

March 9, 2007

Loretta Lawrence Keane
VP for Communications and External Relations

Brenda Pérez
Director of Media Relations

(212) 217-7642

ARTISTS OF LUXURY ON VIEW AT THE MUSEUM AT FIT

The first exhibition to analyze the changing meaning of luxury in fashion history will be on display May 23 through November 10 at The Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT).

Luxury is the fourth exhibition to be held in the museum's popular Fashion and Textile History Gallery. Like its predecessors, it covers 250 years of fashion history, and features more than 150 extraordinary garments, accessories, and textiles from the museum's permanent collection of 80,000 objects. The exhibition encompasses aristocratic luxury fashions from the 18th century; contributions from great couturiers such as Chanel, Dior, Worth, and Poiret; and contemporary accessories by Hermès and Lanvin.

Among the garments in the gallery are a brocaded silk dress, circa 1735, a reception dress from the 1880s by Worth, and a 1950 white silk evening gown with gold embroidery by Dior. Accessories include gold Chanel gloves from the estate of Tina Chow, circa 1932, as well as a contemporary Hermès handbag, Louis Vuitton shoes, and a Lanvin necklace.

The exhibition begins with a look at the politics of luxury in the 18th century. Against the traditional idea of luxury as excessive and morally corrupting, there developed a new belief that luxury could be a positive contribution to the wealth of nations. Private vices, such as extravagance and vanity, could be public virtues because they provided work for countless artisans.

Haute couture, the ultimate luxury industry, emerged during the era of high capitalism in the 19th century. Great couturiers, such as Worth and Poiret, became recognized as "artists of luxury." Companies, such as Hermès and Louis Vuitton, also became iconic purveyors of luxury products. The "new luxury" of today remains a symbol of distinction, but it is no longer restricted to a tiny elite. Marketing luxury to the masses is a multibillion dollar business, and, increasingly, there are many different kinds of luxury.

The exhibition has been curated by Dr. Valerie Steele, museum director, together with Tamsen Schwartzman, associate research curator; Fred Dennis, associate curator of costume; and Clare Sauro, assistant curator of accessories; as well as Harumi Hotta and Lynn Weidner of the textile department.

The Museum at FIT is located on the southwest corner of Seventh Avenue at 27th Street. Exhibition hours are Tuesday through Friday, noon to 8 pm; Saturday 10 am to 5pm; closed Sundays, Mondays, and legal holidays. Admission is free. For museum information call (212) 217-5800 or go to: www.fitnyc.edu/museum.

For further press information, contact the Office of College Relations at (212) 217-7642 or press@fitnyc.edu. Visuals are available upon request via mail or email.