

CHANCES OF A LIFETIME

WORDS
Philippa Prentice

PHOTOGRAPHY
Lucko Prawito

With items from \$10 to \$10,000, estate auctions are a trove of incredible items. How can you get lucky?



Styling: Juliette Wanty



If you're a seeker of special finds, here's something that might get you going. The Estate — a fortnightly sale from New Zealand's premier auction house, Webb's — makes it easy to get hold of vintage and designer objects, furniture, homeware, soft furnishings, artworks, ceramics and curiosities at modest prices. Merchandised in a retail format to display pieces for viewing, the Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland showroom has become a popular Saturday drop-in destination for estate-sale regulars, who then look forward to the auction action. We can confirm it's an ace avenue for discovering uncommonly cool items, and decorative arts specialist at Webb's, Cam Millar, agrees.

The Estate is like a treasure hunt for grown-ups, Cam! Folk art, books, vintage jewellery, rocket ships... the list of finds goes on! Online The Estate auctions run on alternate weekends, going live on the Friday morning and ending the following Tuesday night, with lots — batches of 10 items — closing every two minutes. You can buy as much or as little as you like at virtually any price point.

Estate sales average 700 lots per auction, so at the same time as the showroom is open for viewing for the current auction, the previous sale is being dispatched and the specialist team are out the back consigning another 700 new lots for you to fossick through the following week. It's a big production and a full house.

What makes The Estate different from other auctions? The selection is much broader than our specialty auctions;

it offers a little of a lot, regularly, and you can pick up almost anything. If you enjoy ritual visits to secondhand shops, it'll be right up your alley.

The Estate has regular fortnightly customers who really seem to enjoy the fun of the search for that item that inspires them, evokes an emotional response or will make a rewarding addition to their home. For some, it's inspired by collecting new items of interest. It can become addictive, for want of a better word.

On the other side of the coin, it's a great place to sell, as we have a huge, discerning customer base looking for >



FIRST DIBS Pictured in the Mt Eden showroom, what does Cam have his eyes peeled for? "I'm constantly redecorating the home I share with my partner with statement pieces from Estate auctions that resonate with me. Our house changes fluidly as items come up that suit our aesthetic, which is constantly evolving."

“IT’S A GREAT THING TO SEE OUR CLIENTS WALK OUT THE DOOR WITH BARGAINS AND GRINS ON THEIR FACES.”



HUNTERS & COLLECTORS Cam says the value of being a regular estate-sale shopper is that with each auction offering hundreds of lots, “if you’re a collector or appreciator who knows what you’re looking for, it means you have a good chance of finding it. If you’re new to buying collectables, you can learn quite a lot by following what we bring to market.”

fantastic things for their home. There’s always something that catches my eye.

So how exactly do people go about viewing and buying? Just head to the Forthcoming Auctions page on our website and click on The Estate. Here you can view the online catalogue and register to bid. We highly recommend visiting the gallery when it’s open for viewing to see your items of interest in person. If you’re unable to come by, you’re welcome to request a condition report and additional information.

Any hot insider tips? It’s helpful to register for the current auction ahead of bidding day and create a watchlist of items you’re interested in. You can then decide which ones you’re going to bid on and what your maximum bids will be; they’ll only be reached if someone else bids up to them, and even if they’re prepared to pay the same maximum, you’ll get priority if you placed yours first. In saying that, if you go into the sales with an open mind, you might get a bargain price on something you didn’t know you wanted or needed — till now.

What are some of the niftiest scores you’ve seen up for grabs recently? A few of the corkers include a 1950s ride-on rocket ship, ancient Roman artefacts, prison art, smash-it-out-of-the-park 1970s Italian designer furniture and many mid-century treasures. Every Estate auction is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, so keeping up to date with our offerings is a good way to not miss out. If you find something that ticks all your boxes, go for it — what have you got to lose? We often get rare items that I know I’ll never see again, and feel fortunate that I can enjoy their presence for the time they’re with us. ■ webbs.co.nz