

CHAPTER ONE

RIVALS EVEN IN DEATH
New York 1965–1967

DURING THE EARLY EVENING of Friday 29 April, 1966, in an atmosphere of tense, almost palpitating excitement, over seven hundred people were gathered in the Madison Avenue premises of New York's prestigious Parke-Bernet Galleries. There was a hush as auctioneer John Marion, the man known as a 'wizard run by an adding machine', took the gavel to start the Friday evening sale, the last in a series that had started the previous week. In the space of ten days, Parke-Bernet had placed under the hammer one of the largest – and certainly most famous – private collections ever to come on the market *en masse*. The belongings of their remarkable owner would, at the completion of the sales, fetch over \$2,600,000 (more than \$14,000,000 today).

There had been so much to catalogue, including as it did the contents of five homes in three countries, that it had taken over a year to complete, involving at least one change of auction house and a series of family arguments reported to be pretty lethal. Even as Parke-Bernet were launching their sales, it seems quite possible that they did not have the collections in their entirety – the owner's lawyer, himself an executor of her will, having received offers from interested parties to acquire favoured items, with, it seems, some prepared to offer the added inducement of payment to a Swiss Bank.

There had been much gossip and eager anticipation amongst specialist dealers about this particular sale. Many were absolutely purring with pleasure, in spite of – or maybe because of – knowing they would be going head-to-head with the steely determination of museum directors from all over the world. This then was no ordinary sale.

Observing the crowded rooms with a self-satisfied smile was Peter

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Wilson, chairman of Sotheby's in London, the new owners of Parke-Bernet. His voracious skills in marketing and public relations were legendary, as was his tenacious grip on the firm's finances. Peter Wilson wasn't a man to stint if it meant winning a victory, all virtues he shared with the woman whose belongings were being sold – Madame Helena Rubinstein.

Just the week before, Wilson had conducted the opening sale of the series, 'Modern Paintings and Sculptures – Part One'. The total bids had reached just under \$1,450,000, with Brancusi's polished bronze, *Bird in Space*, reaching \$140,000 in just seventy-five seconds. A most satisfactory result for Wilson, who liked to get results, and had worked his legendary charm at the rostrum. Whilst the artists' names were amongst the most acclaimed and desirable in modern collectible terms, with works by Picasso, Juan Gris, Paul Klee, Bonnard, Degas, Marie Laurencin, Fernand Léger, Henri Matisse, Joan Miró, Modigliani, Monet, Tchelitchev, Utrillo and Vuillard, not to mention no less than five Renoirs, they were, according to some experts, not particularly inspiring. In the words of Conor Macklin of London's Grosvenor Gallery, 'The paintings were strong in names but not strong in quality'. Ray Perman, the gallery's managing director, puts it more succinctly: 'The paintings, with a few exceptions, were bin ends.' They were also, like many of the owner's other belongings, a little worse for wear. Frames had been described by one of her acquaintances as being 'chipped so badly they looked as though they had been gnawed by rats' whilst some pictures were frankly rather grubby.

There were however some contemporary gems in the collection, in particular Joan Miró's *Portrait* and Willem de Kooning's *Elegy* which experts say were particularly desirable. The distinguished art dealer David Nash, then working at Parke-Bernet, is more sympathetic in his appraisal of the pictures. 'She bought what she liked best' he says tactfully about Madame, 'and she had the most wonderful Matisse'.

Bravura collectors, smitten by the allure of lesser known contemporary artists, had found 'Modern Paintings and Sculpture – Part Two' more to their taste. Dealers identified the real bargains as pictures by Antoni Clave, Jean Fautrier and Antonio Music. This group included, according to Conor Macklin, 'what are regarded today as some of the best works by these artists'. As before, it was the sculpture which fired the buyers' imagination, with pieces by Ossip Zadkine and a collection of breathtakingly beautiful heads by Polish sculptor Elie Nadelman, fetching the highest prices.

