Phoenix Art Museum

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PHOENIX ART MUSEUM ANNOUNCES
MEDIEVALISM: FASHION'S ROMANCE WITH THE MIDDLE AGES

New Fashion Design Exhibition Opens Saturday, February 21

Phoenix (February 18, 2009) – *Medievalism: Fashion's Romance with the Middle Ages*, the spring 2009 exhibition organized by the Fashion Design Department of Phoenix Art Museum, explores the influence of Medieval aesthetics and ideals on contemporary fashion from the early 1800s through current collections. The exhibition will be on view at Phoenix Art Museum from February 21 through July 5, 2009.

"From Mariano Fortuny's luxurious velvet gowns to John Galliano's haute couture armor for Christian Dior, this exhibition is a showcase of the Museums' vast fashion design collection and a tribute to the designers who have embraced the medieval spirit," commented Dennita Sewell, curator of fashion design, Phoenix Art Museum. "Fashion as we know it today, really began in the Middle Ages. It was the first time clothing was cut with shapely seems fitted to the body."

Featuring more than 40 ensembles, *Medievalism* brings together wedding and evening dresses, ball gowns, capes and day wear that evoke the sumptuous textures and elegant flowing lines of the medieval or gothic style associated with the Middle Ages. The exhibition's installation, designed by curator Dennita Sewell and set designer Michael Sims, is just as engaging as the ensembles included in the show. Magnificent murals, based on the 15th-century *The Lady and the Unicorn* tapestries in the collection of the Musée National du Moyen Age, Paris, a painted stained glass window and a dramatic coat of arms create the show's stunning backdrop.

Exhibition Overview

The modern system of fashion, with its cycle of rapidly changing styles, began in the Middle Ages (c. 500 – 1500 AD). Unlike the static styles of the Greco-Roman classical age, in which cloth was draped or cut in loose-fitting rectangular styles, medieval tailors shaped seams and sleeves with proportions that fit the body. Western European Crusaders returning from holy wars in the Middle East brought back patterned silks, rich velvets and other luxury goods that allowed for greater variety in dress.

In the late 18th century, romantic ideas about chivalry and courtly magnificence inspired a revival of medieval elements and principals, called medievalism. By the mid-1800s, medievalism further blossomed as a social response to the Industrial Revolution. The dreary realities of factory work led to a general belief that life was better in the "olden days." Victorians associated the medieval era with chivalrous moral values and hand-craftsmanship, ideals they felt were missing from modern life. Popular novels, such as Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*, along with historically inspired paintings, architecture and formal balls, fueled the study of medieval life and dress.

Later generations used medievalism with a greater sense of fantasy. During the Great Depression films such as *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938) provided an escape from economic hardship and impending war. Today, television and video games recycle medieval legends and romances such as Romeo and Juliet and the Knights of the Round Table into contemporary versions that speak to the love of adventure and entertainment of our own time.

Exhibition Details
This exhibition is organized by Phoenix Art Museum and is presented in the Kelly Ellman Fashion Design Gallery and the Orme Lewis Gallery February 21 through July 5, 2009.

Admission to the exhibition is included in general museum admission, which is $10 for adults, $8 for senior citizens (65+), $8 for full-time college students with ID, $4 for children ages 6-17 and free for children under 6 and for museum members. Admission is also free on Tuesdays from 3:00 pm – 9:00 pm and for everyone on First Fridays, 6:00 pm – 10:00 pm.

Phoenix Art Museum is located in downtown Phoenix at the corner of Central and McDowell Road. Museum hours are Tuesday, 10:00 am – 9:00 pm and Wednesday – Sunday from
10:00 am – 5:00 pm. The museum is closed Mondays and major holidays.

This exhibition is organized by Phoenix Art Museum. Major support for this exhibition provided by the Museum's Arizona Costume Institute and Brizo. Additional support provided by the Novis M. Schmitz Foundation. Promotional support provided by Latino Future Magazine, Barnes & Noble Booksellers, Yelp.com and Scottsdale, Glendale, Mesa, and Phoenix Public Libraries.

About the Fashion Design Collection
Founded in 1966, Phoenix Art Museum's fashion design collection is notable for its quality and comprehensiveness and is comprised of more than 5,000 objects of American and European men's, women's and children's dress and accessories dating from the late 17th century to the present. The Museum organizes three exhibitions a year in the Kelly Ellman Fashion Design Gallery featuring objects from the permanent collection as well as international fashion houses, collectors and museums. Phoenix Art Museum is one of only a handful of art museums in the country with a long and continuous active fashion program.

About Phoenix Art Museum
Phoenix Art Museum is the Southwest's premier destination for world-class visual arts. Popular exhibitions featuring artists such as Rembrandt, Norman Rockwell, Annie Leibowitz and Monet are shown along side the Museum's outstanding collection of more than 17,000 works of American, Asian, European, Latin American, Western American, modern and contemporary art, and fashion design. A community epicenter for nearly fifty years, Phoenix Art Museum presents festivals, live performances, independent art films and educational programs that enlighten, entertain and stimulate. Visitors also enjoy PhxArtKids an interactive space for children, vibrant photography exhibitions through the Museum's landmark partnership with the Center for Creative Photography, the lushly landscaped Sculpture Garden, dining at Arcadia Farms at Phoenix Art Museum, and shopping at The Museum Store.

To learn more about Phoenix Art Museum, visit PhxArt.org, or call the 24-hour recorded information line at (602) 257-1222.

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