



January 10, 2010

LOUISIANA STATE EXHIBIT MUSEUM TO PRESENT

THE PURSE & THE PERSON

A CENTURY OF WOMEN'S PURSES

Curated by Curatrix Group

*Secretary of State Jay Dardenne and the Friends of the Museum are proud to present **The Purse & The Person, A Century of Women's Purses, Curated by Curatrix Group**, scheduled to open Sunday, February 14, 2010 and run through April 18, 2010.*

The Purse and the Person brings together life stories buried right under our noses — in the purses carried by our mothers and grandmothers. Developed from a private collection of over 3,000 purses and accessories, this exhibition looks at purses from the inside out, examining day-to-day life reflected in a very personal, very female artifact cache – a woman's handbag. In the mysterious depths of their purses, women reveal their personalities, their fashion sense, and the everyday concerns that populate their lives. What is their image of themselves? What items do they carry to help bolster that image? What do they do outside the home where their purse becomes their tool kit for interaction with the world around them? How do they get around in that world and who goes along with them? What obstacles do they face each day that might require them to identify themselves, communicate about themselves, or even protect themselves? With only the contents of a grandmother's purse to go on, what kind of detailed profile would a forensic scientist draw? Or, is the profiler a curious grandchild whose picture of grandma always includes the magical bag of surprises she carries?

Eight exhibition vignettes examine iconic women of the twentieth century from the Edwardian matron to the Superwoman of recent decades. Each of these figures is a representative of a specific period, but she may also be old or young, rich or poor, urban or rural. As visitors look at what's inside the purses and discover these personalities, they will find familiar objects from purses that they've known as well as objects whose purpose has long since faded. There are curiosities like the combination phone dialer and address book whose handy, rounded tip spared many a manicure from the rigors of rotary dial telephones. There are objects as ubiquitous as lipsticks where it may be hard to imagine a time before they showed up in our purses. And, there are objects like cigarette lighters where it once seemed impossible to think they might disappear from our purses. Specific purse contents may bring to mind the demands of wartime, the excitement of travel or the paraphernalia of motherhood. While some women may be defined by what is inside their purses, others may be interpreted by what's not. The

rouge pot of a 1920s flapper denoted youth and freedom, while the absence of make-up may be an expression of freedom for the counter-culture youth of a later generation.

While the items found on the inside of each purse may leave us wondering why anyone would haul them around all the time, the purses themselves also get a closer look in seven additional vignettes. The twentieth century saw the purse evolve into an accessory as indispensable to most women as their shoes. Specialized bags for all occasions found their way into our closets. Several areas of the exhibition help visitors to explore purses as fashion statements and as idiosyncratic expressions of personality in all their wide range of shapes, colors, sizes, and materials. Purses for all aspects of life provide us with glimpses into a night on the town, a day at the races, or lunch with the ladies. Likewise, when a woman set out to see the world, her purse went along for the ride. These traveling bags carrying memories of home and souvenirs of the road provide snapshots as revealing as any travel journal or postcard.

The showing here in Shreveport is part of a nine city national tour over a three year period containing approximately one hundred purses, one hundred artifacts and photographs. The tour was developed and managed by Smith Kramer Fine Art Services, an exhibition tour development company in Kansas City, Missouri.

The exhibit will be on display until further notice. The public is invited to view the exhibit during regular museum hours: Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. until 4 p.m., Saturday and Sunday, noon until 4 p.m. The museum is located at 3015 Greenwood Road, between Hearne and Jewella Streets.

Admission is free and tours are available by appointment. For more information about the Louisiana State Exhibit Museum and the Secretary of State's Museums Program, please visit <http://www.sos.louisiana.gov/museums> or <http://www.FriendsofLSEM.org>.

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