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But for the collector with good taste and an eye for beauty, the real treasures were to be found in the sale 'Modern Drawings and Prints'. Showing the same creative flair with which she had built up her business and buying with a more assured hand than when she had selected her paintings, there were dozens of sublime nineteenth- and early twentieth-century engravings, etchings, lithographs, drawings and watercolours. David Nash acknowledges the collection as 'really exceptional'. Madame was, however, as with so much of her life, ahead of her time in amassing these works, which fetched comparatively little. As Ray Perman explains, 'They were great quality, but it is only in recent years that drawing has been appreciated'. Artists included Léger, Brancusi, Buffet, Degas, Derain, Dufy, Juan Gris, Helleu, Marcoussis, Matisse, Modigliani, Pascin – and Picasso.

John Richardson, Picasso's friend and eminent biographer, acknowledges the pencil drawings as being 'quite, quite wonderful' and Conor Macklin cites the two 1907 gouaches which were studies for Picasso's masterpiece, *Les Femmes d'Alger*, as being 'hugely important'. The sale list was a roll call of talent made all the more enticing by the fact that Madame had bought the majority of them from each artist privately. She had known them all.

Although Wilson wasn't taking the closing sale, he understood better than most the potential in what was to be sold on that rainy night, having observed with great satisfaction the astonishing result of the previous week's sale in the same category, when two pieces had sold for \$24,000 and \$27,000 respectively. Whilst not large sums, they were world records for their genre and he was even more confident of this, the second half.

As the public strolled through the galleries during previews, one can only wonder at their impressions of the person whose grand passion had been to amass such a plethora of possessions. What did they think when looking at the suite of translucent 'Lucite' furniture, which included her famous illuminated sleigh-bed from which she had long tyrannised staff at early-morning breakfast meetings?

It might have entertained them to know she had been an obsessive bridge player and, when paired against any new, or particularly gifted opponent, was wont to move one of the larger pieces from her African art collection to within a whisker of their chair before the rubber, realising that anyone playing a game requiring great concentration was likely to lose it when faced with a savage carved figure with a beard of human hair. Madame was a woman who liked to win.

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And she was a winner, losing only her final battle – with death – on the first of April 1965. Those who knew her well thought, when they heard the news, that it must be a mistake. She had, after all, died on April Fools' day. Even then, she had defied the odds, living to her ninety-fourth year and working at a pace which was almost as demonic as her beloved African fetish figures. In death, she ruled as imperiously over her belongings as she had done in life. She decreed they should be sold, despite the fact that over a hundred eager relatives may have expected their share of the booty, almost all of them having worked for her at some point or another, some for their entire careers.

It was not to be. She made specific bequests, leaving paintings here and there to office managers and far-flung relatives, and specifically left to her sisters and a few favoured nieces some *extremely* important pieces from her fabled jewellery collection. The rest of this gorgeous, if sometimes gaudy, collection of jewels, an integral part of Madame's personality, had been sold by Parke-Bernet a few months earlier. The famous jewels, however, had fetched just under \$372,000 (over \$2,000,000 today), with some friends observing it was a fraction of what they were worth. Others at the auction like society jeweller Kenneth J. Lane acknowledges that 'a lot of the stones were flawed and settings often damaged' and as the big and splashy stones were not the fashion mood of the time, the disappointing result of the sale came as no surprise. As a significant number of particularly fine pieces, including a black and white pearl necklace, Madame's signature five string cabochon ruby necklace, not to mention her seven string necklace rumoured to contain the missing strand from the Maharajah of Baroda's legendary family pearls, were bequeathed to relatives, the sale it seems was merely the 'best of the rest'. Almost all the rest of her possessions, after a lifetime of collecting, a hobby she described as her greatest passion, were destined to go under the hammer. It was almost as though she could not bear for anyone else in the family to have them, or to squabble over them. 'Better they should go,' she might have said. And go they did.

Absent were certain pieces which today would be considered hugely important, in particular her clothes and furs. Madame was *very* particular about her furs, which included sables, chinchillas, minks and rare Somali leopardskins fashioned into a luxurious coat by Christian Dior. Her clothes were by Worth, Poiret, Chanel, Schiaparelli, Lanvin, Balenciaga, Fath and Dior. Their omission is perhaps understandable as, in the 1960s, such

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sublime items were not considered as collectible as they are today. Her clothes, like most of the fabled shoe collection of the great fashion icon Rita Lydig, simply disappeared. Possibly they found their way into the wardrobes of friends and relatives, the furs in her Paris house were said by someone close to her to have been 'stolen by her maid' who, presumably having suffered five decades of penny-pinching wages, simply helped herself.

