“Fetish: Fashion, Sex & Power” to be Presented by Fashion Icon Valerie Steele at Western Reserve Historical Society

CLEVELAND, OH—Dr. Valerie Steele, fashion icon, author, and Director and Chief Curator at The Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City, will take guests at the Western Reserve Historical Society into the world of fashion—how choices about fashion relate to sex and power. Her talk on October 4 is the first part of a two-lecture series she is presenting at the History Center of the Western Reserve Historical Society, in University Circle, Cleveland. The Friday evening event includes a cocktail party.

A brunch presentation on Saturday, October 5 will focus on “Chanel & Her Rivals.” Tickets to each event are $50 for members and $70 for non-members. Exclusive front-row seats to the evening event are available for $100. Proceeds from both events will go to support the WRHS Costume & Textile Collection. Each of Steele’s two speaking engagements reflects her distinguished knowledge in the field of fashion.

“We are delighted to present a fashion maven and scholar to speak on a topic that is part of our daily life: the things we wear. Dr. Steele has impressive insights, wit, and a brilliant perspective on women’s fashion,” said Gainor Davis, President and CEO of WRHS. “The parallel lines of fashion and culture throughout history are evident in our diverse costume and textile collection in the Chisholm Halle Costume Wing, through which we will continue to present stories about Northeast Ohio and its residents. It is wonderful to have a scholar and larger-than-life expert share her knowledge in order to help us put fashion in a global context.”

A Ph.D. graduate of Yale, Steele has organized more than 20 exhibitions since 1997, including Gothic: Dark Glamour; Love & War: The Weaponized Woman; and The Corset: Fashioning the Body, all of which feature iconic fashion designers and their couture work. Steele has appeared on a variety of television shows, lectures around the globe, and has authored more than a
dozen books. Described by The Washington Post as one of “fashion’s brainiest women,” Steele has been instrumental in the creation of the modern field of fashion studies and in raising public awareness of the cultural and social significance of fashion. She also served as editor-in-chief of the three-volume Encyclopedia of Clothing and Fashion.

The WRHS Dior & More – For the Love of Fashion exhibit opened in early May and is open to the public through March 30, 2014. It 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. Each piece displayed within the exhibit was selected from WRHS’s extensive costume collection, which consists of 40,000 garments, accessories, and domestic textiles, ranging in date from ca. 1750 to present day. Steele’s visit continues the ongoing focus on the Society’s outstanding costume and textile collection.

The Western Reserve Historical Society History Center is located in Cleveland’s University Circle at 10825 East Boulevard. Museum hours are Tuesday – Saturday, 10:00 am – 5:00 pm and Sunday, Noon – 5:00 pm. Admission to the museum is $10 for adults and $5 for children ages 3-12. Western Reserve Historical Society members and children two and under are admitted free of charge. Group rates are available. The History Center is handicap accessible, and includes an elevator to various levels of the museum.

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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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