High Fashion Exhibit Spotlights Historic Luxury

Dior & More – For the Love of Fashion displays impeccable dress at WRHS

CLEVELAND, OH—Now open, The Western Reserve Historical Society’s Dior & More – For the Love of Fashion exhibition in the Chisholm Halle Costume Wing allows visitors a rare opportunity to immerse themselves in the world of couture. Featuring forty-two elegant and sometimes whimsical ensembles by a host of designers, the exhibit reveals women’s changing lifestyles from the turn of the twentieth century to the 1980s. All pieces included in the exhibit were at one time worn by well-known and fashionable women from the Northeast Ohio area; including Mrs. Kenyon C. Bolton and Mrs. Harvey S. Firestone, Jr.

The exhibition, which is open to the public through March 30, 2014, showcases both haute couture – custom clothing made in Paris for an exclusive clientele – and ready-to-wear ensembles by notable design houses including Dior, Givenchy, Balenciaga, Fath, and Balmain, along with looks by lesser-known talents. Groupings by time-of-day reflect shifting hemlines, changing proportions and a growing trend toward informality. Details about fabrics, craftsmanship, embellishment, and fit all highlight “what’s to love” about each featured ensemble. Images of some of the ensembles in the exhibit are available on request.

“This exhibit has been such a great experience for everyone involved and we’re incredibly excited for the public to enjoy it,” noted Guest Curator Susan Neill. “The designs range from daywear to cocktail dresses and ball gowns, truly reflecting the lifestyles of fashionable women living in Northeast Ohio.”

“We plan to continually bring exceptional garments and stories to our visitors in the Chisholm Halle Costume Wing,” says Gainor Davis, President and CEO of the WRHS. “In this exhibit, Dior & More – For the Love of Fashion, it is remarkable how much these stunning pieces of high fashion in Northeast Ohio tell us about women in the twentieth century. Studying clothing reveals many clues about cultural expectations within society and within the family.”

The entirety of the exhibition has been selected from the extensive costume collection of the Western Reserve Historical Society. WRHS maintains one of the largest collections of historic costume and textiles in the United States. Housed within the Society’s Chisholm Halle Costume Wing and the Bingham-Hanna house, the collection comprises some 40,000 garments, accessories and domestic textiles, ranging in date from ca. 1750 to present day. The collection is international in scope and contains both historic and contemporary designs, including mass-produced, ready-to-wear, couture and one-of-a-kind pieces.
The Western Reserve Historical Society History Center is located in Cleveland’s University Circle at 10825 East Boulevard. Museum hours are Tuesday - Saturday 10:00am - 5:00pm and Sunday, Noon - 5:00pm. Western Reserve Historical Society members and children two and under are free of charge. The research library is open Thursday – Saturday 10:00 am to 5:00 pm. Admission is $10 for adults, $10 and $5 for children 3-12. Group rates are available. Parking lot fees are paid at the admission desk during museum hours.

About the Curators
Guest Curator Susan Neill is an independent curator and museum consultant based in Chicago. During her career, she has organized fashion exhibits across the country and has presented her research on historic costumes and textiles nationally and internationally. Neill has also authored publications and articles and holds an M.A. in Cultural Anthropology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Colleen Callahan of The Costume & Textile Specialist served as the exhibition's Assistant Curator. C&TS consults with large and small institutions nationwide on exhibition, collection management and documentation, conservation, and reproduction clothing projects.

Founded in 1867, Western Reserve Historical Society (WRHS) is Northeast Ohio’s premier storyteller. It presents the lives and activities of the 19th-century settlers through historic Hale Farm and Village in Bath, Ohio, and relates the Gilded Age of glitter and industry through the history of Cleveland’s millionaires and entrepreneurs. WRHS offers a wealth of resources to research your family heritage at the History Center in University Circle, Cleveland. It is one of the oldest and largest nonprofit regional historical societies in the nation. WRHS inspires people to discover the American experience by exploring the tangible history of Northeast Ohio. For more information on the Western Reserve Historical Society, 10825 East Blvd., Cleveland, OH 44106 visit: http://www.wrhs.org/ or contact Jane Mason, Director of Communications and Marketing jmason@wrhs.org, 216-721-5722, x 1501.

WRHS receives public support with local tax dollars from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture. Sponsorships, bequests, grants, admissions, and other funding are used to preserve and enrich the region’s artistic and cultural heritage. If you are interested in a funding opportunity for the Western Reserve Historical Society, please contact Amy Shorey, Director of Development, ashorey@WRHS.org

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