

Shanghai Star-Wednesdays, July 2, 2014



FOUNDER: Deb Weidenhamer started her auction company in a warehouse in Arizona. PHOTOS BY YENCKA NG FOR SHANGHAI STAR



The excitement of an auction isn't just for millionaires anymore !

The sale season is back, with bold red SALE banner behind almost every display window in town, declaring the opening of one of the city's most brutal battle among women. While the possibilities to score the best bargains on your Christian Louboutin stilettos with grace are remote, there is an alternative that allows you to bag some discount luxury accessories and clothes while sipping champagne: auctions.

iPai, a subsidiary of the American auction company Auction Systems Auctioneers & Appraisers Inc, intends to create a "modern, intimate, and fun auctioning experience" that reshapes your idea of auctions, which often bring to mind the likes of Christie's and a budget of millions of dollars. The weekly events are held at either the showroom of the company's office a sleek office building on Changle Road, with comfortable seating and free flow of wine, or the underground shopping arcade, where it is a stand-up gathering with a noisier atmosphere, attracting passersby with loud bidding and the beat of the hammer.

No deposit is required for admission, but registration with your ID card or passport is required. After registration, each bidder is given a marker and a bilingual catalogue where everything available for auctions clearly listed with prices and details. Of course, offerings from the auction lots are mostly off-season, but all brand new, as promised by the company's founder, Deb Weidenhamer, who started the company in 1995 in a

warehouse in Arizona. A broad selection of what the company classify as “contemporary luxuries” are numbered and neatly displayed on the table for preview before the auction. Early birds are allowed to try on clothes or earrings or test electronic gadgets prior to the kick-off. While top-notch labels like Gucci and Versace account for less than 10 percent of the offerings, local designer jewelry and quality Italian leatherwear are big selling points.

100 to 200 yuan to 1,500 to 2,000 yuan

Starting price range for auction items. Each auction offers a total of 200 or so items.

Items are mostly sourced from the manufacturers, to guarantee the authenticity of the products.

A total of 200 or so items are offered at each auction, with their starting price ranging from 100 to 200 yuan to 1,500 to 2,000 yuan. Offerings vary from week to week, and themed auctions, like the Mother’s Day auction or wine auction, are held often. The strangest item by far is a corset, won by a middle-aged Chinese lady who “wanted more confidence”, revealed Weidenhamer. Essentially, we want to add more fun to the shopping experience in Shanghai that does away with over-enthusiastic sales staff, lengthy queues, and demanding prices, says Weidenhamer, who visits Shanghai regularly to oversee the auctions held.

IF YOU GO

The next auction will be held on July 12 at 2pm, at INSHOP (the underground shopping arcade at Jing’an Temple station), 1605 Nanjing Road W (南京西路1605号). For a preview of the auction lots, check the company’s social website, www.ipaiworld.com, one week prior to the auction. Bring your ID card or passport for admission. The upcoming auction is a simulcast auction, allowing homebodies to bid against live bidders from the comfort of home. Online registration is required.

A Happy Hour Auction will also be held on July 24 at 7pm for office workers to enjoy the excitement and fun of an auction after work. It is held at the showroom of the company, with free drinks and snacks offered (Suite 3308, 989 Changle Road, 长乐路989号)