The sale poised to start, however, was the one the experts had been waiting for. In John Marion's recollection, 'there were more prestigious dealers from Europe than we had ever seen in New York for this very specialised category of sale. It was a professional and sophisticated audience.' The cover of the catalogue simply said, 'The Helena Rubinstein Collection. African and Oceanic Art. Parts One and Two'. The endpapers showed the breathtaking view from the vast roof terrace of her Paris apartment on the Quai de Bethune, where Bruce Chatwin, protégé of Peter Wilson and then Head of Antiquities at Sotheby's, had spent several weeks cataloguing the collection. By her own admission, Madame Rubinstein had 'put out the best bits' in Paris, saying sagely, 'The French appreciate that sort of thing.' Bruce Chatwin didn't seem to appreciate it very much however, writing to his mother-in-law, 'Helena Rubinstein wore a lot of people out during her long life, and she retains that capacity in the grave. We work from 9 till 8 in the evening and we still get nowhere.'

The team at Parke-Bernet responsible for describing what, in 1966, was still a little-known genre of antiquities, took pains to consult with the few experts in the field anxious to establish sound provenance. Their task was not helped by the total lack of paperwork or reference notes on many of Madame Rubinstein's pieces – as a cash buyer, she cared little for receipts and seemingly less for historical data. One such expert was M. Henri Kamer of the Musée de l'Homme in Paris who became, it seems, an ex-officio adviser to the auction house.

The sale however nearly didn't happen at all – at least, not in New York. The French government were unwilling to grant an export licence, at the eleventh hour becoming surprisingly protective about losing treasures from its French-African colonial heritage, so it looked as if the collection would be stranded in Paris. Eventually a deal was brokered between the Rubinstein executors, Parke-Bernet and the French government, with Mr Kamer's museum the beneficiary of, according to David Nash, 'several meaningful pieces', whilst the rest was allowed to be shipped to New York.

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Parke-Bernet's catalogue notes and bibliography included reference to MoMA's important exhibition 'African Negro Art' in 1935, which effectively launched interest in the topic in America. Helena Rubinstein lent seventeen pieces to this exhibition, although intriguingly only five of them were included in the Parke-Bernet sale. Chatwin also drew heavily from one of the most important reference books on the subject, *Sculptures Soudanaises*, published by the French traveller-collector F.H. Lem in the 1940s. The catalogue text said, 'Madame Rubinstein's collection had been acquired mostly in Paris, at auction sales and from dealers before the War and, to a lesser extent, after it.' It went on to say that 'her major purchases had been from F.H. Lem who had lived in Africa in 1934–35 and who had hoped to establish a museum in Dakar'. His plans collapsed when the funding failed to materialise, so, short of money, not to mention short of space, he sold virtually his entire collection to Madame, who was short of neither.

Most other reference books referred to in the catalogue were written in the 1950s and 1960s, in particular texts by William Fagg, whose career as Keeper of Ethnography at the British Museum qualified him to opine on the complex history of these often mysterious pieces. He described the most highly prized piece in the Rubinstein collection, her Cameroon Grasslands statue of a royal titled woman, otherwise known as *The Bangwa Queen*, glowingly. 'She bids fair to be the finest expression of movement in all African sculptures,' wrote the admiring Mr Fagg.

