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from
THE FRICK COLLECTION

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MEDIA ALERT:

**The Frick Collection Involved in a Major
International Collaboration in 2003**

Whistler, Women, and Fashion

on view in New York

April 22, 2003 through July 13, 2003

Marking the centenary of the death of **James McNeill Whistler** (1834–1903), The Frick Collection will present ***Whistler, Women, and Fashion***—the first in-depth exploration of the artist’s lifelong involvement in fashion as an essential aspect of his work. The Frick Collection is the sole venue for the exhibition, which features eight magnificent full-length oil portraits of women by Whistler and sixty other works, including oils, his finest prints and drawings, pastel studies for paintings, costume designs by the artist, and portrait etchings and watercolors, as well as fashion plates and period costumes.

The exhibition is organized by **Susan Grace Galassi**, Curator at The Frick Collection, and the leading Whistler scholar, **Margaret F. MacDonald**, Principal Research Fellow at the Centre for Whistler Studies at the University of Glasgow; **Aileen Ribeiro**, Head of the History of Dress Section at the Courtauld Institute of Art, is the costume consultant for the exhibition. The three scholars, joined by **Patricia de Montfort**, Research Fellow at the Centre for Whistler Studies, are the authors of a fully illustrated accompanying book to be published by Yale University Press. The publication is the first venture between art and dress history that places fashion at the center of a great artist’s work. The book will also

include new biographical material about Whistler's sitters, among them artists, actresses, society women, and members of his family, and their roles in his life and work.

Spanning the three central decades of the artist's career, the paintings, prints, drawings, and costumes will illuminate Whistler's participation in the lively interchange between art and fashion in the second half of the nineteenth century. At the heart of the exhibition are ten oil portraits, eight of which will be displayed in the museum's Oval Room. Three stunning portraits from The Frick Collection are joined by works on loan from national and international collections, including the Tate Britain, London; the Hunterian Art Gallery, Glasgow; the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; the Philadelphia Museum of Art; and the Honolulu Academy of Arts.

Symphony in White, No. 2: The Little White Girl (1864) will be paired with *Symphony in Flesh Color and Pink: Mrs. Frederick R. Leyland* (1871–74). The first work, in which the artist depicted his Irish model and mistress, Jo Hiffernan, in a simple white muslin gown, without a crinoline, reveals the influence of Pre-Raphaelite artistic dress—one of the first alternative movements in nineteenth-century fashion. Artistic dress, as well as Classical, French eighteenth-century, and Japanese dress were sources for the beautiful pink chiffon gown that Whistler designed for Frances Leyland to harmonize with the décor of the room, which he also designed. The portrait is a complete statement of his Aesthetic principles.

In *Arrangement in Black and Brown: Miss Rosa Corder* (1876–78) and *Arrangement in Black: La Dame au Brodequin Jaune—Portrait of Lady Archibald Campbell* (c. 1883), Whistler painted his sitters—an artist and an aristocrat, respectively—in the elegant new street attire inspired by riding habits and men's wear. This type of stylish and functional clothing was then coming into fashion for women engaged in work outside the home. The exhibition will reunite—for the first time in nearly a century—two portraits of a *demimondaine* who married the heir to a brewery fortune: the Frick's *Harmony in Pink and Gray: Valerie, Lady Meux* (1881–82) and *Arrangement in Black No. 5: Lady Meux* (1881), in which Valerie, Lady Meux, dressed in high fashion, unabashedly flaunts her wealth and sex appeal. In both, Whistler makes use of the conventions of society portraiture to flatter and gently satirize his subject. Also reunited are two portraits of Ethel Birnie Philip, Whistler's sister-in-law, the model for *Red and Black: The Fan* (1891–97) and *Mother of Pearl and Silver: The Andalusian* (1888(?)–1900). They display the changing silhouette of dress in the late 1880s and 1890s and reveal Whistler's return to an interest in Spanish art

and costume in his later years, as well as the extent to which fashion had become deeply assimilated into his artistic vocabulary.

Purple and Rose: The Lange Leizen of the Six Marks (1864), a major work of the artist's early years in London, will be displayed with pastels and drawings that document Whistler's fascination with the East. Another masterpiece, *Harmony in Grey and Green: Miss Cicely Alexander* (1872–74), for which Whistler designed his eight-year-old sitter's dress in a contemporary style that alludes to Velázquez's *infantas*, joins the exhibition as a special loan in mid-June. The exhibition also includes some of Whistler's finest works in his graphic oeuvre, showing, for instance, his model and mistress Maud Franklin posing in formal and informal attire, as well as vibrant watercolors showing her in everyday dress in an interior—wonderfully intimate evocations of their bohemian life. Finally, there are the highly personal studies of his wife, Beatrice, a designer and artist, which include the most poignant of his lithographic portraits, done shortly before her death. In these small-scale masterpieces, the artist's acute eye and feeling for costume and character are directly revealed.

