Chicago History Museum

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The Costume Council Launches Costume Ball

The Costume Ball will celebrate the opening of *Charles James: Genius Deconstructed* at the Chicago History Museum on Friday, October 21, 2011

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS (Monday, September 19, 2011) – The Costume Council of the Chicago History Museum is reviving their signature black tie ball for the first time in over ten years. Launched in the 1970s, the Council hosted the Donor's Ball to help acquire new garments into the Museum's costume collection. This year, the Costume Ball will celebrate the opening of *Charles James: Genius Deconstructed* with a black-tie affair, including dinner, auction and exhibition preview at the Chicago History Museum on Friday, October 21, 2011.

Helen Harvey Mills, whose mother was one of Charles James's muses, is the evening's Honorary Chair. The Event co-chairs are Catherine Eberle, Lawrie Weed and Robin Loewenberg Berger. The ball begins with cocktails at 6:00 p.m. followed by dinner and dancing in the tent-covered Uihlein Plaza. DJ Kiss will be flown in from New York to provide entertainment for the evening.

The Costume Council will also honor one of today's most acclaimed international couturiers, Mr. Ralph Rucci of Chado Ralph Rucci, who will be presented this year's Award for Design Excellence.

A silent auction will take place during cocktail hour, followed by a live auction and raffle. The silent auction includes items donated by Jimmy Choo, Ferragamo, Alexis Bittar and Kimberly McDonald, as well as a style consultation donated by Julie Watson Style, among several other items centered around fashion. The live auction features two exclusive fashion packages, including runway tickets to New York Fashion Week donated by neapolitan collection, hotel accommodations provided by Hyatt Hotels Corporation, VIP admittance and drinks at JIMMY at The James Hotel and lunch for two at the famed The Lambs Club at the Chatwal Hotel. A piece of fine jewelry from Pomellato and a Hermès Birkin bag are the evening's two raffle items. Raffle tickets will be sold for $100 for single tickets and $500 for six tickets.

Costume Ball tickets are available for individual purchase for $500 or $1000 as well as tables of ten for $5000 and $10,000. To purchase tickets, please call Wendy Schiller at (312) 799-2113.

Funds raised from this event will enable the Chicago History Museum to continue to enhance the public's understanding of Charles James and provide thoughtful insight into the Museum's costume collection.

More detailed information on the Costume Ball and *Charles James: Genius Deconstructed* is available by request and also on the exhibition website, http://chicagohistory.org/charles-james.

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The Costume Council is a diverse group of businesswomen and civic leaders spanning multiple generations and is led by Costume Council President, Nena Ivon, who was recently appointed after a longtime career as fashion director for Saks Fifth Avenue's Michigan Avenue store. The Council supports the Chicago History Museum as a leader in the documentation and interpretation of the history and the art of costume. The Chicago History Museum serves as a unique national resource for the preservation, interpretation, and understanding of history through the collection, examination and documentation of costume. The Costume Council proudly supports the collection, which has grown to be one of the world's premier costume collections with over 50,000 pieces dating back to the 1720s, and is the second largest costume collection in the United States.

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. 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.

Charles James: Genius Deconstructed will explore the life and work of American couturier, Charles James, and why nearly 40 years after his death he is still a relevant force in the fashion world. 15 of James's most iconic designs will be on display, including touchable reproductions of four of his most celebrated garments, allowing viewers to explore their unique interior construction. Every garment in the exhibition has a Chicago connection due to James's time working as a milliner in Chicago and his loyal Chicago clientele. Original sketches from fashion illustrator Antonio Lopez, who worked closely with James during nocturnal drawing sessions at the Chelsea Hotel, will also be featured in the exhibition.

Charles James (1906-1978) is widely regarded as the only American designer to have worked in the pure tradition of haute couture and was described as the greatest couturier of his time by the elite Parisian design world. He began his fashion career as a milliner, opening three shops in Chicago before moving to New York in 1930. Although James divided his time between Paris, London, and New York from 1930 to the mid-1940s, the last two decades of his life were spent primarily in New York. James was eager to preserve his legacy and urged his clients to donate the garments he had made for them to museums around the world. By the time of his death in 1978, over 31 major museums internationally contained examples of his work, including the Chicago History Museum.