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John Keats 03 9508 9900
John.Keats@sothebysaustralia.com.au

Sarah Carroll 03 8416 5999
SCarroll@3dm.com.au

Property from the Collection of Dame Nellie Melba GBE

Auction in Melbourne 31 March 2015



Arthur Streeton 1867-1943, *The Windsor Damsel, Fishing* (1903). Estimate \$40,000-50,000

Sotheby's Australia is honoured to announce the consignment of selected Asian, Australian and European Art, Decorative Arts, Jewels and Objects of Vertu from the private collection of Dame Nellie Melba GBE (1861-1931) to be auctioned on 31 March 2015 as part of the Fine Asian, Australian & European Arts & Design sale.

Helen 'Nellie' Porter Mitchell was born on 9 May 1861 and became one of the most famous operatic singers of the late Victorian Era and early 20th century. She was the first Australian to achieve international recognition as a classical musician.

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Melba trained and performed in Melbourne before moving to Europe to pursue a career as an operatic soprano. She studied in Paris in 1886 and was very successful in Brussels before establishing herself as the leading lyric soprano at Covent Garden, London in 1888. She then performed in most European cities before debuting at the Metropolitan Opera in New York in 1893.

In the early 20th Century, after gaining recognition as one of the world's leading sopranos, Melba returned to Australia for what she called her 'sentimental tour' in 1909. She was in Australia when the First World War broke out, and in March 1918 Melba was created a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire (DBE) for services in organising patriotic work, whereby she raised over £100,000 for war charities. She was later elevated to Dame Grand Cross of the Order of the British Empire (GBE) for services to Australia.

Melba was known for her flamboyance and impeccable sense of style. Her friends included renowned and celebrated artists such as Arthur Streeton and Hans Heysen, as well as actors and royalty whom she regularly entertained at her home, Coombe Cottage. Her link with famous French chef Escoffier is undeniable, with his creation of Peach Melba in her honour.



Rupert Bunny 1864-1947, *Madame Melba* (1901-1902). National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with the assistance of Dinah and Henry Krongold CBE, Founder Benefactors in 1980. Reproduced courtesy of the National Gallery of Victoria.



A gold, agate, diamond and enamel case with jasperware panel, Boucheron, circa 1910. Estimate \$10,000-15,000

During her extensive travels, Melba amassed a wonderful collection of fine art, luxurious furnishings, silverware and many objects of vertu. A small selection of that collection, that until now has been housed in Melba's private home and bank vault, is being offered for sale to allow Melba lovers and collectors the opportunity to own, treasure and appreciate their own piece of Australia's first 'international diva'.

AT A GLANCE

Fine Asian, Australian & European Arts & Design
Including Property from the Collection of Dame Nellie Melba GBE
Auction in Melbourne, 31 March 2015, 6 pm

Images are available upon request
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