Four or five dresses that correspond with the costumes depicted in the paintings and graphic work will also be on view. They provide the opportunity to see examples of actual garments from an era in which virtuoso dressmaking and alternative fashion trends flourished. The costumes also make clear how Whistler transformed and distilled the essence of the fashion extravaganzas and simple costumes of his day to fit his Art for Art's sake philosophy, which placed greater emphasis on the formal elements of line and color than the identity of the sitter. At the same time, Whistler's deep affinity with fashion—integral to his art as a whole and to his self-presentation—enabled him to express in his formal arrangements a strong sense of the personality of his sitters through costume and pose.

Whistler, Women, and Fashion is made possible through the generosity of The Henry Luce Foundation, The Samuel H. Kress Foundation, The Howard Phipps Foundation, The Helen Clay Frick Foundation, Melvin R. Seiden in honor of Susan Grace Galassi, The Ahmanson Foundation, and Joseph Koerner, with additional support from the Fellows of The Frick Collection.

OTHER WHISTLER EVENTS PLANNED WORLDWIDE IN 2003

Information and links concerning a range of Whistler-related exhibitions and events planned for 2003 can be found at www.whistler2003.com.

ABOUT THE FRICK COLLECTION

Henry Clay Frick (1849–1919), the coke and steel industrialist, philanthropist, and art collector, left his New York residence and his remarkable collection of Western paintings, sculpture, and decorative arts to the public “for the purpose of establishing and maintaining a gallery of art, [and] of encouraging and developing the study of fine arts and of advancing the general knowledge of kindred subjects.” Designed and built for Mr. Frick in 1913 and 1914 by Thomas Hastings of Carrère and Hastings, the mansion provides a grand domestic setting, reminiscent of the noble houses of Europe, for the masterworks from the Renaissance through the nineteenth century that it located there. Of special note are paintings by Bellini, Constable, Corot, Fragonard, Gainsborough, Goya, El Greco, Holbein, Ingres, Manet, Monet, Rembrandt, Renoir, Titian, Turner, Velázquez, Vermeer, Whistler, and other masters. Mr. Frick’s superb examples of French eighteenth-century furniture, Italian Renaissance bronzes, and Limoges enamels bring a special ambience to the galleries, while the interior and exterior gardens and the amenities created since the founder’s time in the 1930s and 1970s contribute to the serenity of the visitor’s experience.

Renowned for its small, focused exhibitions and for its highly regarded concert series and lectures, The Frick Collection also operates the Frick Art Reference Library, founded by Henry Clay Frick’s daughter, Miss Helen Clay Frick, located in an adjoining building at 10 East 71st Street. Both a research library and a photo archive, the Frick Art Reference Library is one of the world’s great repositories of documents for the study of Western art. It has served the international art world for more than seventy-five years.

BASIC INFORMATION

General Information Phone: (212) 288-0700

Website: www.frick.org

E-mail: info@frick.org

Where: 1 East 70th Street, near Fifth Avenue.

Hours: open six days a week, with recently expanded hours: 10am to 6pm on Tuesdays through Thursdays and on Saturdays; 10am to 9pm on Fridays; and 1pm to 6pm on Sundays. Closed Mondays, New Year’s Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving, December 24, and December 25. Limited hours (1 to 6pm) on Lincoln’s Birthday, Election Day, and Veterans Day.

Admission: \$12 for the general public; \$8 for seniors, and \$5 for students

PLEASE NOTE TO YOUR READERS: Children under ten are not admitted to the Collection, and those under sixteen must be accompanied by an adult.

Subway: #6 local (on Lexington Avenue) to 68th Street station; **Bus:** M1, M2, M3, and M4 southbound on Fifth Avenue to 72nd Street and northbound on Madison Avenue to 70th Street

Tour Information: included in the price of admission is an Acoustiguide INFORM® Audio Tour of the permanent collection, provided by Acoustiguide. The tour is offered in six languages: English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish.

Museum Shop: the shop is open the same days as the Museum, closing fifteen minutes before the institution.

Group Visits: Please call (212) 288-0700 for details and to make reservations.

Public Programs: A calendar of events is published regularly and is available upon request.

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For further press information, please contact Heidi Rosenau, Manager of Media Relations & Marketing, or Stephanie Ruggiero, Media Relations & Marketing Coordinator

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