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THE BEAUTY CHEF,  
CARLA OATES

# belie

*Charlotte Cooté*  
TRANSFORMS A RURAL LANDMARK

SALTBURN  
SUAVE

LUXE COASTAL &  
COUNTRY

CLO STUDIOS + JOHN BECHINI + KENNEDY NOLAN + TAMSIN JOHNSON

# LUXE FILES

WITH KIRSTIE CLEMENTS



Auction houses provide a fascinating barometer of our changing cultural tastes and attitudes, a reflection of society both past and future.



“AS AUCTIONEERS we simply reflect the community,” explains John Albrecht, chairman and head of Important Collections for Leonard Joel, as the storied 105-year-old auction house opens the doors of its new national headquarters and Melbourne saleroom in Hawthorn, Victoria. The location is 3000 square metres of “unashamedly

more than half of Leonard Joel’s sales in the previous financial year. The space features dedicated online auction rooms with enhanced technologies to showcase and streamline the auction experience for clients worldwide. “The auction house of the future is multi-faceted, welcoming people digitally, as well as in real life,” says Mardi. “The vast open spaces that the building offered represented a significant change for Leonard Joel, allowing for large gallery spaces, viewing areas, a bar and a theatrical auction room.”

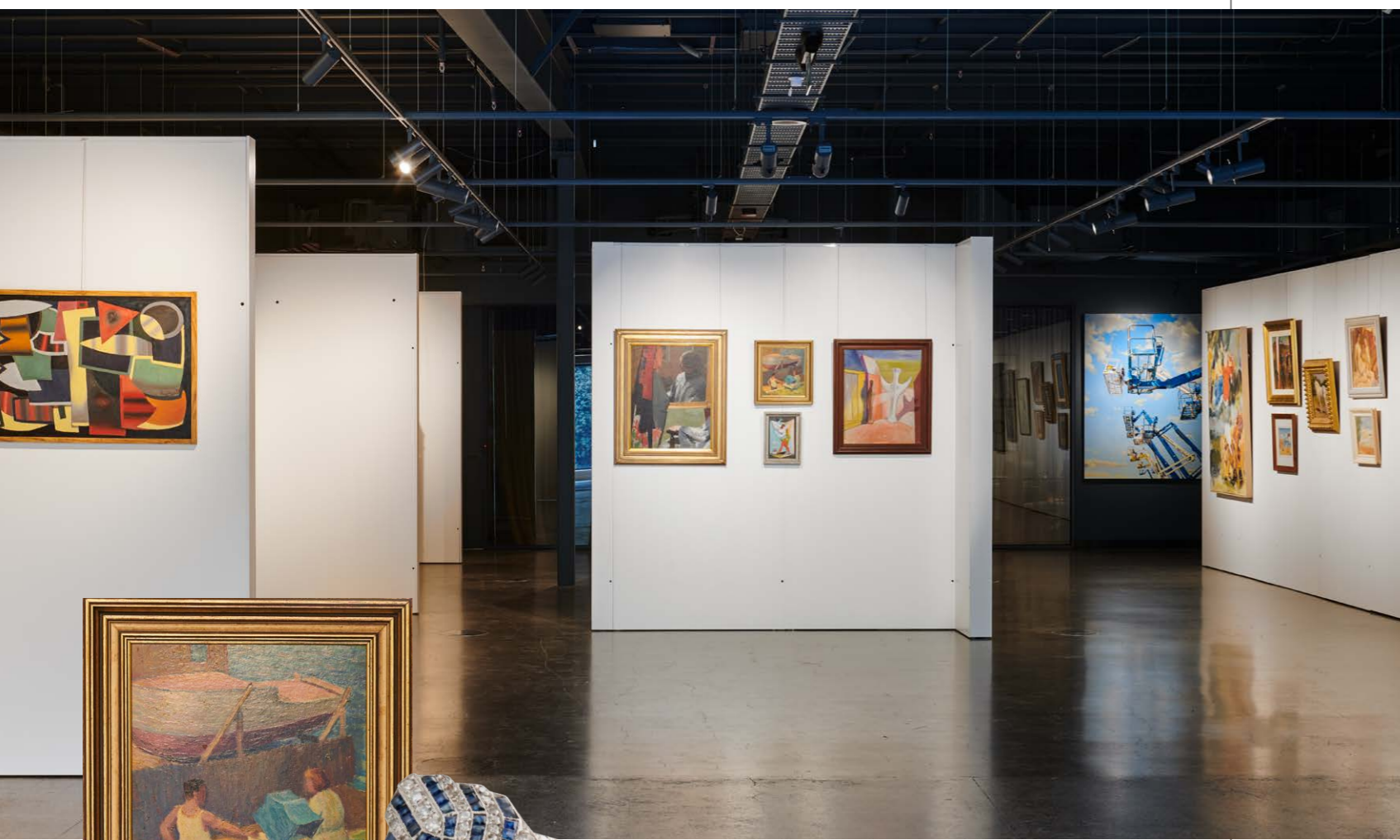
contemporary” space stretching across two levels, designed in collaboration with interior design firm Studio Doherty, led by director Mardi Doherty.