It is unusual, even in the hands of experts, for auction houses to get everything right. David Nash points out that 'in the early 1960s the state of scholarship was really not so terrific in auction houses. It was very difficult to assess both quality and provenance without making *some* mistakes.' Chatwin's strangest mistake was the inference that Madame Rubinstein had bought her African art before the Second World War, when she had already become a keen collector before the First World War. He clearly didn't know of her friendship with the sculptor Jacob Epstein in London as early as 1909, when, prompted by Epstein, she started buying African art. There was no mention that by 1925 the American media were already saying that her collection was 'coveted by museums' nor that she had, by 1928, masterfully inveigled *The Bangwa Queen* out of the man described as 'the dean of African art collecting', Paris *über*-dealer, Charles Ratton. This move was as brilliant and Machiavellian as the one Ratton had made when he had sent his colleague in Berlin to inveigle the piece out of the safe haven of the

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Volkerkunde Museum, where it had been on display for over thirty years. To this day, curators at the museum find it hard to discuss this particular *faux pas* on the part of one of their long-dead directors.

In what was, for Helena Rubinstein, a remarkably forthright admission, she once wrote, 'I have always favoured the unusual and when I followed such sound advice as Jacob Epstein's, as well as my own "inner eye", my purchases were invariably good.' What she didn't say is that along with her glorious prints and her collection of Belter furniture, the African carvings were top of her shopping list, in the beginning at least, because they cost next to nothing. She would probably have had to pay no more than a few dollars for any item pre-1920.

At the Parke-Bernet Galleries, however, the idea of collecting such mystical treasures at any bargain price was about to end. That eventful night, 125 pieces fetched nearly \$300,000. It was, the experts are unanimously agreed, 'a benchmark sale'. It was the night that a little-known niche sector in the art world crossed the line and became a major collectible. The Helena Rubinstein auction of African and Oceanic art established the genre in today's terms. A noted dealer in New York grumbled to David Nash a few months later about 'how difficult it was to buy in Africa now every villager had a priced copy of the Helena Rubinstein catalogue.' He wasn't entirely joking.

It was a fitting result for the woman who over sixty years earlier had taken a small niche sector in the beauty world – that of face cream, brilliantly imbued it with mystical properties and turned it into a multimillion-dollar empire. Her success inspired countless competitors to join the market, fuelling a boom that has grown into a global industry.

Whilst Helena Rubinstein had several rivals in collecting African art, in the beauty business she had only one. The two of them competed to see who could acquire the most accolades and the most profit. Neither could bear to say her rival's name out loud. To Helena Rubinstein, her competitor was always 'the other one'. To her rival, Helena Rubinstein was always 'that woman'. Between them, these formidable women created the luxury beauty business as it is known today. The 'other one's' name was . . . Elizabeth Arden.

A year before those eventful auction sales, on a sunny day towards the end of April, four people were walking up Fifth Avenue towards La Grenouille, a fashionably swell restaurant in New York, then the favoured

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lunch venue for the upper echelons of the fashion and media world. Moving at a brisk pace belying her eighty-four years of age, and with her listing gait, the legacy of a childhood hip injury, just visible, the hostess was marshalling her group in her normal, rather bossy manner. Her companions were Mrs Ernestine Carter, the distinguished women's editor of the *Sunday Times* in London, accompanied by her husband Jake Carter, Sotheby's roving consultant in America, and Count Lanfranco Rasponi, a public relations consultant of rather flashy good looks with a fine taste in camel cashmere overcoats. The woman bustling ahead was Elizabeth Arden, Rasponi's most valued client. He was somewhat confused by this late-morning exercise, as Miss Arden invariably used her chauffeur and Bentley, even for journeys of a hundred yards. Indeed, the British racing green Bentley had already been dispatched to the restaurant where her chauffeur, Charles, would wait until Miss Arden was ready to be whisked back to her office. He wouldn't have to wait long. She ate like a bird, taking a crisp forty-five minutes for lunch, often leaving her guests lingering over coffee.

Rasponi soon understood the reason for this orchestrated walk. The route from the Elizabeth Arden headquarters passed the doorway of 715 Fifth Avenue, the flat, limestone façade bearing the words 'helena rubinstein'. Here Elizabeth Arden paused, halting her guests. Madame Rubinstein had died three weeks earlier. Waving a hand for dramatic effect towards the beauty salon windows, Arden murmured, 'Poor Helena.' Mrs Carter later wrote, 'Her voice was sad, but her eyes were triumphant.'

