

NEWS

from the Worcester Art Museum

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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THE PAINFUL PRICE OF BEAUTY ON DISPLAY AT WORCESTER ART MUSEUM

(WORCESTER, Mass., September 16, 2009) — What lengths will some people go to be fashionable? Worcester Art Museum investigates the psychological and physiological effects that the corset has on women in its new exhibition, *Bound by Fashion: The Corset in European Painting*, on view September 16, 2009 through January 10, 2010.

Worcester's history is eternally laced within the corset. Thousands of local women worked at the Royal Worcester Corset Company between 1861 and 1949, producing garments that were shipped worldwide. The factory was also one of the largest corset manufacturers in the world, and one of the largest female employers in the country.

Bound by Fashion examines 13 European paintings between the 16th and 20th century that feature the corset, an international fashion staple in female wardrobes that was often associated with sexual control and social discipline - the discomfort of its restriction on the waist was designed to suppress female sexual impulses, while arousing male desires. Wearing a tightly laced corset created the ideal female shape - an exaggerated narrow waist and wider hips - but female organs

were also constricted, and in some cases, women fainted from reduced air capacity caused by the corset's restriction.

The home of the Royal Worcester Corset Company founder, David Hale Fanning, is now a dormitory at Clark University. Four Clark University Art History students chose the theme, selected the works, and wrote the special labels and brochure under the direction of Clark University Assistant Professor of Art History, John Garton. *Bound by Fashion* is on view Wednesday through Friday from 11:00 a.m. – 5:00pm, Saturday from 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. and Sunday 11:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. through December 31, 2009.

Related Events

Worcester Waists

Sunday, October 11, 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Conference Room

The Royal Worcester Corset Factory was a thriving corset producer and international distributor of the garment between 1812 and 1949. Join Kelli Blank, Preservation Worcester docent, for a discussion about Worcester's corset industry and its lasting impact on the city. Cost is free with Museum admission and free for Museum Members and Preservation Worcester members.

Located on Salisbury St., in Worcester, Massachusetts, the Worcester Art Museum opened in 1898 and is one of America's most respected art museums. The Museum is world-renowned for its 35,000-piece collection of paintings, sculpture, decorative arts, photography, prints, drawings and new media. For more information, visit our new website at www.worcesterart.org.

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