

Auction checklist

Antique newcomers should check out in-store auctions to examine items in person and ask questions. Here's our checklist.

Develop your eye

Browse auction catalogues to train your eye. Do research to decide which category types you should buy vintage or antique – older pieces are more likely to feature traditional joinery techniques, better-quality woods and less glue. Research auction archives to find out the 'sold' price of similar items.

Best bargains now

Right now, dark timber furniture – mahogany and oak – is out of fashion, which is a good thing because it means you can pick up beautiful Georgian and Regency antiques for a bargain. Seek out chests of drawers, dining chairs and side tables.

Get a condition report

Good auction houses will be glad to send additional photos and give further details. Video calls have definitely become standard and it's great to be able to ask questions in the moment instead of going back and forth over email.

Look for added costs

Most houses tack on a 25 per cent buyer's premium or commission. Large items may need to be shipped. Get free quotes from removalists before committing to shipping. If your beloved object will need reupholstering or rewiring, add in those costs.

“VINTAGE PAINTINGS CAN BE A BARGAIN WHEN YOU CONSIDER THE COST OF FRAMING.”

rate by lot for its landmark auctions and single-owner auctions. The top lot of 2024 – *The Destruction of the Bastille*, a rare ink-wash drawing gifted to President Washington by the Marquis de Lafayette – exceeded all expectations, selling for close to \$2 million, almost four times its pre-sale estimate of \$500,000. Potential buyers can browse catalogues and bid online. invaluable.com

LAWSONS

One of the country's oldest auctioneers is now a massive online auction marketplace with an incalculable amount of vintage and antique furniture to browse on your screen. It broadcasts feeds of its unpretentious Thursday auctions in real time. Following along will give you a feel for the rhythms and idiosyncrasies before you dive in.

Clients who have registered may place bids as if they were in the room. In addition, Lawsons holds regular timed online-only Thursday sales for interior and garden items. Its timed online auctions let bidders place their top bid ahead of time, which keeps you from being caught up in the adrenaline-fuelled drama of live auctions. Identify the items you like, put in your maximum bids and walk away. When the auction closes, you can go back and see what you've won, knowing you haven't been taken for a ride. lawsons.com.au

LEONARD JOEL

Year-round, multi-category auctions backed by sophisticated online interviews and magazine articles. Its popular The Auction Salon presents more than 1000 items every Thursday. These tend to be eclectic collections across four categories:

furniture; art; objects and collectables; and jewellery. This auction house is great for items at lower price points, which owner John Albrecht explains is “so first-time bidders can dip their toes in without worrying about making a bad investment”. It also offers curated standalone sales with recent auctions including names such as Barry Humphries, which reached four times the estimate at its June sale. Melissa's family recently auctioned a valuable fine art collection of more than 200 lots to great success with a 98 per cent clearance rate, and highly recommends the Leonard Joel vendor experience. Isabella never misses its program of pop-up modern art exhibitions and weekly The Auction Salon sales. leonardjoel.com.au

LESKI AUCTIONS

Established in 1972, the respected auction house based in Armadale, Victoria, is run by long-time proprietor Charles Leski. Leski is a leading authority in the field of collectables in Australia and a government-approved valuer for the cultural gifts program. In collaboration with fine arts specialist Harry Glenn, the boutique house offers live and timed online auctions for beautiful Asian and European decorative arts, paintings, furniture, silver, jewellery, antique clocks, English pottery, porcelain, ceramics, glass, lighting, rugs, textiles, tribal artefacts, artworks and collectables. leski.com.au

PHILIPS AUCTIONS

Philips launched online-only sales in 2018 – live auctions supported by an online bidding platform. The Australian auction