Phoenix Art Museum

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Phoenix Art Museum Presents *Modern Spirit: Fashion of the 1920s*

New Exhibition Explores Roaring 20s Lasting Legacy on Fashion Beyond the Flapper

PHOENIX (June 15, 2012) – Phoenix Art Museum presents Modern Spirit: Fashion of the 1920s, a fascinating look into the meaning of fashion in the jazz age. Featuring more than 40 ensembles and accessories by more than a dozen iconic fashion designers including Gabrielle Chanel, Madeleine Vionnet and Jean Patou, the exhibition provides a stunning overview of the decade's creative and revolutionary garments that continue to impact fashion today. Modern Spirit: Fashion of the 1920s opens on September 22, 2012 and runs through February 10, 2013 in the Ellman Fashion Design Gallery at Phoenix Art Museum.

"Featuring authentic fashion from the 1920s while the decade is at the forefront of inspiration gives us further insight into this fascinating historical period," says Dennita Sewell, curator of fashion design at Phoenix Art Museum. "It is a privilege for the Museum to showcase original works by some of the 1920s most innovative designers especially when the era is having such a dynamic influence on major projects in film, fashion and culture, in particular with the December 2012 release of Baz Lurhman's *The Great Gatsby*."

The 1920s is the earliest historical period that defines how clothing appears today. Leading fashion designers Chanel and Vionnet embraced women's new freedom by creating garments with innovative cuts in fabrics that established modern fashion. In 1925, for the first time in recorded history, dresses that revealed the knees were acceptable in fashionable society.

Modern Spirit: Fashion from the 1920s is drawn from Phoenix Art Museum's nationally acclaimed fashion design archive and private collections. In addition, the exhibition will also feature original silent film footage, a commissioned original soundtrack of period music and Vogue and Harper's Bazaar magazines from Phoenix Art Museum's extensive archives. The dramatic installation places fashion among the architecture, decorative arts and an automobile of the era providing a comprehensive context to the design, culture and literature of the time.

Exhibition Overview

Fashion of the 1920s reflects the jazz era's exuberance and elegance, and the works featured in this exhibition expand on the breadth of the decade beyond the traditional notions of the flapper to reveal the tremendous range of individuality and styles of the decade. From stunning examples of art deco styles and beaded eveningwear to perfectly proportioned daywear to elegant and freeing leisurewear and sports-inspired styles, this exhibition lends insights into the fashions that resulted from women's increased range of roles in society.

Easy to move in, easy to pack, easy to wear, the designs were based on simple lines, made of light fabrics and required only minimal, un-encumbering undergarments. "Luxury must be comfortable, other wise it is not luxury," observed Gabrielle Chanel, one of the era's most important innovators. The simple lines were the

perfect canvas for modern prints and embellishments that captured the exoticism made fashionable by the wildly popular performances of the Ballets Russes and 1922 discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamen, as well as the geometrics of Art Deco and Cubist influenced designs. Feathers, beads, braids, appliqué and embroidery, tassels, sashes and floating panels created the sparkle, energy and movement that characterize these designs. Accessories were paramount to achieving the look of individuality so important in the period.

Beyond the Gallery

In addition to the collection of 1920s fashion in Ellman Gallery, the exhibition will be enhanced and enriched with a fuller view of life in that decade through the Museum's comprehensive film program. Related films shown throughout the exhibition will include *The Roaring Twenties* (1939), starring James Cagney and Humphrey Bogart, on October 14; *The Great Gatsby* (1974), starring Robert Redford and Mia Farrow, on November 4; *The Artist* (2011), starring Jean Dujardin and Bérénice Bejo, on January 6, 2013; and Pandora's Box (1929), starring Louise Brooks and Fritz Kortner, on February 3, 2013. All films are shown in Whiteman Hall at 1:00 pm. Admission is $5, and includes complimentary admission to the Museum after the screening only.

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.

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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