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# Artists auction ashes, but their dust is a bust

By LISA GRAY

What is an artist worth? In their *Forever Yours* project, the Art Guys posited that they or, more precisely, their mortal remains, were worth at least \$1 million. Starting April 1, 2007, Jack Massing and Michael Galbreth gave collectors a year to bid on funerary urns and the right to own the artists' cremated remains after each died of natural causes.

On Tuesday, Massing and Galbreth "lay in state" for an hour at Houston City Hall: eyes closed, hands by their sides, on folding tables draped in black. And that night at their studio, in the final hours of bidding, they held a party and exhibition of death-related works.

The mood wasn't quite funereal, but no million-dollar bids were expected. Bidding had peaked in January, when a Fluxus artist — one of those old half-serious pranksters — offered to trade the Art Guys one of his own works, which he modestly valued at \$2.199 million. But the Art Guys held out for hard currency.

The party, too, peaked early: around 75 people at 10 p.m., but dwindling to a dozen or so as the clock ticked toward midnight.

A computer was set up in a corner of the studio, and Massing and Galbreth took turns checking for bids and updating their Web site. "No bids received," they typed at 11 p.m., then 11:15, 11:30, and 11:45.

At 11:57 p.m., Galbreth told the bleary hardcore that this was their final chance to own his ashes. There didn't appear to be a millionaire in the lot.

"Guess we should go join the bidding frenzy," joked Massing's wife, Starr.

Inside the studio, people were quietly saying goodbyes.

"Bidding Closed," Galbreth typed at midnight.