The formidable and famous Ernestine Carter and the equally formidable and extremely famous Elizabeth Arden, had first met a year earlier. Mrs Carter had been invited for lunch at Miss Arden's penthouse apartment at 834 Fifth Avenue. It was a hot day, yet Mrs Carter, who felt the heat badly, was kept waiting in the overheated drawing room of Miss Arden, who felt the cold. Wilting in front of a roaring log fire, the central heating turned up, Mrs Carter felt her make-up melting, not an auspicious start for a *tête-à-tête* with a cosmetics tycoon. Following a delicious light lunch, served on a lace-covered table in front of the fire, the by now very uncomfortable guest was horrified when Miss Arden's maid arrived with a tray groaning under the weight, not of iced tea, but all the latest Elizabeth Arden cosmetics. 'I will now make you up myself,' said Elizabeth in her soft, whispery voice. The faster she applied foundation, blusher and lipstick, the faster it melted off Mrs Carter's face. Quite oblivious to her discomfort, Miss Arden, clearly in

her element, started to apply eye make-up. Her struggling guest tried to explain she had an allergy to mascara. Instead of stopping, Elizabeth Arden asked which brand she had been using. Alas for Mrs Carter, she blurted out the terrible truth, 'Helena Rubinstein's'. Whereupon Elizabeth jabbed her eyelashes fiercely with another swoosh of her roll-on black mascara saying sharply, 'That's just boot black.' Her victim's cheeks were black with dripping mascara as she left, groaning gift bag in hand, promptly going to her hotel room to wash it all off.

Having met and written about both ageing doyennes of the beauty industry in the mid-1960s, it's clear Ernestine Carter had a penchant for Helena Rubinstein. Even that, however, was not an easy relationship, as when the two first met at Claridges in London in 1963, Carter describes Madame Rubinstein's conversation as 'uttered in grunts' ingeniously translated by Helena's urbane and charming *homme d'affaires*, Patrick O'Higgins. They met several times thereafter and, as befitted an ex-curator of New York's Museum of Modern Art, married to an eccentric expert on rare books and antiquities, Ernestine Carter and her husband Jake felt drawn to Madame Rubinstein, clearly fascinated by her collections. 'At Madame Rubinstein's,' wrote Carter, 'one never minded waiting as there was so much to look at. She was a magpie collector.'

Despite being in New York in April of 1965, Ernestine Carter would not have been at Helena Rubinstein's funeral, for it was strictly a family affair. Indeed, even her laying-out, which took place at Campbell's funeral parlour on Madison Avenue, the venue of choice for New York's Upper East Side grandees, was very nearly a minor affair. Oscar Kolin, Madame's nephew and executive vice president of the business, was in Japan when his aunt was admitted to the New York Hospital, travelling back immediately on hearing of her death. He found the family and her omnipresent lawyer Harold Weill had made arrangements with almost unseemly haste, planning what they said would be 'a very simple event'. The body of the woman who had lived surrounded by opulent beauty, was shunted up to a room on the fourth floor of Campbell's, described as 'looking like the comfortable sitting room of a Miami Beach hotel, complete with plastic armchairs'.

Used to the thrifty ways of his illustrious client, her lawyer had, it seems, taken the 'budget' option, a move which caused much grief to Patrick O'Higgins, who immediately lobbied Mala, Madame Rubinstein's niece, to help make the necessary changes. Her body was subsequently moved to the

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Williamsburg Room which, at a cost of \$1000 a day, was Campbell's finest. The family had already decreed that no flowers be sent. Instead, it was suggested donations be made to the Children's Blood Foundation, a favoured charity of Roy Titus, her son. Patrick, however, ordered a mass of her favourite flowers, including peonies, roses and delphiniums (holding his head high when Mr Weill later queried the bill) and had her dressed in her latest couture purchase, a brocade suit by Yves St Laurent, accessorised by her glorious black pearls. The best make-up artist at the Rubinstein salon was summoned for her *maquillage*, artfully applied using exactly the right shade of violet dusting powder, and her hair was freshly dyed and swept into her signature chignon. The stage was set for her final triumphant goodbye. During the two days Helena Rubinstein rested at Campbell's the people arriving to pay their respects and sign the books of condolence numbered several thousands. Madame would have been pleased.

