

PORTLAND HEIGHTS ESTATE SALE

What did the buyer pay for Warhol soup dress?

Janet Eastman *The Oregonian/OregonLive*

Thousands of bargain hunters, antique appreciators and those curious about seeing inside an 1888 Queen Anne mansion, once the most prominent residence in Portland, gathered at the Markle-Pittock House in Portland Heights Dec. 15-17 for a once-in-a-lifetime estate sale.

More than 5,525 pieces were sold, and the customer traffic was overwhelming, said Gary Newton, president of Peerless Estate Sales, who conducted the sale. He said the line to enter the house at the 10 a.m. opening on the first day extended past the driveway of the 1.2-acre property and down the sidewalk.

"We had to make a plan to get the people outside inside, but stop new people from getting in line," he said.

Typically, the cutoff to enter would have been 3:30 p.m., a half-hour before the official 4 p.m. close. This time, they locked the property's entrance gate two hours early.

"It was like 'Game of Thrones,'" Newton joked. "Sealing off the wall to keep the White Walkers out."

The Markle-Pittock House was occupied for more than five decades by descendants of the former publisher of *The Oregonian* Henry Pittock, but none of the family's possessions were inside. Many of the family's heirlooms remain in the city-owned Pittock Mansion museum, a 1914 French Renaissance Revival-style chateau on a West Hills bluff overlooking the city.

Three miles southeast is the Markle-Pittock House, where two generations of Pittocks lived, from around 1917 to 1970, after



Andy Warhol's artistic use of soup cans inspired the Campbell Soup Company in 1966-67 to create and mass produce dresses with soup cans printed in silk screen ink. The item was discovered tucked between books inside the Markle-Pittock House. *Beth Nakamura, staff*

original homeowner, financier and developer George B. Markle, skipped town to avoid mounting debt during the Panic of 1893.

Once the Pittock heirs moved from 1816 S.W. Hawthorne Terrace, ownership changed hands three times, and the current owner spent the last 40 years restoring the house to its original Gilded Age splendor. The owner plans to put the property on the market in 2024 and hired Peerless Estate Sales to first sell the furniture, art, clocks and other collectibles.

One of the most interesting items was an Andy Warhol-inspired "Souper Dress"

stamped with Campbell's soup labels. The sleeveless paper dress sold for the full asking price of \$3,995. The pop artist's interest in the value of everyday items, especially soup cans, motivated the Campbell Soup Company in 1966-67 to create and distribute A-line cellulose dresses with its label printed in silk screen ink.

The current owner of the Markle-Pittock House recalled sending a check for \$1 to the soup company almost six decades ago for the red, black and white dress. Soon after the package arrived, she forgot about it and the folded frock was found, never worn, tucked between books.

A Campbell Soup Company archivist contacted Peerless Estate Sale on the last day, according to Newton, to buy the dress, which is in the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh and other museum collections. But the item had sold Saturday to a shopper who noticed it on a mannequin and said, "You know what? I never treat myself. I'll take the dress," said Newton.

Newton said each item was priced based on market value, his 24 years of experience in the resale business and the advice of specialist appraisers. Prices, revealed on the first day of the sale, were firm on the first two days, but at 1 p.m. on the last day, everything was discounted.

Last-day sales included contemporary items such as a "Spy Hunter" pinball machine made by Bally in 1984 that sold for \$1,400 and a Rowe AMI CD jukebox for \$900.

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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SALE

- ▶ Two hand-crafted Victorian dollhouses with chandeliers that light up were purchased for \$2,500 each and may eventually be displayed at a miniature museum, said Gary Newton of Peerless Estate Sales. Restorer Jorge Solis used a tiny wood lathe to replace missing balusters. Solis, a skilled finish carpenter, managed the Markle-Pittock estate for 21 years and was responsible for many of the upgrades and restoration projects that adhered to the architectural restrictions of the house listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- ▶ The Magnificent Windsor "potbelly" wood-burning parlor stove No. 22 sold at the full asking price of \$1,650. The stove was made of enameled cast iron circa 1910 and manufactured by the Lakeside Foundry of Chicago owned and operated by Montgomery Ward 1904-1920.
- ▶ A Victorian double-size bed of burled walnut with a matching marble-top mirrored dresser is in the mover's truck on its way to a Salem house owned by a regular customer of the estate sale company. The buyer also took home an 8-foot-long piece of original wainscoting that had been removed from the Markle-Pittock library and replaced by glass-door bookcases.
- ▶ A Jacobean Revival walnut canopy bed was priced at \$850 and sold for \$425. The three-quarter-size bed has tall, carved twisted posts, and the thin rails above the headboard are for fine fabric panels. "The head and foot boards are caned ... restored at tremendous expense," Newton said.

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