The modernist look is entirely reflective of a new age for the auction house, given the digital marketplace accounted for

“Our previous premises were basically one very big building with lots of small rooms, that felt lovely, in old European/English auction style, but was completely impractical,” says John. “I felt as if we grew out of it five years ago, and I certainly feel like we’ve grown out of it post-Covid. I think it’s fair to say that the

This page Leonard Joel chairman and head of Important Collections John Albrecht stands in its new national HQ and Melbourne saleroom in Hawthorn. Bench in Aquarella Gold quartzite from Victoria Stone Gallery. Opposite page, clockwise from top left Featured in recent Leonard Joel catalogues: 18ct gold and gem-set brooch modelled as an exotic bird, \$3000-4000. 18ct white gold and diamond bracelet, \$10,000-15,000. In Leonard Joel interiors, custom upholstered sofa by Camm and ‘Spool’ side tables from Space. 8ct white gold and diamond pendant necklace, \$22,000-28,000. ‘Thierry’ side table from Space with Leonard Feb-Mar 2024 catalogue. In recent Langtons sale, Chateau Petrus Cru Exceptionnel ‘Pomerol’ 2019 \$12,000/bottle; Domaine Leroy ‘Clos de Vougeot’ Grand Cru 2006 \$16,500/bottle. Artwork by Percy Watson Clear-Cut, 1956, \$3500-5500.





movements in tastes and categories have also changed so much that we didn't feel as if it still reflected the business."

When it comes to changing tastes and categories in the fine art, jewellery and decorative art world, John has an enviable front row seat. "There is a movement away large-scale traditional, furniture what we call 'brown furniture', although we're still handling it," he says. "Traditional furniture is finding its way into country properties, not primary residences. An individual with a house in Melbourne is not stocking it with period furniture; it will be contemporary or mid-century furniture and art. We just cannot meet the demand for modern mid-century design." The shift also indicates a population and a country that is evolving, and the fact that for the best part of 150 years or more, the collecting cultures tended to reference England and Europe. "That's why we established our category called Centrum, where we present 100 contemporary artworks every year," says John. "I never felt comfortable about these works being mashed into other general auctions."

"No one is clamouring for Victorian furniture but what people are realising is that within the whole period furniture spectrum there are some wonderful functional items and areas of utility that can still work," John says, mentioning pieces such as buttonback leather armchairs and wine tables that can sit beautifully in contemporary environments. "That is the big cultural change in Australia - we do more eclectic decorating and collecting." In terms of new phenomena, John points to luxury goods, accessories and luggage from brands such as Louis Vuitton and Hermès. "That is the category that has to a large degree redefined the way the public views auction houses and the way auction houses have now decided they need to think about collecting," John says.

The wine auction market is experiencing an evolution in tastes that is more than just individual preference, notes Langtons head of Auctions and Secondary Market Michael Anderson. "Back in the 90s we talked about the big rich reds with 16% alcohol, those types of wines. Those are falling by the wayside now as life, and the world, is getting hotter. People are turning more to pinot noir, or chardonnay grapes from cooler climates." "The recent 8th edition of *Langtons Classification of Australian Wine* reflects this change in consumer preference which will affect the collectability and prices fetched at auction. "It's probably the biggest change in terms of style because Australia is built on big reds," says Michael, including, of course, Penfolds Grange 1951, the first vintage of what is considered Australia's finest wine by winemaker Max Schubert. "We've broken the sale record three times with 1951 Grange," he says. "There's no more than 24 or so out there now, nobody really knows. In the last three years we sold three, and the last one went for \$152,000." Both men agree that the auction world has become exceedingly connected and globalised, and that Australian collectors definitely have the capacity to compete with international buyers. "There was a cultural cringe that we wouldn't pay as much as other people which is absolute baloney," says John.

