



# ARCHIVED PRESS RELEASE

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## THE FRICK COLLECTION

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### ***Whistler, Women, and Fashion***

*April 22 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-three other works, including additional oils by the artist, a selection of his finest prints, drawings, pastel studies, costume designs, portrait etchings, and watercolors, as well as fashion plates and costumes of the period. The exhibition is organized by **Susan Grace Galassi**, Curator at The Frick Collection, and **Margaret F. MacDonald**, Principal Research Fellow at the Centre for Whistler Studies at the University of Glasgow and a leading Whistler scholar. The costume consultant for the exhibition is **Aileen Ribeiro**, a lecturer in the History of Dress Department and Professor in the History of Art at the Courtauld Institute of Art at the University of London. ***Whistler, Women, and Fashion*** has been 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, Joseph Koerner, and Raymond and Margaret Horowitz, with additional support from the Fellows of The Frick Collection. It is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and Humanities.

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, during which virtuoso dressmaking and alternative fashion trends flourished. At

the heart of the exhibition are ten oil portraits, eight of which will be displayed in the museum's Oval Room. Three 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.

Comments Frick Collection Curator Susan Grace Galassi, "The most exciting and rewarding aspect of this endeavor has been the stimulating exchange among members of the team, bridging art and dress history. Our understanding of this fascinating topic developed together through constant discussion."

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE EXHIBITION

*Symphony in White, No. 2: The Little White Girl* (1864) features the artist's Irish model and mistress, Joanna Hiffernan, in a simple white muslin gown, without a crinoline, revealing 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 in *Symphony in Flesh Colour and Pink* (1871–74). The portrait, which achieves a delicate harmony between the costume and the décor of the room—also designed by Whistler—is a complete statement of his Aesthetic principles.

In *Arrangement in Brown and Black: Portrait of Miss Rosa Corder* (1876–78) and *Arrangement in Black: La Dame au brodequin jaune—Portrait of Lady Archibald Campbell* (1882–84), Whistler painted his sitters—an artist and an aristocrat, respectively—in the elegant new street attire inspired by riding habits and menswear. 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 Grey: Portrait of Lady Meux* (1881–82) and *Arrangement in Black: Lady Meux* (1881), in which Valerie, Lady Meux, dressed in high fashion, unabashedly flaunts her wealth and sex appeal. Also reunited are two portraits of Ethel Birnie Philip, Whistler's sister-in-law and model for *Red and Black: The Fan* (1891/94) 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, attests to Whistler's fascination with the East. Another masterpiece, *Harmony in Grey and Green: Miss Cicely Alexander* (1873), 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 early 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 portraying 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, lent by public and private collections in the United States and Europe, the artist's acute eye and feeling for costume and character are directly revealed.

Four dresses from the Brooklyn Museum of Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and the Museum of the City of New York will also be on view. These garments correspond with the costumes depicted in Whistler's paintings and graphic work. They reveal how Whistler transformed and distilled the essence of both the fashion extravaganzas and simple costumes of his day to fit his Art for Art's sake philosophy and aesthetic principles and to express his sitters' personalities and status.

## ILLUSTRATED PUBLICATION

Margaret MacDonald, Susan Galassi, and Aileen Ribeiro are joined by Patricia de Montfort, Research Fellow at the Centre for Whistler Studies, as the authors of an accompanying book to be published by Yale University Press. The publication, 224 pages in length and lavishly illustrated with 140 color and 40 black and white illustrations, offers a unique approach to Whistler's artistic production by exploring his engagement with fashion as an essential part of his work and personality, and by providing new biographical information about the women he portrayed—among them artists, actresses, society women, and members of his family. Published in both hardcover (\$50) and softcover (\$30), the book will be available from the Museum Shop of The Frick Collection, through the institution's website ([www.frick.org](http://www.frick.org)), and by calling (212) 288-0700.

## **FREE PUBLIC LECTURES**

**Date:** Wednesday, April 23, 2003, 6:00pm

**Speaker:** Margaret F. MacDonald, Centre for Whistler Studies at the University of Glasgow

**Title:** *Designing Women: Whistler's Portraits*

This lecture explores in depth Whistler's relationships with the women in his life by looking at some of the artist's finest portraits with a focus on the significance of his manipulations of line and color, pose and costume. There is no charge for this lecture, and seating is limited.

**Date:** Thursday, June 5, 2003, 6:00 pm

**Speaker:** Aileen Ribeiro, Courtauld Institute of Art

**Title:** *"A dream of fair women": Whistler and the Art of Dress*

This lecture surveys women's fashion during the second half of the nineteenth century and examines the different ways in which Whistler and his contemporaries portrayed it. There is no charge for this lecture, and seating is limited.

## **CONFERENCE ON DRESS AND ART**

Saturday, June 7, 2003, 9:00 am-5:00 pm, at The Frick Collection

Organized by Aileen Ribeiro and Susan Grace Galassi

**This event will now be held at the Asia Society, 725 Park Avenue at 70<sup>th</sup> Street.**

**Please be advised that tickets are no longer available.**

In connection with the exhibition, this one-day conference will explore the role of costume in European art from the Renaissance to the end of the nineteenth century. Nine speakers—art and dress historians

among them—will give talks that focus on such artists as Holbein, Titian, Van Dyck, Velázquez, Gainsborough, David, and Whistler, all of whom are represented in The Frick Collection.

Further information on the program can be found on our web site at [www.frick.org](http://www.frick.org). *This conference is made possible through the generosity of the Arthur Ross Foundation.*

## **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](http://www.whistler2003.com) and at [www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/HTML/calendar.htm](http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/HTML/calendar.htm).

### **BASIC INFORMATION**

**General Information Phone:** (212) 288-0700

**Website:** [www.frick.org](http://www.frick.org)

**E-mail:** [info@frick.org](mailto:info@frick.org)

**Where:** 1 East 70<sup>th</sup> 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 68<sup>th</sup> Street station; **Bus:** M1, M2, M3, and M4 southbound on Fifth Avenue to 72<sup>nd</sup> Street and northbound on Madison Avenue to 70<sup>th</sup> 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.

#62, May 16, 2003

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

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