of it going online.”

“Significant” online bidding began a week before the auction began to time out, which was “almost unprecedented for an online auction”, Albrecht said.

The low and high estimates of the sale totalled \$93,000 and \$142,000 respectively. Hammer prices trounced those expectations, totalling \$419,250 (\$524,062 when buyer’s premium is included).

“As far as a single-owner Toorak estate auction goes, this was as good as it gets,” Albrecht said.

All 185 lots sold, with many exceeding their estimates by a large margin.

Lot 8, a large Victorian mahogany extending dining table, bucked the global trend away from so-called “brown furniture” by selling for \$12,500 (including premium, as do all prices in this article) against a pre-sale estimate of just \$1500 to \$2500.

Assorted local and international dignitaries had enjoyed Walker’s hospitality at that dining table, and this knowledge would have spurred buyer interest, Albrecht said.

“Campbell said, ‘there were more than a few prime ministers sat around that table with dad’,” Albrecht said.



Prime ministers and other dignitaries once dined at this Victorian mahogany table. From the Toorak mansion of Rich Lister Ron Walker, the table measures a shade under five metres long and sold for \$12,500 (including premium).



One of a pair of English decorated flintlock pistols, engraved “Clark”, from the collection of Rich Lister Ron Walker. The two pistols sold as a single lot for \$20,000 (including premium) on a pre-sale estimate of just \$800 to \$1200.

The property from which all the objects were sold is Huntingfield, the Toorak house built for Walker in 1998.

Boasting two swimming pools and underground parking for eight cars, Huntingfield sold in June

[<https://www.afr.com/link/follow-20180101-p5dgc0>] this year for an undisclosed price. The agent's expectations were \$55 million to \$60 million.

The prestige home was fitting for a man dubbed "Mr Melbourne". Walker was a property developer, a one-time chairman of Fairfax Media, a Melbourne Lord Mayor, Liberal Party treasurer and chairman of the Melbourne Grand Prix.

By Thursday afternoon Huntingfield will be bare of all the items included in the Leonard Joel sale.

The sale was not an art auction, but it did include some sculptures.

Among these were a bronze figure of Liberal Party legend Sir Robert Menzies by Peter Latona which sold for \$3250 (estimate \$300 to \$500), and a Degas-inspired bronze by Jacques Coquillay, titled *Le Ruban*, that went for \$16,250 (estimate \$2000 to \$3000).

An antique walnut-cased Blüthner salon grand piano, circa 1913, tickled the fancy of collectors. Estimated at just \$3000 to \$5000, the piano sold for \$52,500.

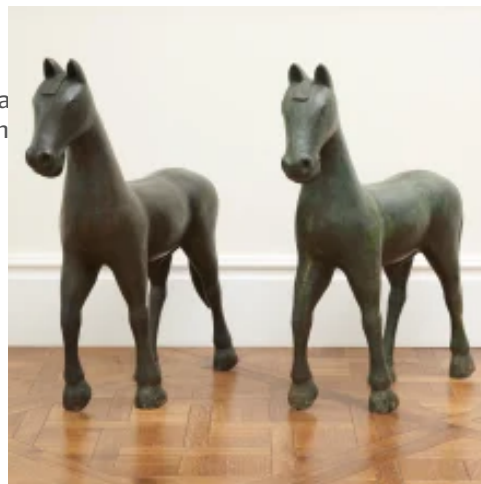
Other objects sold in the auction included armchairs, lamps, side tables, garden benches and rugs.



This Peter Latona bronze sculpture of former Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies, measuring 32 cm high, fetched \$3250 (including buyer's premium). The work was from the collection of the late Ron Walker, a one-time Liberal Party treasurer. The work had been estimated at \$300 to \$500.

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A pair of contemporary Chinese bronze figures of ponies, 98 cm high, which decorated the Toorak mansion of the late businessman Ron Walker, sold for \$3500 (including buyer's premium) through Leonard Joel.

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