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**NEW MORGAN EXHIBITION OF ILLUMINATED MANUSCRIPTS
EXPLORES THE EVOLUTION OF HIGH FASHION DURING THE
LATE MIDDLE AGES**

***SHOW FOCUSES ON DRESS IN NORTHERN EUROPE AND INCLUDES FOUR
FULL-SCALE REPLICAS OF ENSEMBLES DEPICTED IN
MORGAN MANUSCRIPTS***

Illuminating Fashion: Dress in the Art of Medieval France and the Netherlands
Opens May 20, 2011

****Press Preview: Thursday, May 19, 2011, 10 a.m. until noon****
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New York, NY, March 25, 2011—The complex and rich history of courtly fashion of the late Middle Ages as seen in the manuscripts and early printed books of the period is the subject of a fascinating new exhibition at The Morgan Library & Museum entitled *Illuminating Fashion: Dress in the Art of Medieval France and the Netherlands*. Opening on Friday, May 20, the show includes more than 50 works of Northern European origin from the Morgan's renowned collections, and also features four full-scale replicas of clothing seen in exhibited manuscripts. It will run through September 4.



Delilah Shearing Samson's Hair, by the workshop of the Boucicaut Master. *Bible historiale*; France, Paris, ca. 1415-20. Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M.394, f. 112 (detail).

Covering nearly 200 years prior to the beginning of the full Renaissance in France about 1515, *Illuminating Fashion* examines a period in which clothing styles changed more rapidly than had previously been the case, often from one decade to the next. Social custom, cultural influences, and politics—such as the Hundred Years' War (1337–1453) and the occupation of Paris by the English (in the 1420s)—had a notable impact on fashion, and medieval illuminators deftly recorded these shifts in taste.

The exhibition also touches upon how artists used clothing (garments actually worn) and costume (fantastic garments not actually worn) to help contemporaneous viewers interpret a work of art. The garments depicted were often encoded clues to the wearer's identity and character.

“The Morgan is delighted to present this captivating exploration of an important aspect of late medieval culture,” said William M. Griswold, director of The Morgan Library & Museum. “As is the case today, artists of the medieval era understood how people used clothing to communicate their status and role in society. As fashions evolved, illuminators followed suit in manuscripts, providing not only an illustrated record of changes in dress and social customs, but also a symbolic visual commentary on the values and morals of the people they depicted.”

THE EXHIBITION

Fashion Revolution, 1330–50

The exhibition is organized in eight sections, the first of which is entitled, “Fashion Revolution, 1330–50.” During the second quarter of the fourteenth century, fashion moved in an important new direction as the largely unstructured garments of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries gave way to tighter, more form-fitting clothing for both men and women. This was primarily due to advances in tailoring and in the use of multiple buttons.

A new man’s garment—the cote hardy—revealed the shape of the torso and arms while tighter bodices and sleeves for women became popular, as did exposed necks and shoulders. The sides of women’s outer garment, the surcot, were given seductively large, peek-a-boo openings. Men as well as some women turned the chaperon (a hood with an attached cape and tail) into a fashion accessory that lasted over one hundred years (it appears in the exhibition repeatedly).



Fesonas and Cassiel the Baudrain Playing Chess. Jacques de Longuyon, *Vows of the Peacock*; Belgium, Tournai, ca. 1345–50. Pierpont Morgan Library, MS G.24, f. 25v (detail).

For example, the manuscript of the *Vows of the Peacock* on view (ca. 1345–49) shows the image of *Fesonas and Cassiel the Baudrain Playing Chess*. The four young men in the miniature are all dressed at the height of the new fashion. They wear the new short garment, the cote hardy, which is buttoned down the front; it is tight at the skirt, bodice, and sleeves. All sport chaperons, two of which are dagged (cut into decorative strips). Some wear delicate shoes, while the youth in blue wears chausses: hose with leather soles. The two women at the left wear the open surcot. The woman in blue wears the closed surcot, furnished with a lined slit for access to the kirtle (the garment worn beneath). She also wears tippets: thin decorative bands of clothing falling from the elbow.

Wasp Waists and Stuffed Shirts, 1350–90

The next section, “Wasp Waists and Stuffed Shirts, 1350–90,” reveals how the catastrophes of the bubonic plague, which first struck in 1348, and the defeats of the Hundred Years’ War had a stagnating effect on the development of fashion for much of the second half of the fourteenth century. While the look for women changed little from the previous period, men’s fashions did develop under the influence of military dress. With a short flaring skirt and a cinched waist, the pourpoint (snug-fitting buttoned-down jacket also known as doublet) was padded at the chest and shoulders, giving its wearer a distinctive ‘hour-glass’ silhouette. Long pointed shoes (pouleines) and belts worn low on the hips complimented the look.



Youth and Two Maidens Hawking. Wusthorpe Missal; Germany, Hamburg, shortly before 1381. Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M.892.3 (detail).

In a German Missal (a liturgical service book used by the priest at Mass) created before 1381, three fashionably dressed young people are hawking at the bottom left. The youth wears a red pourpoint with a daggered hem, a particularly tight chaperon, narrow belt, and open shoes. For medieval audiences of the late fourteenth century, the especially fancy clothing of the hawking trio carries connotations of the vanity of secular pursuits, as fashion in the art of this late medieval period was often a metaphor for the wasting of money and energy on the material world.