By all accounts, the auction trade is brisk indeed. "We have 20,000 bottles online at the moment for auction," says Michael, who is also studying to become Australia's first qualified Wine Fraud Expert. "We are one of the last points in the world but you can get still reasonably priced, super high-end fine wine. Langtons has five to six auctions running at any given time, including Finest and Rare, which is all the top end wines over \$300. People do drink them as well. They might buy six bottles, keep three and trade them to make their money back. Wine has become an incredible alternative investment."

So is it still possible to snag a bargain in the highly competitive auction world? "I don't know about a bargain, but there are things that perhaps haven't quite realised their value yet," says John. "So, for example a bold, beautiful design, like Bang & Olufsen stereo systems from the 1960s and 70s, that play LPs. To me, these are works of art, from a moment in time."

[leonardjoel.com.au](http://leonardjoel.com.au)



This page, clockwise from above Langtons head of Auctions and Secondary Market Michael Anderson hosted an event at a private residence in Sydney's Bellevue Hill. Over a multi-course dining experience guests enjoyed a curated range of fine wines. The client bar with work by William Delafield Cook, one of the Leonard Joel collection. Opposite page, clockwise from top left Paintings on display at the Leonard Joel gallery. Recently listed, a 1953 work oil on board work by Roland Wakelin, \$3000-4000, and a 18ct gold, platinum, sapphire and diamond ring, \$6500-7500. The foyer at Leonard Joel with a work by Gerald Festus Kelly.



**1** **1\_TIME KEEPER**

“Unmatched in both collectability and style, the ‘Daytona’ is one of Rolex’s most iconic designs and was a star lot in a recent auction.

Gifted to a young man by his grandfather, it kept time for him during his Vietnam War service, and beyond.”

*Patricia Kontos, Timepieces Specialist.* Rolex Cosmograph ‘Red’ Daytona stainless-steel watch, sold for \$57,500.



**2\_UP THE DUFFEL**

Louis Vuitton men’s fashion director Pharrell Williams has taken the classic ‘Speedy’ duffel and made it his own, introducing it in a variety of bright primary colours and sizes, seen here in hottest pink, at the Fall 2024 collection.

*au.louisvuitton.com*



LUXE LIST

Edited by **KIRSTIE CLEMENTS**

Leonard Joel’s special discoveries and future luxury investments worth making.

**7**

**7\_TINY DANCER**

“Discovering a collection of paintings by the Australian artist Florence Dearing, underappreciated in her time, has been my most thrilling discovery at Leonard Joel so far. We placed a painting by Florence titled *The Dancer* in our Women Artists Auction last year, which went on to achieve a result well above the estimate. She is one to watch.”

*Amanda North, Art Specialist.* *The Dancer* by Florence Dearing, sold for \$3750.



**3**

**3\_HIGHLY PRIZED**

“When an estate arrives the unpacking of boxes is the auctioneer’s equivalent of a lucky dip. This tiny vase was revealed as an original piece by the high-status samurai and work-master Namikawa Yasuyuki!” *John Albrecht, Head of Important Collections.* Japanese cloisonné vase, sold for \$39,040.



**5**

**5\_BAGGING RIGHTS**

An Hermès Birkin bag is a surefire investment: the latest from S/S24 features a hand-painted illustration of the Faubourg storefront on black calfskin, with a padlock clasp. POA. *hermes.com*



**4**

**4\_POINTING TO THE PAST**

“I was thrilled to find this culturally important late 19th/early 20th century carved Maori ‘jewel’ of a weaving peg in a virtual appraisal. It had sat on a shelf and thought not worth mentioning by the owner.” *Chiara Curcio, Head of Decorative Arts, Design, and Interiors.* Maori *turuturu*, sold for \$243,750.



**6**

**6\_TWEED LIGHTLY**

One irrefutable fashion investment is a classic tweed Chanel suit. For S/S 2024, the fashion house’s creative director Virginie Viard delivered it as a bright pink windowpane check, with black and white floral sequinned lapels. *chanel.com*

