

On The Internet
Weekly Times Column
By Warren Joel

byjoel

The internet can be your best friend and your worst enemy, all in the one day.

I thought it was time to have a look at the internet and see what part it plays in the art and antique world, both good and bad. Now, I'm not talking about the many internet auction sites that litter the net, but the information that is available to the unsuspecting public.

On the plus side, the internet is one of the most valuable tools I have in my arsenal when doing valuations. As I sit and type this week's column, I have 3 or 4 screens open with different internet site to lookup artists, dates, prices, or just about any piece of information that I will need to finish off a valuation. I need to also point out that all of these sites require you to pay some type of fee for the information, and some charge several thousand dollars for full access. And, all this data is useless unless you have the requisite expertise.

But the clue to all this information is to know what and where to look for the information. Art is a great example of where the net is a great help. Put in the artist name and up comes just about every piece of information that is available, pay a little extra and you can have every item sold at auction over the last 30 years.

But try putting a simple description like "Antique Dining Table" and the whole information stream falls down. There are just too many variables in the pieces of information needed to put together the valuation on that table. And as we have heard many times before, a little bit of knowledge is dangerous.

Where this short fall in information shows up for me is doing the public valuation days I do around the country. "I saw it on the internet for \$10,000" so mine must be worth the same - wrong! Yes, you found the right table, yes you worked out the timber, and you were close on the age. But your table is a 19th Century copy not the original 17th Century table that sold for \$10,000.

Next week: The Tea Caddy.

Free Valuation for Weekly Times readers.

Byjoel will do a free valuation of your collectables via email. If you send a photo and description of your item to valuations@byjoel.com.au I will access the item and respond.

Warren Joel

Warren is a third generation auctioneer and valuer specialising in Art, Antiques and Collectables, accredited by the Commonwealth in 2002 different areas of collectables.

www.byjoel.com.au