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For Immediate Release

THE FRICK PITTSBURGH PRESENTS

undressed

A HISTORY OF FASHION IN UNDERWEAR

The Frick Pittsburgh is the exclusive North American venue for this blockbuster fashion exhibition that features more than 200 objects

PITTSBURGH, PA, October 16, 2017—Beginning October 21, 2017, The Frick Pittsburgh invites visitors to discover the fascinating history of underwear design from the 18th century to the present in *Undressed: A History of Fashion in Underwear*, a blockbuster exhibition organized by London's Victoria and Albert Museum.

The Frick is the exclusive North American venue for this exhibition that takes a serious look at an alluring subject. *Undressed* features more than 200 objects that tell the story of the ongoing evolution of underwear, from its origins as a basic layer between the skin and clothes, to its use in fashion and as fashion. The exhibition beautifully illustrates how undergarments reflect society's changing ideas about the body, morality, and sex, and how underwear styles reflect and shape the body to society's current fashionable ideal. *Undressed* remains on view at The Frick Art Museum through January 7, 2018. General admission is \$15; free for Frick members.



Exhibition organized by the
Victoria and Albert Museum, London

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Organized into thematic sections, *Undressed* follows a general chronology while examining issues like health and hygiene (including corsets and women's health), underwear designed for performance (like sports, pregnancy, or extreme climates), volume (creating a fashionable silhouette), and support (bras and girdles), with other sections devoted to hosiery, luxury lingerie, relaxation and loungewear, revelation, temptation, and transformation. The exhibition includes key designers and manufacturers from all periods and concludes with an array of styles representing some of today's most notable designers, including Elie Saab, Alexander McQueen, and Agent Provocateur.

Highlights of the exhibition include an example of handmade stays made by a working woman in 18th-century England. Stays were particularly popular ladies' undergarments in 18th-century England and were fully-boned, lace-up garments worn around the bodice and bust for support and structure. They were precursors to the more well-known corset.

A subsection of the exhibition devoted to corsets confronts the debate about corsets and women's health and features an x-ray that showing the internal effects of tight lacing. Also included in the corset section are an austerity corset made from paper during World War I and a waist-training corset, illustrating a current trend endorsed by celebrity figures such as Kim Kardashian.

After the heyday of the corset, the evolution of the brassiere and the girdle is explored in a section on support. Bras gained popularity through the 20th century and originated in an often prettily decorated garment worn by younger women known as a bust bodice. Bust bodices were frequently embellished with lace and ribbon and made from fine materials. Today, high-tech materials provide support and control, and the girdle, which has seen a plethora of materials and construction techniques over the decades, has now seen a modern resurgence in the form of Spanx and similar products.

Originally, underclothes worn next to the skin were made of natural fibers that were not dyed and could be washed at high temperatures. This changed with the development of man-made fibers and advances in dyeing and laundry technology. *Undressed* illustrates these changes and the sometimes revolutionary impact of newly developed fabrics, like man-made silks and elastics, which have created longer-wearing, more affordable garments. Additionally, high-tech innovations allow underwear to be developed for purposes beyond typical everyday use—like keeping the wearer warm or cool in extreme temperatures. One early example of “performance underwear” is an 1860 petticoat from Ireland—sewn in a bold and cheerful paisley—the petticoat is quilted and filled with goose down for extra warmth. The down allows for warmth and is lightweight and comfortable, while creating a structure that helped to shape the voluminous skirts in fashion at the time. In contrast, the Japanese company Uniqlo launched a line of thermal underwear in 2003

called Heattech—made of special fabric that retains body heat and generates warmth from the movement of tiny droplets of moisture captured in the fabric fibers. It also contains an antibacterial agent to reduce body odor.

Recently, underwear has been recast in provocative ways, with designers pushing the boundaries between public and private, decent and indecent, by experimenting with visible underwear, and underwear worn as outerwear. In the 1980s the radical, transgressive clothes worn by punks were a key influence on avant-garde fashion designers like Vivienne Westwood. Corsetry, which became associated with fetish and pornography in the 20th century, remains a powerful inspiration for both men and women's clothing. Other structural garments from the past also interest contemporary designers, many designers, like Dolce & Gabbana, have probed the relationship between the body and clothing through the use of hoops and crinolines. Reflecting this contemporary attitude, the exhibition includes a sheer dress by Liza Bruce famously worn by Kate Moss, and Antonio Berardi's monochrome dress, worn by Gwyneth Paltrow, featuring a trompe l'oeil corset which reveals the underwear worn beneath.

