

What's In A Number?
Weekly Times Column
By Warren Joel

byjoel

As a valuer I am often quizzed on the significance of the number applied to the base of fine china and glass. This number is used to refer back to a factory based cataloguing and referencing system. However in many cases we are unable to trace the numbers or marks back to the factory due to lost or destroyed records. There are exceptions to this with some of the best porcelain and glass factories documenting their numbering system.

Royal Doulton uses a number system to identify when the production of a particular model was commenced, who modelled it, and when production ceased. From a collector's point of view this is important information as the fewer produced and the greater the age the more collectable the piece becomes.

Royal Worcester is another good example of an important English factory that also uses a numbering system on the base of porcelain wares, however in their case the numbers refer to the shape of a piece. This comprehensive numbering system is extremely useful in ascertaining for instance, if a vase shape should have a cover – an important factor in the valuation process.

Lalique, the French glassmaker, employed possibly the best use of a numbering system whereby the number was used to refer back to the original 1932 catalogue. If a piece of Lalique glass is numbered we know that the piece is part of an original exhibition catalogue, a fact that may well add many thousands of dollars to the value.

At a recent valuation day I was presented with the normal vases, figures, jewellery and other family heirlooms. Late in the day a gentleman arrived with a good Lalique vase out of the 1932 catalogue, only to find that the vase was also engraved with his licence number, as per neighbourhood watch. I understand that it is important to look after the collection but the value of the vase was reduced by as much as \$2,000!

One of the golden rules of collecting is to buy items in the best possible condition and maintain them that way if possible.

Next week: Diamonds Are A Girl's Best Friend.

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.

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Warren is a third generation auctioneer and valuer specialising in Art, Antiques and Collectables, accredited by the Commonwealth in 35 different areas of collectables.

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