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

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

Toast to Melba's Enduring Legacy

Auction in Melbourne 31 March 2015



Arthur Streeton 1867-1943, *The Windsor Damsel, Fishing* (1903). Sold for \$189,100 March 2015

Following a 10 day exhibition in Sydney and Melbourne which attracted over a 1,000 visitors to Sotheby's Australia's galleries, the sale of Property from the Collection of Dame Nellie Melba GBE opened to a full saleroom at the Grand Hyatt Melbourne. Over 400 people registered to bid from all corners of the globe for this historic sale which included Asian, Australian and European Art, Decorative Arts, Jewels and Objects of Vertu. Comprising 162 lots, the auction achieved a total of \$1.99 million including buyer's premium against an estimate of \$548,880-746,370, with 100% sold by volume and 362.5% by value.

The auction commenced with a rousing start as the first lot, a Belle Epoque diamond and seedpearl hair pin, Cartier, circa 1905, soared to \$26,840 over 4 times the pre-sale estimate of \$6,000-9,000. This was a beginning of a pattern which continued throughout the evening.

Dame Nellie Melba enjoyed luxurious ornaments and with her regular travels would pack small items of familiarity. A very fine rock crystal, enamel and diamond-set desk clock with its original box for travelling by the famed luxury brand Cartier also attracted 11 telephone bidders and numerous room and internet bidders that witnessed a lengthy battle, and achieved the stunning and highest price of the evening of \$244,000 (estimate \$20,000-25,000, lot 11). Also by Cartier was a diamond, gem-set and silk brocaded evening clutch bag by Cartier, circa 1930 which sold for 13 times the pre-sale high estimate realising \$39,040 (estimate \$2,000-3,000, lot 17).



A very fine rock crystal, enamel and diamond-set desk clock with box, Cartier, numbered 379 and 7137, circa 1915. Sold for \$244,000 March 2015

A gold paperweight depicting Australian flora and fauna, manufactured by

Hammerton and Sons sold to a room bidder for \$134,200, three times the pre-estimated of \$40,000-50,000 (lot 21). In 1922 Melba gave a concert at His Majesty's Theatre in Geelong to raise funds for the Kitchener Memorial Hospital. As a token of appreciation the Mayor on behalf of the citizens of Geelong, presented Melba with this paperweight.

A pictorial highlight of the sale was Arthur Streeton's *The Windsor Damsel, Fishing* (1903), which attracted 12 telephone bidders and well as from the room and internet and achieved \$189,100 (estimate \$40,000-50,000 lot 49). This particularly beautiful and refined composition, with the subject and humorous title held obvious appeal to Dame Nellie Melba.

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.

'Sotheby's Australia was honoured to be entrusted with the sale of Property from the Collection of Dame Nellie Melba GBE' said Geoffrey Smith, Chairman of Sotheby's Australia. 'The leading lady of Opera had flamboyance and an impeccable sense of style and the prices achieved recognise the quality and taste of Australia's first international diva.'

AT A GLANCE

Property from the Collection of Dame Nellie Melba GBE

Auction in Melbourne, 31 March 2015, 6 pm

Grand Hyatt Melbourne, 123 Collins Street, Melbourne

Lots of on offer: 162

Pre-sale estimate: \$548,880-746,370

Total sold: \$1,989,808

Sold by volume: 100%

Sold by value: 362.52%

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**Estimates do not include buyer's premium and prices achieved include the hammer price plus buyer's premium.*

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