

When all is said...



by
Corinne
Abatt

Mae West furnishings go on auction

In the past few years, C.B. Charles of Pontiac has had thousands of items belonging to movie stars like Ann Southern, Anita Louise, Judy Garland and John Barrymore go across his auction block.

This weekend comes Mae West — and that should be a lulu. Some of the lady's household things were on display at the gallery last week. More were being unpacked hourly. Charles bought the contents of her six-bedroom home on the beach just off Santa Monica freeway. Somewhere around 85 now, living in an apartment, Ms. West, according to Charles, is completely unavailable.

The closest I can come to placing the sampling of Ms. West's furnishings into a period is early brothel. Strangely, both the Southern and West collections

look like they came off stage sets rather than from a private home.

MS. SOUTHERN was heavy into pink — pink rugs, pink chairs, pink crystal chandeliers. Ms. West, on the other hand, liked virgin white lavishly slopped with gold. The grand piano is gold and white, so is a desk, numerous chairs, bedroom furnishings and accent pieces.

Ms. West's sculptures are pretty much of the unclothed figure variety. Her circular bed, small beside today's super king and queen numbers, has a canopy of ivory satin with cute little clusters of eery lace. A discarded wedding dress, perhaps?

Everything displayed in the gallery, auction center at 825 Woodward, Pontiac, across from St. Joseph Hospital,

can be given a G rating. But, that doesn't include the collection of erotica hidden from view.

Scattered in among the pink satin chaise, the white dining room chairs with the light blue velvet seats and the glittering chandeliers are some quality pieces from the West home — Minton and Meissen china, and Oriental and French furniture that somehow escaped the white paint brush.

BUT, THESE PIECES appeal because of the name of the previous owner rather than the name of the maker. Ms. West squirreled away lots of fan letters, Christmas and calling cards — scraps of her life when she was the great screen idol. Lots of these pieces of memorabilia will be auctioned. If you hanker for a suggestive fan letter some guy out in the boonies wrote to Mae West, now's your chance. There's something else almost mesmerizing about seeing such a collection. It's the next best thing to open-

ing the door of the great one's house, walking in, peeking in the drawers, looking under the bed and rummaging through the closets.

And while an electric spark seems to ignite when sitting on the curved edge of Mae West's bed, or when picking up one of her jewel encrusted hats, there is something sad about it all.

House auctions always have a touch of sadness about them. They signal the end of an era for someone's family. In this instance, it's the end of a colorful era for an early sex queen. But, the sadness goes beyond that.

Judging by what I saw, the woman lived on stage rather than in a home. The only items that may reflect her hobbies and leisure pursuits are off-limits.

Was this life as boring and empty as the furniture and possessions would indicate? Maybe not, but I get a little ill thinking it might have been — even if she did crack a little (um — um) smile as she sashayed to the bank.



Weaving demonstrated

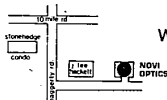
"Warp and Weft," an annual event, will be held at Henry Ford Museum Feb. 24 through March 18. Visitors will be able to try their hands at some of the simple steps in cloth making. Pictured is Carol Hoffman of Beverly Hills who is seated at one of the antique spinning wheels she'll be using during the exhibit. Pictures and demonstrations will trace the making of cloth from shearing, washing and carding through spinning and weaving. The exhibit is open to all museum visitors without cost beyond general admission.

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