By a strange twist of fate, there was upheaval too in New York that Friday and Saturday. Three thousand shop-floor workers at Bloomingdales and Stern Brothers had gone on strike, picketing the stores and demanding a \$1.50 per hour minimum wage and a thirty-five-hour week. Almost all the department stores in New York were paralysed as shoppers stayed at home, avoiding the *mêlée*. As if on cue, a twenty-four-hour taxi strike caused even more chaos with the result that three senior fashion and beauty editors, more used to limousines, were obliged to take the bus up Madison Avenue to Campbell's, getting off at every other corner en route for a fortifying tippie. When the illustrious trio of Sally Kirkland (*Life* magazine), Nancy White (*Harper's Bazaar*) and Eugenia Sheppard (the *Morning Post*) finally arrived at 8.00 p.m. to say goodbye, finding Patrick O'Higgins still there keeping solitary vigil, they were decidedly merry. 'I bet this is the only time Arden didn't mind Rubinstein being ahead of her,' was Sally Kirkland's *bon mot* as she took a nip of scotch from her friend Patrick's flask. She was quite right.

The funeral was held at Mount Olibet cemetery, Queens, where Helena was buried in the same grave as her second husband, Prince Artchil Gourielli-Tchkonja, her gravestone saying she had been born in 1870. Having spent a lifetime bickering with her family, she would have another cause to grumble that 'they always got things wrong' as her birth records in Krakow show she was born on 25 December, 1872. Her fabled black pearls were not buried with her. A relative was later observed at a party wearing the Yves St Laurent brocade suit. Patrick O'Higgins was not invited to the funeral.

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Some eighteen months later, when Campbell's were preparing for the funeral of 'the other one', the director pursed his lips in irritation as bouquet after bouquet in myriad shades of pink, highlighted with just a touch of baby blue, arrived. He had always felt that the Williamsburg Room was more suited to cream, but what could he do? Nothing very much, as there were soon so many floral tributes that the room was in danger of overflowing. The heady scent was becoming sickly sweet, causing one beauty editor to remark, 'Too, too floral, dear, just like her fragrances.'

Florence Nightingale Graham, otherwise known to the world as Elizabeth Arden, died on 18 October 1966, following a stroke, at the Lenox Hill Hospital, where she had endowed a room for her favourite children's charity. 'That woman' hadn't had to wait too long for 'the other one' to join her in the afterlife. The same group of magazine editors, publishers, beauty editors, advertising executives – ever on the alert for a change of agency – and department store management filed past the body of Elizabeth Arden. This time, however, there was no family squabbling about costs. Elizabeth Arden was leaving life as she had lived it, in a glorious haze of pink-filled extravagance.

Even her burial clothes were pink. She was laid out in a ruffled chiffon confection, made for her by Oscar de la Renta, the last of the designers – her *boys* – who had worked for the fashion floor at Arden's Fifth Avenue flagship. Her beauty salon's famous creative director, the world-renowned Italian make-up artist Pablo, for whom *Vogue* had coined the phrase *visagiste*, had taken a full two days to compose himself after a diva-esque attack when he heard the news of her death. It wasn't grief that consumed Pablo, more the suggestion that he might apply her make-up, ensuring that Elizabeth Arden looked every inch the beauty queen even in death. The idea horrified him, particularly as her face had 'slipped' as a result of the stroke, and he offered every excuse to avoid the task, eventually consulting his lawyers to ensure he wasn't in breach of contract in refusing. He wasn't.

