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ART & DESIGN

## Collectors Still Savor Shirley Temple Black Memorabilia

Antiques

By EVE M. KAHN OCT. 6, 2016



Shirley Temple at about 17, painted by her cousin Robert Ayers, a film studio illustrator. Credit Heritage Auctions

Last year, Theriault's auction house held sales in New York and Kansas City, Mo., of her collections, including costumes, dolls, posters, scripts, sheet music, scrapbooks and musical instruments. Through the auctions, a few of her dresses ended up at institutions like the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the Santa Monica History Museum in California. Her childhood typewriter, which sold for \$4,500, went to the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History.

On Dec. 5 and 6, Heritage Auctions in Dallas will offer her

trophies, tableware, porcelain, books signed by politicians (including Richard M. Nixon and Henry A. Kissinger) and souvenirs from her service as an ambassador in Ghana and the former Czechoslovakia. Some of her furniture in the sale had previously belonged to the publisher William Randolph Hearst, who was an insatiable collector. Gowns, tap shoes and ballet slippers have been consigned. A diamond-studded charm bracelet was a gift from the actor and dancer Bill (Bojangles) Robinson. A Tiffany table lamp with a flowered shade (estimated to sell for up to \$90,000) came from the set of one of her TV shows.

The actress, who died in 2014 at 85, had made plans to donate some possessions to institutions. Her son, Charles Black, said that the family is finalizing the details of gifts to the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum in Honolulu, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' Academy Museum under construction in Los Angeles and the United States Diplomacy Center in Washington, which is scheduled to open in 2018.

Last year, Melissa Tonnessen, a New Jersey schoolteacher, founded a fan club, Shirley's Army. (Mr. Black and other family members have been inducted into the army.) Mrs. Tonnessen owns hundreds of objects related to the actress and uses dressmakers' forms to display a dress made of pale green silk crepe and a jumper in blue-and-white plaid. (The jumper cost \$850 at Theriault's.)



Shirley Temple's tap shoes. Credit Heritage Auctions

At last year's sales, Mrs. Tonnessen said, the clothes' pristine condition and vibrant fabrics were impressive; the family had kept them well protected in storage. "It was stunning to find out what colors they really are," she said, since the movies were mostly in black and white.

The clothes are trimmed in smocking, ruffles and lace, and they are reinforced with closely spaced hooks and snaps. They were engineered to stay snugly in place on the actress's body while she danced. Michelle Tolini Finamore, a fashion arts curator at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, wrote in an email that she has been researching the largely forgotten dressmakers who tailored the star's costumes.

"People were cheering for one another," Mrs. Tonnessen said of the auctions. "There wasn't this terrible feeling of competition." She took notes for what she calls a "Who has what list."

Club members help research one another's findings, partly by scrutinizing film stills and newspaper clippings. When Mrs. Tonnessen acquired the green dress, she was told that it had appeared in "Just Around the Corner," a 1938 musical about an impoverished girl's adventures in hotel living that also starred Mr. Robinson. Another fan informed her that the actress had also worn it in 1938 in "Little Miss Broadway," in which she plays a resourceful and irresistibly talented orphan.

Mrs. Tonnessen said the actress was an unusual example of a star who was allowed to keep her costumes. She rarely wore any in more than one movie.

Some pieces sold at Theriault's have already returned to the market. When collectors in the fan club find something important for sale, they alert one another. "We call it a rescue," Mrs. Tonnessen said.

Last month, the Leominster Historical Society in Massachusetts displayed the holdings of Nancy Bilotta, a fan club member who has acquired the actress's christening gown and her glass powder jar with a monogrammed silver lid. Leominster has a little-known connection to Shirley Temple: Starting in the 1930s, a factory there made doll carriages that were emblazoned with her portrait; the hubcaps bore her name.



Emilio Terry drew this masked ball attendee on a Havana hotel's stationery in 1928. Credit 2016 Emilio Terry/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/Eerdmans Fine Art

Mrs. Tonnessen said the star's onscreen persona keeps motivating the collecting group. "Shirley still inspires happiness and optimism," she said.

## Attention for an Architect

Emilio Terry, the mid-20th-century architect, designer and artist, applied obelisks, interlocked spirals, scallop forms and gnarled coral textures to jewelry, furniture, garden ornaments and chateaus. Mr. Terry, a Havana native who inherited a sugar fortune, spent most of his career in France, working for and befriending aristocrats, industrialists and intellectuals like Salvador Dalí, the cosmetics magnate Helena Rubinstein and the illustrator and set designer Christian Bérard. Mr. Terry's archives, stored at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, have scarcely been published, and his work has been little exhibited in the United States.

“In Search of Emilio Terry,” a show and sale at Eerdmans Fine Art in Manhattan from Oct. 20 to Nov. 12, will combine his sketches and furniture with architecture and design reference books that he kept in his library. Scholars of his work will lecture during the show’s run.

Few of his interior designs remain intact. Last month, Christie’s in Paris sold the contents of a Parisian home he had furnished. Sketches by Mr. Bérard in the collection depict dancers in flounced costumes and vaulted rooms lined in fringed fabric.