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PHOENIX ART MUSEUM EXPLORES GLAMOUR AMIDST WARTIME WITH *IN THE MOOD*

Fashion, War, Women and Their Impact in the 1940s

PHOENIX (April 6, 2010) – *In the Mood*, the spring 2010 exhibition organized by the Fashion Design Department of Phoenix Art Museum, explores the glamour and innovation of fashion in the 1940s, a decade radically affected by war, changing social order and redefined visions of femininity. From glamorous Hollywood starlets to “Rosie the Riveter,” women and fashion were at the forefront of a new era. Now open, *In the Mood* will be on view at Phoenix Art Museum through August 15, 2010.

“While American soldiers were overseas fighting in World War II, women were encouraged to keep up their appearances in an effort to bolster morale and maintain a sense of normalcy. This was exceptionally challenging due to wartime rationing, new responsibilities for women and the closing of Parisian fashion houses, which at the time provided the majority of mass produced ready to wear fashions,” commented Dennita Sewell, curator of fashion design, Phoenix Art Museum. “What could have been a lackluster period of fashion design emerged as a time of patriotic ingenuity during which American designers experienced a creative surge.”

In the Mood features more than 35 fully accessorized fashion ensembles from the 1940s including works by Adrian, Claire McCardell and Howard Greer along with original military and factory uniforms including Mainboucher’s design for the WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Services) and inventive dresses and negligees made from repurposed parachutes.

Exhibition Overview

In the Mood, a fashion design exhibition drawn primarily from Phoenix Art Museum’s permanent collection, looks at design and life on the American home front and the important role women and ultimately fashion played during World War II. Categorized around five themes, *In the Mood* reveals the clothing and designers that helped define this generation of women and their new adapted lifestyles.

- *Women in Service*. In a time of great changing social order, vast numbers of women, who had never worked outside the home before, donned overalls and trousers and worked long hours at defense and munitions factories. Women also held positions within the military serving at home and abroad in unprecedented numbers.
- *Recognition for American Designers*. When France surrendered to Germany in 1940, many Parisian fashion houses closed creating new opportunities for American fashion designers. Until then, American manufactures had primarily copied French designs for mass production. For the first time, designers were allowed to express themselves and receive recognition on clothing labels. American fashion flourished with ingenuity and glamour and established a true American look.

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- *Hollywood Glamour*. Maintaining a well groomed and pretty appearance was considered vital to morale during wartime. Hollywood movies and celebrities presented glamorized versions of the war and were influential in setting styles and boosting spirits.
- *Color in Boosting Morale*. French, German and Italian artists and designers fled to the United States establishing New York as a new art center and fostering a renaissance of artistic activity. The Museum of Modern Art and art galleries became popular meeting places and locations for editorial photo shoots. Clothing and accessories began to mirror the abstracted forms and bold colors found in contemporary art. Dynamic color combinations were also thought to lift spirits.
- *Make Do and Mend*. During the war, factories ceased production of civilian goods and transitioned to the production of war goods. Government mandated rationing was instituted to conserve resources such as food, gas and clothing. Designers offered clothing free from superfluous frills and unwanted pockets that supported the new working lifestyle of the American woman.

“Known as the ‘greatest generation,’ those who defended our freedoms during World War II set standards that continue to define American life and ideals. *In the Mood* was inspired by the powerful nostalgia and patriotic spirit imbued in this era and celebrates the designers, such as Jo Copeland for Patullo and Mainbocher whose creative work helped define American fashion,” commented Sewell.

Exhibition Details

This exhibition is organized by Phoenix Art Museum and is presented in the Kelly Ellman Fashion Design Gallery April 3, 2010 through August 15, 2010.

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.

Phoenix Art Museum is located in downtown Phoenix at the corner of Central and McDowell Road. Museum Hours are Wednesday, 10:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m., Thursday thru Saturday, 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. and Sunday, Noon – 5:00 p.m. The museum will be closed on Mondays, Tuesdays and major holidays. Admission is free on Wednesdays from 3:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. and for everyone on First Fridays, 6:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.

Major support for this exhibition provided by Novis M. Schmitz Foundation.

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.

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About Phoenix Art Museum

Phoenix Art Museum is the Southwest’s premier destination for world-class visual arts. Popular international exhibitions 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 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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