

ChicagoHistoryMuseum

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Media Contact:
Lauren R. Dolan
312-799-2161
dolans@chicagohistory.org

CHIC CHICAGO: COUTURE TREASURES FROM THE CHICAGO HISTORY MUSEUM

More than 60 couture pieces provides an intimate view into the past.

CHICAGO (May 21, 2008) – *Chic Chicago: Couture Treasures from the Chicago History Museum*, opening September 27, 2008, provides the rare opportunity to see more than 60 of the greatest couture treasures from the Museum’s collection. The exhibition will feature Gilded Age gowns by Worth and Pingat to modern masterpieces by Chanel and Versace. The exhibition is a testimony to Chicago women of style who supported innovative fashion designers in the hope of claiming Chicago as chic. Fashion, they believed, was the most dramatic way to re-imagine Chicago as a sophisticated and cultured city. By purchasing and wearing couture fashion, these women aspired to overcome the city’s image as a gritty, industrial, working-class metropolis and its negative reputations as hog butcher to the world, gangland, and the second city. The exhibition, running through July 26, 2009, displays some of the most significant pieces that helped shape fashion history.

The exhibition features examples of the history of fashion from 1861 through 2008; designed by international houses of couture that catered to Chicago women. “The pieces in the exhibition are brought to life through the stories behind the woman that wore them,” said Timothy Long, exhibition curator. “The pieces were worn by notables such as Mrs. Potter Palmer II, Mrs. Charles S. Dewey, Ruth Page, and Mrs. William McCormick Blair to events such as the Coronation of King Edward VII; the Court of Saint James in 1927; and to meet the Queen of England in 1938.”

Chic Chicago: Couture Treasures from the Chicago History Museum will open to the public on September 27, but for individuals curious about how an exhibition like this is put together; a behind-the-scenes preparation area will be on-view to the public starting June 1. Watch as the curator, conservators, and mount makers bring their expertise to the complex process of preparing these treasures for this unique exhibition.

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The Chicago History Museum holds one of the largest and oldest costume collections in the country comprising over 50,000 pieces. Collection holdings date to the 1750s and consist not only of couture pieces, but also those worn by famous, infamous, and everyday Americans. The collection places an emphasis on the provenance of each piece and tells the history and story of each artifact. The Museum has been collecting historical dress since 1898 and exhibiting the collection for over 80 years; but there has never been a comparable exhibition that showcases such a broad range of couture masterpieces from the Museum's collection. A 144 page, full-color, heavily illustrated catalog documenting the exhibition, as well as pieces that are significant within the Museum's collection, will be available at the Museum's store when *Chic Chicago* opens to the public.

The programming in conjunction with *Chic Chicago: Couture Treasures from the Chicago History Museum* will feature fashion-focused films. The first film, ***Unzipped***, on Sunday, October 19, is a documentary about Isaac Mizrahi and his quest to seek inspiration after reading mixed reviews of his 1993 show. The film will be free with Museum admission. A program exploring the growing relationship between political movements, ethics, and the clothes worn by everyday Chicagoans called ***The Politics of Fashion***, on Thursday, November 6, will be part of our In the K/Now series – a monthly series looking at contemporary issues affecting people in the city. Admission for this series is free, but reservations are required. A bus tour, ***Work Spaces, Chic Places***, highlights Chicago artisans and designers will take place on Saturday, January 10. This tour will be \$45/\$40 for Museum members. The Museum's website, www.chicagohistory.org, will have more details on dates and times, and other programs relating to the exhibition as they become available.

This exhibition is based on an installation that was jointly organized by curators Timothy Long at the Chicago History Museum, and Dr. Valerie Steele from The Museum at FIT. A sampling of this exhibition was on display at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City from October 12, 2007 to January 5, 2008. "This was the first time a grouping of costume artifacts of this magnitude traveled from the Museum," said Gary T. Johnson, Chicago History Museum President. *Chic Chicago* is dedicated to the Costume Council of the Chicago Historical Society, and in memory of Hope B. McCormick. Ovation TV is the official network partner for *Chic Chicago*.

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The Chicago History Museum, a major museum and research center for Chicago and American history, is located at 1601 N. Clark Street. The Museum can be reached by CTA buses 11, 22, 36, 72, 151, and 156. Parking is conveniently located one block north of the Museum at Clark and LaSalle Streets (enter on Stockton Drive). Admission to the Museum is \$14 adults with audio tour, \$12 seniors/students with audio tour, free for children 12 years and younger. General Admission is free on Mondays. Please call 312.642.4600 or visit us at www.chicagohistory.org. The Chicago History Museum is affiliated with the Chicago Historical Society and acknowledges the Chicago Park District's generous support of all the Museum's activities.