Whether museum visitors are fascinated by the history of clothing, bewitched by luxury fabrics and trimmings, interested in contemporary fashion design, or intrigued by the broader cultural issues that are reflected in our underwear, *Undressed* will provide a fascinating (and occasionally flirtatious) look at garments that are typically not seen, while illuminating how trends in undergarments reveal things about ourselves.

EXHIBITION ORGANIZATION AND SUPPORT

Undressed: A History of Fashion in Underwear is organized by the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

The Pittsburgh presentation of *Undressed* is made possible by the Eden Hall Foundation.

Additional support is provided by the EQT Foundation.

Major exhibition program support is provided by the Richard King Mellon Foundation.

LACE AND LUXURY: EXAMPLES FROM THE FRICK PITTSBURGH'S COSTUME COLLECTION ON VIEW THROUGH JANUARY 7, 2018

Featuring garments owned by Adelaide Frick embellished with both machine-made and handmade luxury lace, *Lace and Luxury* is a special installation at the Frick that complements the major traveling exhibition, *Undressed: A History of Fashion in Underwear*.

Curated from The Frick Pittsburgh's collection by Dawn Reid Brean, associate curator of decorative arts, *Lace and Luxury* will explore the allure of lace during the Gilded Age. The installation will be on view in the French period room at The Frick Art Museum.

Lace has been an elegant indicator of wealth and prestige since the 16th century. Although many varieties of lace exist today, handmade lace is traditionally classified into two categories: bobbin and needlepoint. Both are exceptionally laborious processes, requiring time and skill, ensuring that lace was available only to royalty or the fabulously wealthy. Industrial advances of the 19th century enabled the creation of inexpensive laces accessible to a broader market. After which, although handmade lace continued to be produced for the luxury market, machine lace dominated the 19th-century market and a craze for lace gripped Gilded Age fashionistas.

Included in the exhibition is opulent evening gown by Lichtenstein Cie Modes with an antique handmade lace panel incorporated into the bodice; an elegant shirtwaist with machine embroidered details by Parisian firm Maison Albert; and an exquisite machine-made lace fan with hand-finished details and a carved mother-of-pearl handle made by luxury manufacturer E. Buisson. Also on view will be elegant lace trimmings used as collars and cuffs, lace scarves, and two books on the history of lace that belonged to Adelaide Frick.

ABOUT THE FRICK PITTSBURGH

Located on the Pittsburgh estate of late-19th-century industrialist Henry Clay Frick, The Frick Pittsburgh is the steward of collections left as a legacy to the people of Pittsburgh by Frick's daughter, Helen Clay Frick. The permanent collections include fine and decorative arts, cars, carriages, historic objects, and buildings. The Frick experience includes The Frick Art Museum, the Car and Carriage Museum, Clayton, the Frick family Gilded Age mansion, and six acres of beautifully landscaped lawns and gardens. Also included are an Education Center, the Frick children's playhouse (designed by renowned architects Alden & Harlow), a large working greenhouse (also designed by Alden & Harlow), The Café at the Frick, and the Grable Visitor Center, which houses the Frick Museum Store.

ABOUT THE VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM

The V&A is the world's leading museum of art and design, with collections unrivaled in their scope and diversity. It was established to make works of art available to all and to inspire British designers and manufacturers. Today, the V&A's collections, which span over 2,000 years of human creativity in virtually every medium and from many parts of the world, continue to intrigue, inspire and inform.

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Frick Pittsburgh is located at 7227 Reynolds Street in Pittsburgh's Point Breeze neighborhood. Free parking is available in the Frick's off-street lot or along adjacent streets. The Frick is open 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Tuesday–Sunday;

10:00 a.m.–9:00 p.m. Friday; and is closed Mondays and major holidays. The public should call 412-371-0600 for information, or visit the Frick online at TheFrickPittsburgh.org.

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