

Local

Dusty treasures brought to light

BY STEVEN MAYER
 Californian staff writer
 smayer@bakersfield.com

An old wooden coffee grinder that had seen better days, a footlocker packed with military treasures and someone's memories, a photo portrait of a white-haired Albert Schweitzer ...

Some 300 Kern County residents lugged thrift shop bargains, white elephants and family heirlooms to the Bakersfield Museum of Art on Wednesday for an appraisal event similar to the popular "Antiques Roadshow" on PBS.

TBC NEWS

From paintings to manuscripts to statues, people brought their prized possessions to the Bakersfield Museum of Art to be appraised by Bonhams. Check out the video and additional photos at bakersfield.com.

Specialists from Bonhams auction house in Los Angeles were on hand to evaluate items in a variety of categories, including fine art, furniture and decorative arts, books and manuscripts, Asian art, fine jewelry and more.

For just 20 bucks, attendees could have four items evaluated. Proceeds went to the museum.

"Everyone here is hoping," said Bakersfield attendee



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Ty Cannon finds out from Scot Levitt, vice president/director of fine arts for Bonhams, that the Eugenio Zampighi painting his wife picked up at a yard sale four years ago is worth between \$4,000 and \$5,000.

Mike Cooper.

Hoping one of their heirlooms or one of their yard sale bargains would be set down in front of an expert, whose jaw would drop as he recognized the piece as a long-lost rarity from Picasso's Blue Period.

That particular fantasy didn't come true Wednesday. But many at the event had fun learning more about their treasures — even if it sometimes meant learning their treasures were teetering on the verge of worthless.

"I had a feeling it wasn't of real value," Tehachapi resident Jim Collins said of a painting of a lighthouse he bought at a rummage sale for \$6. "But you never know."

But the fine art specialists did know, and they politely showed little mercy when presented with lesser works that would never make it into an art auction.

"For me, it's kind of an amateur piece," Bonhams Director of Fine Arts Scot M. Levitt told a hopeful attendee who brought in an oil painting. "I hope I'm wrong," Levitt said, although he probably wasn't.

Bakersfield resident John Stumm brought in a landscape painting that had been collecting dust in his garage for 30 years. The artist, German-born Jean Mannheim, became well-known as one of the California Impressionists during

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Experts from Bonhams Auction House, right, came to the Bakersfield Museum of Art to tell area residents, left, what their treasures might be worth.

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APPRAISAL

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the first half of the 20th century. Levitt told Stumm the piece is collectible, but that it's one of Mannheim's lesser works. "One thing about Mannheim and his contemporaries, as their popularity increased they tended to have to crank them out a little faster," Levitt told Stumm. In addition, the composition is a tad on the plain side, Levitt said. "It's all about the composition." Still, even with those caveats, Levitt estimated the painting could sell at auction for close to \$5,000. "I'm not going to keep it in the garage anymore," Stumm said. Vikki Cruz, the museum's curator, said it was the first time the museum had partnered with Bonhams to bring the event to locals. But she hopes it won't be the last. "I think there are a lot of hidden gems in this community," Cruz said. "This is a great way for people to learn more about what they have."



ABOVE: This photograph of Albert Schweitzer by famed portrait photographer Yousuf Karsh was valued between \$2,000 and \$3,000. It is owned by Matt Raue of Bakersfield.

LEFT: The Asian Works of Art table drew a good crowd at the Bonhams appraisal event held at the Bakersfield Museum of Art.

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