

THE AUSTRALIAN

John Cruthers-curated auction a hit for Bonhams

MICHAELA BOLAND THE AUSTRALIAN JUNE 17, 2015 12:00AM

Bonhams' decision to invite art adviser John Cruthers to curate artworks for its Important Australian and International Art auction proved to be a masterstroke, with 77 per cent of 60 pictures he secured for the sale finding buyers in Sydney last night.

Bonhams sold 86 per cent of its total catalogued 109 lots for \$3.89million, off a pre-auction estimate of \$3m-\$4m.

WA-reared Cruthers is an art veteran and expert in female artists. The collection curated by him reflected this with many works in the catalogue from unnamed Perth collections.

Grace Cossington Smith's small oil on hardboard, Lili Kraus in the Town Hall, achieved among the best results, selling for \$170,000 off an estimate of \$50,000 to \$70,000.

The successful phone bidder will pay \$207,000 including Bonhams' 22 per cent buyers' premium.

A much earlier classic still life by the same artist, Blue Glass, fetched \$256,000 (including the premium) off an estimate of \$90,000 to \$120,000.

The auction room was full, with 80 seated and 20 people standing but most successful bids were placed by phone.

Bidding didn't slow for the latter 39 pictures not curated by Cruthers, where the highlight was flea market discovery John Joseph Wardell Power's stylised still life Basket of Fruit which sold for an artist record \$171,000 off an estimate of \$40,000 to \$60,000.

Auctioneer Mark Fraser delayed the beginning of the sale by half an hour when staff could not connect to internet bidding.

The web is becoming a key auction vehicle worldwide but sellers are often disadvantaged by slow connections. It didn't appear that any works sold to internet bidders, with phone bidders by far dominant.

Last week single-owner specialists Mossgreen stumbled with its most ambitious catalogue of Australian art.

Despite 67 per cent of the 141-lot sale finding buyers, most of the big-ticket pieces were overlooked for an auction total of \$1.6 million, including Mossgreen's 22 per cent buyers' premium off a total low-estimate of \$3.9m.

Managing director Paul Sumner said several blue-chip works sold after auction after vendors adjusted their expectations.