

The City of West Hollywood presents

Angel of Compassion

paintings by S. P. Harper

of jewels that were sold to benefit

the Elizabeth Taylor AIDS Foundation

These seven paintings feature images of jewels that were originally owned by Elizabeth Taylor and sold by her estate to benefit the Elizabeth Taylor AIDS Foundation after her death. Prior to their auction in 2011, these jewels were displayed on a four stop worldwide tour, including at the Pacific Design Center gallery space across the street from the West Hollywood Library.

Dame Elizabeth Taylor (February 27, 1932 – March 23, 2011) was one of the most popular Hollywood movie stars, and a leading activist and philanthropist for HIV/AIDS causes, whose personal life was the subject of constant media attention. Taylor began as a child actor before becoming the world's highest-paid movie star in the 1960s. Some of her movies include National Velvet (1944), Father of the Bride (1950), A Place in the Sun (1951), Ivanhoe (1952), Giant (1956), Cat on a Hot Tin Roof (1958), Suddenly, Last Summer (1959, won a Golden Globe); Butterfield 8 (1960, Academy Award for Best Actress), The V.I.P.s (1963), The Sandpiper (1965), The Taming of the Shrew (1967), and Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? (1966, Academy Award).

Taylor was one of the first celebrities to participate in HIV/AIDS activism and helped to raise over \$270 million for the cause. She co-founded the American Foundation for AIDS Research in 1985 and the Elizabeth Taylor AIDS Foundation in 1991. From the early 1990s until her death, she dedicated her time to philanthropy, for which she received several accolades, including the Presidential Citizens Medal in 2001.

Taylor began her philanthropic efforts in 1984, helping to organize and by hosting the first AIDS fundraiser to benefit the AIDS Project Los Angeles (APLA). In August 1985, she and Michael Gottlieb founded the National AIDS Research Foundation after her friend and former co-star Rock Hudson announced that he was dying of the disease. The following month, the foundation merged with Mathilde Krim's AIDS foundation to form the American Foundation for AIDS Research (amfAR). As amfAR's focus was on research funding, Taylor founded the Elizabeth Taylor AIDS Foundation (ETAF) in 1991 to raise awareness and to provide support services for people with HIV/AIDS, paying for its overhead costs herself. Taylor testified before the Senate and House for the Ryan White Care Act in 1986, 1990, and 1992. She persuaded President Ronald Reagan to acknowledge the disease for the first time in a speech in 1987. Taylor also founded the Elizabeth Taylor Medical Center to offer free HIV/AIDS testing and care at the Whitman-Walker Clinic in Washington, DC, and the Elizabeth Taylor Endowment Fund for the UCLA Clinical AIDS Research and Education Center in Los Angeles.

She once explained to Vanity Fair that she "decided that with my name, I could open certain doors, that I was a commodity in myself – and I'm not talking as an actress. I could take the fame I'd resented and tried to get away from for so many years – but you can never get away from it – and use it to do some good." Taylor was honored with several awards for her philanthropic work. She was made a Knight of the French Legion of Honour in 1987, and received the Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award in 1993, the Screen Actors' Guild Lifetime Achievement Award for Humanitarian service in 1997, the GLAAD Vanguard Award in 2000, and the Presidential Citizens Medal in 2001.

Taylor was considered a fashion icon, receiving the Lifetime of Glamour Award from the Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA) in 1997. She collected jewelry through her life, and published a book about her collection, **My Love Affair with Jewelry**, in 2002. After her death in 2011, her jewelry and fashion collections were auctioned by Christie's to benefit her AIDS foundation, ETAF. The jewelry sold for a record-breaking sum of \$156.8 million, and the clothes and accessories for a further \$5.5 million. Before the auction, her jewelry collection was displayed on a four stop worldwide tour, including at the Pacific Design Center across the street from the West Hollywood Library.

From January – June 2011, photographer Catherine Opie was given unprecedented access to Elizabeth Taylor's home at 700 Nimes Road. Opie took 3,000 images; 129 comprised the completed study which was published in 2015 as an art book titled **700 Nimes Road**, with a 2016 exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA). As Opie related to the Daily Mail: Taylor's "legendary jewels sparkling in the sun were captured on their final day at 700 Nimes Road, and are represented at both the beginning and end of the book. One of the last images made is of the jewelry in a paper bag the day Christie's packed everything up for auction. On that last day, we put the jewels out in the sun to mark a moment of silence for her beloved and monumental collections."

Both of these books, **My Love Affair with Jewelry** and **700 Nimes Road**, are part of the LA County Library collections.

Artist Bio

S. P. Harper paints and sculpts abstract geometrics using recycled materials. What begins as refuse is repurposed, transforming base materials into noble objects. Diverse media such as discarded canvas, tablecloth, wallpaper, curtain, lath and plaster scrap become surface medium. By reforming and re-employing, the work fits into eco-centric art (aka neo-materialism) to reduce, reuse and up-cycle. Harper synthesizes historical and contemporary styles by mixing the classical tradition of still-life painting with modernism. Background recycled patterns disappear behind opaque oil paint rendering, reappearing through transparent acrylic wash. Eternal flames emerge in facets which reflect and transfix. She is inspired by her grandfather, Archibald Picking, who was a diamantaire (diamond cutter) before becoming a conductor for Pacific Electric Railway Company (also known as the Red Cars).

Harper studied art at American University in Paris, France, USC Roski School of Art and Design (BFA) and advanced studies at ArtCenter in Pasadena. After spending 12 years in New York, Harper returned to Los Angeles to teach and practice eco-centric art. She has exhibited internationally at Neutra Institute Museum; Autry Southwest Museum; Torrance Art Museum, Museum of Art & History, Lancaster, CA; Centro Cultural di Milano, Milan; The Holy Art, The Factory Gallery, London; and The Living Room Gallery, W Hotel Hollywood.

About the City of West Hollywood's Arts Division

The City of West Hollywood's Arts Division delivers a broad array of arts programs including Art on the Outside (temporary public art), Arts Grants, City Poet Laureate, Drag Laureate, Drag Story Hour, Free Theatre in the Parks, Human Rights Speaker Series, Library Exhibits, Summer Sounds + Winter Sounds, Urban Art (permanent public art), the WeHo Pride Arts Festival and WeHo Reads literary series. For more information about City of West Hollywood arts programming, please visit www.weho.org/arts.

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