



NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

RICHARD KING MELLON FOUNDATION GRANT AWARD SUPPORTS SERIES OF FASHION-FOCUSED EXHIBITIONS AT THE FRICK PITTSBURGH

*The Frick's presentation of a trio of exhibitions examining high fashion kicks off this summer with *Killer Heels: The Art of the High-Heeled Shoe**

PITTSBURGH, PA, May 17, 2016—The Richard King Mellon Foundation recently awarded The Frick Pittsburgh a grant in the amount of \$1,000,000 to support a three-year series of major fashion-focused exhibitions, beginning this summer with *Killer Heels: The Art of the High-Heeled Shoe*.

In addition to underwriting the significant costs involved in presenting high quality annual exhibitions, the grant award will support the Frick's efforts to increase its audience and membership base, thereby bolstering its long-term sustainability as a museum.

Frick director Robin Nicholson comments, “Innovative explorations of the world of fashion—both historical and contemporary—are one of the most popular topics in museums today, appealing not only to our existing audience, but also, especially, to newer, younger, visitors. Our three high-profile exhibitions will place the Frick as a leading presenter of fashion exhibitions in Pittsburgh, while also drawing attention to our extensive collection of fashion and textiles, including Adelaide Frick’s exquisite dresses, shoes, and a range of other wonderful accessories owned by the Frick family.”

Nicholson continues, “This exceptionally generous grant is a remarkable endorsement by the Richard King Mellon Foundation of the role the Frick plays in the Pittsburgh cultural community and our ambitious goals for continuing growth, diversifying audience, and increasing accessibility.”

Following *Killer Heels*, this summer's exploration of fashion's most provocative accessory, the Frick will present *Undressed: 350 years of Underwear in Fashion* in fall 2017, featuring highlights from the Victoria & Albert Museum's (London) extensive collection of underwear.

Pulp Fashion: The Art of Isabelle de Borchgrave—the third exhibition in the series, to be presented in fall 2018—features the impressive paper costume creations of contemporary French artist, Isabelle de Borchgrave, whose works, from afar, appear to be masterpieces of tromp l'oeil. Detailed descriptions of the exhibitions follow below.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITIONS

Killer Heels: The Art of the High-Heeled Shoe explores fashion's most provocative accessory and will be on view at The Frick Art Museum from June 11 through September 4, 2016. From 18th-century silk slippers to the glamorous stilettos on today's runways and red carpets, the exhibition looks at the high-heeled shoe's rich and varied history and its enduring place in our popular imagination. As fashion statement, fetish object, instrument of power, and outlet of artistic expression for both the designer and the wearer, throughout the ages the high-heeled shoe has gone through many shifts in style and symbolism.

Going beyond merely looking at shoes, the exhibition tells an important story of cultural and historical significance. For centuries, shoes have been objects of social interest. High shoes were adapted in the European royal courts as a means for both male and female nobility to express power and exclusivity. By the mid-eighteenth century men stopped wearing high heels and they became exclusively female-gendered objects, embodying irrationality, frivolity, vanity, and a propensity for deceitful adornment—traits culturally attributed to women. By the nineteenth century, heels lost their pejorative connotations and came to symbolize femininity and sex

appeal, giving special power to the person wearing them, transforming our way of thinking about women and the way that women think about themselves.

Deadly sharp stilettos, architecturally inspired wedges and platforms, and a number of artfully crafted shoes that defy categorization are featured among the nearly 150 historical and contemporary shoes on loan from designers, from the renowned Brooklyn Museum costume collection housed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and from the Bata Shoe Museum. Designers and design houses represented in *Killer Heels* include Manolo Blahnik, Chanel, Salvatore Ferragamo, Christian Louboutin, Alexander McQueen, Prada, and Vivienne Westwood.

Organized by the Brooklyn Museum, *Killer Heels* is the only venue in the mid-Atlantic / mid-West regions.

Undressed: 350 years of Underwear in Fashion presents highlights from the Victoria and Albert Museum's extensive collection of underwear. This exhibition, which will be presented at The Frick Art Museum in the fall of 2017, will look at the history of private and intimate clothing—from corsets to court dress and boudoir wear to bustles. It explores the manipulation of the body and the importance of foundation garments to the fashionable silhouette. The importance of underwear in fashion history cannot be overstated. The majestic shapes of 18th-century mantuas, the distorted hourglass shapes of the Victorian and Edwardian eras, and Dior's "New Look" were all dependent upon elaborate corsetry, technologically complex petticoats, hoops, and padded underpinnings. It is only since the 1960s that people have been expected to embody the fashionable ideal by way of diet and exercise, and without the aid of foundation garments, so understanding underwear is fundamental to our appreciation of fashion history. It is also important for cultural and social historians, to whom it provides a symbol of changing social mores and attitudes to morality, sex, beauty and gender.

Historically, underwear served the basic function of covering the body for protection and warmth. White linen shifts, chemises, smocks and shirts were worn under outer layers to protect the body from coarser materials, such as wool or canvas, while also protecting the clothes

themselves from perspiration before bathing and laundry were commonplace. Women's undergarments have tended to focus on body sculpting and decoration, whereas men's undergarments have generally been designed for warmth and ease of movement. In both cases, codes of propriety and morality developed around undressing and the showing of undergarments.

The exhibition contains around 80 objects, grouped thematically, and shown alongside contextual photographs, prints, and advertisements from the Victoria and Albert Museum's archives. The museum's collection of underwear dates from 1750 to the present day and includes many rare and never-before-displayed objects. A lavishly illustrated book from the Victoria and Albert Museum's publications accompanies the exhibition.

