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Eager Buyers Bid Hearty Hello To Di's Dresses

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NEW YORK, June 25 — In what turned out to be an unneeded attack of populism, Christie's slashed its \$5,000 minimum bid to \$500 for all of Princess Diana's 79 frocks eight hours before the charity auction began tonight.

"Fabulous," gushed Falls Church lawyer Heather Thomas, a willowy blonde aching to own No. 39, the Catherine Walker gown with straight black silk crepe skirt and "diamante paste embroidered" bodice made for Di's 1992 visit to India.

"Sure I'd wear it. I'd go to the Kennedy Center. Most people probably wouldn't know what it is but those who do, great," said Thomas, 28.

She and her law student husband, Mark McGovern, 33, weren't sure how high they'd bid, "but if it comes down to it, we might have to call a few of the rich uncles back in Chicago," he said.

No joke. When the auction actually started, eager bidders in the salesroom and on the phones jumped right in with \$5,000 and even \$10,000

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Gowns for the Count

SOURCE, From E1

opening bids, with final prices solidly in five figures.

A Zandra Rhodes white chiffon calf-length dress that retailed for \$3,000 fetched \$41,400 and a black silk cocktail dress worn by Diana the night in 1994 that her estranged husband admitted on television he'd committed adultery went for \$74,000.

It was clear from the get-go that this would be a big-bucks event. When the first gown—three-quarter-length, sarilike white chiffon—brought \$88,750, the room erupted in applause.

Nancy Binz of Lake Tahoe, Calif., said she'd set aside \$75,000 for another Di-in-India gown. Binz planned to give it to Sierra Nevada College in Incline, Nev., for display in the library. Go figure.

Even before the first dress was sold, thrilled Christie's officials crowed that catalogue sales topped \$1.7 million and Monday's invitation-only preview—starring Di herself in a slinky, beaded white Walker—raised another \$140,000. The money goes to five British and U.S. breast cancer and AIDS charities.

It took only until Dress

No. 20 to break the million-dollar mark.

"It's what I call Planet Fame," said Christie's marketing director Meredith Etherington-Smith of the interest in Diana's charity un-dressing, which Ms. E-S dubbed "Sequins Save Lives." The princess credits her son Prince William, 14, with the idea.

Might Di—ranked by the Sunday Times of London as the 916th richest Brit owing to her \$28 million fortune—be doing this for a tax break?

In a word, no, said one tax official speaking generically: "If you take your old clothes to a charity shop you get a positive glow of satisfaction, but you don't get a benefit from the Inland Revenue."



At Christie's, in line for a little royalty.

A Family Weigh-In

■ Iron Mike finally has put it on the record. He confirms that he is indeed hitched to Monica Turner, as first reported in The Source in April. She's the Georgetown University Medical Center pediatric resident who is pregnant with their second child. In an interview with ABC's Alex Wallau, to air Saturday on "Wide World of Sports," Mike Tyson says he needs to win Saturday's Vegas bout against Evander Holyfield because he has a wife and kids to support.

"He talked much more effusively about his marriage than he did about boxing," said Wallau, the network's boxing analyst as well



Tyson, tied down.

as its executive vice president. Referring to his relationship with Turner, Tyson said, "That's the best thing that ever happened to me. I'm just prepared to love my wife and take care of my children and make sure the streets don't get them. . . . The only thing [that's important] right now is making sure that my kids go to great schools, that they become well-educated and they become good people and they treat people nice who are not as fortunate as them."

Turner and Tyson have a daughter, Rayna, about 16 months, and each has a daughter from a prior relationship. She lives with her girls in Bethesda, and Tyson has put one of his large homes, in Connecticut, on the market.

Holyfield, in an odd coincidence, also is married to a physician.

Rep. Chenoweth's Long-Distance Relationship

Hillary Rodham Clinton may have chosen to channel Eleanor Roosevelt. But if Rep. Helen Chenoweth (R-Idaho) had her wish, she'd hang out with suffragist Susan B. Anthony.

"I really wish I could know Susan B. Anthony personally so that I could talk to her about the suffragist movement," Chenoweth said yesterday. "She was not afraid to articulate her beliefs and referred to abortion in her writings as an evil."

Chenoweth spoke up at a Hill news conference held by the Susan B. Anthony List, a PAC for Republican women. The national organization is dedicated to electing antiabortion women to Congress.

Jane Abraham, wife of Sen. Spencer Abraham (R-Mich.), is the organization's president.

Whether the feminist icon Anthony, who died in 1906, was indeed antiabortion is up for interpretation.

"Her pro-life heritage has been shamefully hijacked by the extreme feminists who refuse to face reality," Chenoweth offered in a release.

Today, the suffragists sashay into the Rotunda. After



Set in stone? Susan B. Anthony, center, still a matter of debate.

linguishing for decades in the U.S. Capitol basement, the statue commemorating Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott makes the official move (cost: \$83,000) to its new perch. Among those to take part in a morning ceremony will be "20/20" correspondent Lynn Sherr, who said, "I've read everything that Susan B. Anthony has ever written. . . . She's never said anything on the subject of abortion at all."

Meanwhile, the National Political Congress of Black Women has its own ax to grind: Today, members are speaking out against the exclusion in the statue of black suffragist Sojourner Truth.