



March 2005

**The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Awards \$3.925 Million to Brooklyn Museum
For Landmark Survey of Its Historic 70,000-Object
American and European Costume Collection**

Brooklyn, NY....For Release Friday, March 25, 2005. The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation has awarded a major grant of \$3,925,000 to the Brooklyn Museum to undertake the first complete inventory, collection review, digital photography, and cataloguing of the Museum's historic holdings of approximately 70,000 American and European costumes and accessories. The goals of this three-and-a-half-year intensive study are to assess and document the collection and ultimately to provide electronic access to scholars, students, and a broader public.

Arnold L. Lehman, Director of the Brooklyn Museum, commented: "We are enormously grateful for the farsighted and generous support of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. This grant will make possible unprecedented access to and knowledge about this collection, considered one of the richest and most important in the world."

The collection will be transferred from its current limited storage space within the Museum to a spacious, climate-controlled off-site location for review, inventory, and digital photography. A newly appointed curator, project director, and conservator will supervise a staff specifically dedicated to the project.

For the first time in the hundred-year history of the collection, a detailed record of the complete contents will be created, together with a digital image of each object. Four thousand of the most important works will be photographed at high resolution and documented in such a way as to support broad electronic dissemination. It is expected that this selection will then be made available to scholars, students, and the broader public through ARTstor, an innovative online initiative of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, that provides access to curated collections of art images and associated data for non-commercial, scholarly, and not-for-profit educational use.

Anne d'Harnoncourt, director of the Philadelphia Museum of Art which owns a large and distinguished collection of costume and textiles founded in the 19th century, noted that "this extraordinary grant will be a great boon, not only to the Brooklyn Museum and the treasures it holds in public trust but to all museums with related holdings and to the intertwined fields of art history, material culture, and design, which this important cataloguing and digitizing project will illuminate for all of us."

Brooklyn Museum

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The Brooklyn Museum costume collection of examples dating from the 16th to the 20th centuries was initiated in 1903, and from the beginning was intended to inspire American industry. For the next 80 years, through its Department of Industrial Design, Design Lab, and Department of Costumes and Textiles, the Museum served as one of the most important centers in the United States for the study and collecting of fashion. The stature and quality of the collection also inspired a number of great American designers, such as Charles James, to deposit their archives at the Museum. In addition to being an outstanding assemblage of individual works of great rarity and aesthetic quality, with masterpieces by Worth, Paul Poiret, Lanvin, Christian Dior, Balenciaga, Charles James, Norman Norrell, and Claire McCardell, this collection documents the consolidation and growing international importance of the fashion industry in New York City.

Over the years, the Brooklyn Museum has drawn upon the riches of the collection as the basis for a wide range of exhibitions and scholarly publications. However, since 1991, when the Museum was forced by major reductions in City support to merge the Costume Department into the Decorative Arts Department, the staff, exhibitions, publications, and programs dedicated to costume have been significantly curtailed. During this time period, except for the limited continuation of loans to other institutions, Brooklyn's costume collection has been almost entirely inaccessible to scholars, students, and the public.

Because of the inherently fragile nature of the material, the curatorial, conservation, and custodial requirements for caring appropriately for such a major collection are both complex and costly. The results of the present carefully considered plan for collection review will offer the Museum the opportunity to explore all options for the future of these holdings, including a partnership with another New York City institution, or the possibility of an enhanced costume program at the Brooklyn Museum. The objective would be to ensure the primary institutional goal of preserving and maintaining this world-renowned and historic collection for the benefit of the public.

President William G. Bowen of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation commented, "It is our hope that, with the help of the grant, the Brooklyn Museum will be able to accomplish its goal of meeting its responsibilities for the stewardship of this important costume collection, while also making it available electronically to a broad educational community."

End

Contact:

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BROOKLYN MUSEUM GENERAL INFORMATION

Admission:

Contribution \$8; students with valid I.D. and older adults \$4. Free to Members and children under 12 accompanied by an adult. Group tours or visits must be arranged in advance by calling extension 234.

Directions:

Subway: Seventh Avenue express (2 or 3) to Eastern Parkway/Brooklyn Museum stop; Lexington Avenue express (4 or 5) to Nevins Street, cross platform and transfer to the 2 or 3. Bus: B71, B41, B69, B48. On-site parking available.

Museum Hours:

Wednesday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; First Saturday of each month, 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.; all other Saturdays, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Sunday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day.