

Media

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Looking the Part: New Historical Fashion Exhibit Opens at North Carolina Museum of History

RALEIGH, N.C. – Hold on to your corset strings! An eye-popping new exhibit is coming to the lobby of the North Carolina Museum of History on Friday, September 22, 2017.

The N.C. Museum of History presents *The Shape of Fashion*, a new exhibit showcasing 10 different fashionable silhouettes (six represented by artifacts) that show changing trends of dress from the 1800s to the 1900s. The exhibition will be available through May 6, 2018.

Nothing marks an era in history like the clothes people wore – and saved. The clothing chosen for this exhibit comes from the museum’s extensive collection of textiles and features ball gowns, afternoon dresses, and a few examples of men’s and children’s clothing, all conserved and mounted for display.

“This exhibit is a wonderful opportunity for the museum to show just a small portion of the beautiful clothing that we hold in our collection,” shared RaeLana Poteat, who curated the exhibit. “Several of the pieces have never been on view, and others have not been seen by the public in many years.”

Visitors likely will be drawn to the objects and be fascinated by the fluctuations in style that the various pieces reflect. Museumgoers can enjoy seeing what some of these fashions looked like on real people by viewing the many intriguing period photos of North Carolinians included in the exhibit.

The shapes, or silhouettes, people have considered fashionable have changed significantly over time, and often clothing from various time periods is easily identifiable by these shapes. The “looks” include everything from the “column” shape of the 1790s, which harkened back to Greek statues and the classical period, to the enormous “leg-o’-mutton sleeves” of the 1890s to the modern “sheath” look of the mid-1960s.

“*The Shape of Fashion* is an exciting new exhibit that showcases our extensive North Carolina clothing collection and the talents of our curatorial and conservation staff,” said Ken Howard, Museum Director. “It’s a fun look back at styles of dress we might consider outrageous today – just imagine what they’d think of us!”

Structural undergarments were key to creating these shapes, and visitors will see images of the pieces, such as corsets and bustles that made these outrageous silhouettes possible. Videos of

models donning and moving in reproduction historical dress will show how these clothes behaved on actual bodies, and a selfie station will provide opportunities to take fun snapshots for the whole family.

Themes explored include how fashions worn by the wealthy were adapted by people in the working class, as well as how clothing styles were – and remain – cyclical, with certain elements being revisited and reused over time. Visitors will also note how clothing became less restrictive as women began entering the workforce.

Programming and events to support this exhibit include a historical fashion show and a History à la Carte lunchtime talk about trends in footwear, among others.

The exhibition opens in conjunction with another feast for the eyes: the small lobby-case exhibit *Louis C. Tiffany: Art and Innovation from the Wester Collection*. More details about upcoming exhibits can be found on the museum's website at ncmuseumofhistory.org.

About the N.C. Museum of History, a Smithsonian affiliate

The N.C. Museum of History is located at 5 E. Edenton Street in downtown Raleigh. Hours are Monday through Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday, noon to 5 p.m. The museum collects and preserves artifacts of North Carolina history and educates the public on the history of the state and the nation through exhibits and educational programs. Each year more than 400,000 people visit the museum to see some of the 150,000 artifacts in the museum collection. The Museum of History, within the Division of State History Museums, is part of the N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.

For information about the N.C. Museum of History, call 919-807-7900 or access ncmuseumofhistory.org or follow on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google+ or YouTube.

About the N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

The N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (NCDNCR) is the state agency with a vision to be the leader in using the state's natural and cultural resources to build the social, cultural, educational and economic future of North Carolina. NCDNCR's mission is to improve the quality of life in our state by creating opportunities to experience excellence in the arts, history, libraries and nature in North Carolina by stimulating learning, inspiring creativity, preserving the state's history, conserving the state's natural heritage, encouraging recreation and cultural tourism, and promoting economic development.

NCDNCR includes 27 historic sites, seven history museums, two art museums, two science museums, three aquariums and Jennette's Pier, 39 state parks and recreation areas, the N.C. Zoo, the nation's first state-supported Symphony Orchestra, the State Library, the State Archives, the N.C. Arts Council, State Preservation Office and the Office of State Archaeology, along with the Division of Land and Water Stewardship. For more information, please call 919-807-7300 or visit www.ncdcr.gov.

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