After an undignified scramble for a replacement, Miss Harris, who had worked for Elizabeth Arden for over four decades, volunteered for the task. She worked wonders on her late employer's delicate skin, shading her with pink blusher and her favourite baby-blue eye shadow, finishing with her signature pink lipstick. Elizabeth Arden had lived suffused in pink, firm in her belief it was the single most flattering colour, for her and her clients. Her flowers were pink, her tapestry cushions were pink, her cashmere car rugs

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were pink, her silk lampshades were lined with pink, her lightbulbs were pink, her racing colours were pink, her linen sheets – changed every day and ironed after her early evening rest – were pink. Most of her clothes were pink, along with several dozen of her hundreds of pairs of shoes. Her product packaging was pink, the ribbons on her jars were pink. Over fifty shades of Elizabeth Arden lipstick were pink and even her favourite diamond earrings, purchased with the profits from the lipsticks, were pink. When the couturier Elsa Schiaparelli called her signature fragrance ‘Shocking’ and packaged it in a pink flacon, Miss Arden said, ‘Hmm. It won’t work. When people think pink, dear, they think Arden.’

Miss Arden’s eulogy at her funeral service at St James Episcopal Church was read by the Rev. Dr Kinsolving, the eminent vicar to New York’s elite. The same words would be repeated a few weeks later at the memorial service held at one of London’s most socially esteemed places of worship, St George’s Church in Hanover Square. ‘We thank Thee for the spark of creative imagination in Thy servant Elizabeth, as for her ingenuity, energy and enterprise. We thank Thee for her keen perception and her love of beauty, of flowers and of animals, for her flair for life and vitality in living it, for her many friends and kindnesses along life’s way.’

It was remarked by one of her friends that Elizabeth would have preferred her coffin to be pulled by her beloved horses on its final journey to Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, where she is buried in the Graham family plot, alongside one of her three sisters, her sister-in-law, a niece and a great nephew. The adjoining plot is empty – almost as though she were waiting for someone she had loved to join her – only they never arrived.

Being incapable of delegation and somehow believing she would always be there to run her company, Miss Arden left no clear line of succession, although rumour swept the trade that her sister Gladys de Maublanc would take over. Worse, there were no real financial means left to manage it. Elizabeth Arden, unlike her old rival, died with her financial affairs in a woefully tax-inefficient state. She left \$8.5 million in thirty-seven individual bequests from an estate calculated to be valued at over \$30 million. Financial reporters stated that she had probably *earned* more money than any woman in American history. Given the millions she had spent on her horses, and the fortune spent on her houses, the amount she left was impressive. However, Miss Arden did not have the benefits of a Foundation such as the one created by Madame in the 1950s. Instead, her lawyer, one Howard Carter, presided

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over a will which resulted in the American government reportedly claiming over \$35 million in tax. One thing after another went seriously wrong, with the estate becoming embroiled in bitter litigation, resulting in great distress to her beneficiaries, many of whom waited for over six years to receive their inheritance and then only after everything Elizabeth had held dear – her horses, her homes and above all, her business, had been sold to pay taxes.

A year after her death, the contents of her beautiful mansion house in Kentucky were auctioned in Lexington. The sale, held over two days, attracted over 5000 viewers with standing room only when the bidding started. Household effects were displayed piled up on cloth-covered trestle tables and buyers, reported by the local media as ‘being particularly well dressed’, snapped them up. Memorabilia included such diverse items as engraved bookends and even the carriage lamps from outside her porch, to a net-trimmed pincushion and a monogrammed Louis Vuitton trunk, which went for \$9 minus its key. Evening sales were held to dispose of her Louis XVI and Sheraton furniture, along with a group of fine French country armoires. All in all, the auction from her ‘ole Kentucky home’ fetched \$45,000.

Not for Miss Arden her own named sale at Parke-Bernet in New York, although they did sell some of her belongings a few at a time. In November and December of 1968, over fifty pieces of her charming antique furniture were sold in a group auction, simply listed on the catalogue covers as being from ‘the Estate of Mrs E. Graham – Miss Elizabeth Arden’. Amongst the decorative items were Regency chairs, a William and Mary table, papier mâché trays, marble-topped console tables and several pieces of fine Biedermeier. Included were two directoire painted ‘Lits de Repos’ and an 18th century Italian painted bed – in shades of pink. The furniture fetched just \$10,000. According to Miss Arden’s friend Emily Hutchison, the furniture was put up for sale by Patricia Young, Elizabeth’s niece who, Emily says, ‘needed the money’.

It was a sad end for the poor girl from Canada who had worked her way up from nothing to become, during her lifetime, the richest self-made woman in the world.