Organized by the Victoria and Albert Museum, this exhibition is traveling internationally from 2014-2017. Presently, the Frick is the only US venue included on the tour schedule.

Pulp Fashion: The Art of Isabelle de Borchgrave presents an installation of costumes created entirely of paper by Isabelle de Borchgrave and offers an overview of the artist's most important bodies of work: from the white dresses and *Papiers à la Mode* to the Fortuny and Medici collections and her newest creations. This is the third fashion-focused exhibition in the Frick series, to be presented in the fall of 2018. For more than 15 years, Belgian artist Isabelle de Borchgrave has been producing a completely original body of work that is quite easy to explain but very difficult to categorize. Her central project has been to re-create exquisite life-sized historical costumes from paper. From afar, de Borchgrave's creations appear to be masterpieces of tromp l'oeil. Taking inspiration from the rich depictions in early European paintings, iconic costumes and museum collections, photographs, sketches, and even literary descriptions, de Borchgrave skillfully works papers to achieve the effect of textiles: crumpling, pleating, braiding, feathering, and painting the surfaces. The combination of a long and restless artistic career, de Borchgrave's mature work is best understood not only by examining her artistic processes, her sources, and the theoretical discourse that surrounds painting and costume, but also by considering the artist's own social and creative context.

Trained in painting and drawing at the Centre des Arts Décoratifs and the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Brussels, she began her artistic career in the 1960s designing dresses of hand-painted fabric for special occasions; though they were initially intended only for her friends and herself, she quickly developed a significant client list. Since then, her studio has evolved. In the spirit of Andy Warhol's Factory, de Borchgrave's Brussels atelier today teams with young designers, many of them recent graduates of art schools in Brussels, Antwerp, and Gent. Despite first appearances, these creations are not stringent copies of the originals; they are more like impressions. Going well beyond the mere history of costume, her work has become increasingly cinematic, displayed in immersive environments that verge on installation art.

The exhibition is being organized by a consortium of four US museums, including the Frick, and will travel to up to six national venues. It will be de Borchgrave's first major touring exhibition in the US.

ABOUT THE RICHARD KING MELLON FOUNDATION

For more than 60 years the Richard King Mellon Foundation has invested in the competitive future and quality of life in Southwestern Pennsylvania, and in the protection, preservation, and restoration of America's environmental heritage.

The Foundation was created in 1947 by Richard King Mellon (1899–1970), president and chairman of Mellon Bank, a conservationist and leading figure in the financial and civic life of Pennsylvania. The son of Richard Beatty Mellon and Jennie King Mellon, Mr. Mellon served his country in both World Wars and in peacetime, attaining the rank of Lieutenant General, United States Army Reserve, and receiving the Distinguished Service Medal. Following his service in World War II, he returned home to begin work transforming the Pittsburgh Renaissance into a nationally recognized architectural, civic, social, and educational venture.

As a banker and director of major corporations, he envisioned philanthropy as an investment and partnership to improve the city and region where he worked and lived. As a lifelong outdoorsman and sportsman, he, along with his wife, Constance Prosser Mellon, had an equally

strong commitment to preserving wildlife habitat and the natural world. Mrs. Mellon served as chair of the Foundation from 1947 until her death in 1980.

In 2014, the Richard King Mellon Foundation approved 190 grants totaling \$104,578,500, and paid out commitments totaling \$115,292,182. A significant portion of this funding was directed to organizations that enrich local communities, enhance the quality of life in southwestern Pennsylvania and promote the promise of a bright future for generations to come.

ABOUT THE FRICK PITTSBURGH

Located on the Pittsburgh estate of late-19th-century industrialist Henry Clay Frick, The Frick Pittsburgh is the steward of collections left as a legacy to the people of Pittsburgh by Frick's daughter, Helen Clay Frick. The permanent collections include fine and decorative arts, cars, carriages, and historic buildings and objects. Built by Helen Clay Frick in 1969, The Frick Art Museum displays an exquisite permanent collection of European paintings, sculpture, and decorative arts from the 14th to 18th centuries,⁵ and presents outstanding temporary exhibitions from some of the world's finest collections and museums. Clayton, the Henry Clay Frick family mansion, is one of the most intact Gilded Age homes in the United States and possesses general significance as an artifact of American social history and a document of American and regional architecture. Restored to its original glory and opened as a house museum in 1990, an astonishing 93% of Clayton's artifacts are original. The Frick family's carriages and automobiles provided the inspiration for the development of the Car and Carriage Museum. A museum of transportation design and history, the recently expanded and renovated Car and Carriage Museum is home to a collection of more than twenty vintage automobiles. Also included on the Frick's five-acre site of beautifully landscaped lawns and gardens are the Frick children's Playhouse, designed by renowned architects Alden & Harlow, a large working greenhouse (also designed by Alden & Harlow), the Grable Visitor Center, which houses the Frick Museum Store, an Education Center, and The Café at the Frick. The Frick Art Museum, Car and Carriage Museum, The Café, the Grable Visitor Center and Frick Museum Store, grounds, and first floor of Clayton are accessible, and wheelchairs are available on site. Accessible rest rooms are

available in The Frick Art Museum, Car and Carriage Museum and Grable Visitor Center. If requested in advance, tours can be arranged for hearing and visually impaired visitors.

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The Frick Art & Historical Center, a museum, historic site and cultural center serves the public through preservation, presentation, and interpretation of the fine and decorative arts and historically significant artifacts for all residents of and visitors to Western Pennsylvania.