Luxury in a Time of Madness, 1390–1420

“Luxury in a Time of Madness, 1390–1420” is a dramatic contrast to the previous section. This thirty-year period is one of the most sumptuous, elegant, and luxurious of all the Middle Ages. Fashion flowered, ironically against the continued backdrop of political instability represented by the madness of the French king, Charles VI, and the incessant Hundred Years’ War. Men’s and women’s fashions were dominated by a new garment, the houppeland. Men’s houppelands featured enormous sleeves and a skirt ranging from full-length to upper thigh. The pourpoint remained popular, but now often finely embroidered and equipped with large sleeves. Women’s houppelands were always full-length, with bombard or straight sleeves. The simpler cote hardy, with its voluminous skirt and tighter upper body, continued to be worn. Women also began to wear their hair in temples, a double-horned coif surmounted by veils or a tubular burlet as seen on Delilah in the French *Bible historiale* (ca.1415–20). Fitting with the time, Delilah’s houppeland is trailing and



Training the Huntsmen, by the Josephus Master and the Bedford Master? Gaston III Phoebus, *Livre de la chasse*; France, Paris, shortly before 1407? Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M.1044, f. 42v (detail).

high-waisted with bulbous sleeves and an open V-shaped collar. Also on view in this section is an important fifteenth-century treatise on hunting by Gaston Phoebus, the *Livre de la chasse*. The well-dressed trainer of huntsmen wears a luxurious, blue fur-lined houpeland with gold embroidery and daged bombard sleeves.

Terrible Twenties, 1420s

Military occupations are seldom kind to fashion. The occupation of Paris by the English had a depressing influence on fashion for the decade that Duke John of Bedford was regent in France. In the “Terrible Twenties, 1420s” French nobles fled the capital and art commissions dried up. Fashion, likewise, declined, as a simpler approach to dress prevailed. In the *Hours of William Porter* (ca.1420–25), the leaf depicting the Decapitation of St. Winifred shows the tyrant Caradoc wearing a new garment that evolved from the houpeland: a *robe* (gown). Short, unwaisted, but belted at the hips, the gown presents an unflatteringly bulbous silhouette. In sharp contrast to the huntsman in Gaston’s treatise, the garment is unembellished with any gold embroidery.



Catherine of Cleves Distributing Alms, by the Master of Catherine of Cleves. Hours of Catherine of Cleves; The Netherlands, Utrecht, ca. 1440. Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M.917, p. 65 (detail).

coins to the poor while dressed in a magnificent orange ermine-lined houpeland. Her long, voluminous sleeves are open, revealing the gold of the kirtle worn beneath. She wears her hair encased in horns to which a veil is attached. From her high-waisted (but unseen) belt hangs a slender knife case and a purse from which she selects coins.

Late Gothic Vertigo, 1460s and ‘70s

“Late Gothic Vertigo, 1460s and ‘70s” represents the fashion of the Middle Ages for most people today. This

Peacocks of the Mid-Century, 1430–60

The fifth section of the exhibition, “Peacocks of the Mid-Century, 1430–60,” sees the end of the Hundred Years’ War in 1453. Political stability fostered fashion, and the thirty years of the middle of the fifteenth century were an exuberant period. These decades saw the last of the houpeland. Men more often wore the gown: full- or knee-length, belted at the waist. Women’s gowns featured wide V-necks with contrasting collars and parlets (plackards worn at the midriff). Their headgear atop the temples continued to evolve, growing ever more extravagant. In the *Hours of Catherine of Cleves* (ca. 1440), the duchess of Guelders is depicted as a personification of piety distributing



Geneviève Receiving King Mark’s Letter, by the Master of the Vienna Mamerot. *Romance of Tristan*; France, Bourges? dated 1468. Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M.41, f. 24v (detail).

is mainly due to the women's towering conical headgear, the turret, from the top of which flowed long transparent veils. The *Romance of Tristan* (1468) beautifully illustrates Geneviève wearing a vertiginous cone-shaped turret anchored to her head with a frontlet, a band of black velvet. Her gold gown offers the silhouette characteristic for this period: a voluminous skirt; a high, narrow waist; and a wide flaring collar.

Twilight of the Middle Ages, 1480–1515

“Twilight of the Middle Ages, 1480–1515” examines the period of transition in Northern Europe—the Middle Ages were not yet over and the Renaissance had not yet begun. Both King Charles VIII (died 1498) and Louis XII (died 1515) invaded Italy, and these military campaigns exposed France to Italian art, culture, and fashion. The look for men changed abruptly. Long loose open gowns came into style, and by the 1490s, these gowns became especially voluminous and bulky as illustrated in the Morgan's copy of the very rare *Dance of Death* printed in 1486. The knight on the page is wearing an open gown with side lapels. The garment is long and loose and, lacking the pleats of the previous decades, hides rather than highlights the male form. His hat, with its low crown and brim, is also new, as are his shoes. These are the *demy pantouffles*, rounded-toed slippers with an open back.

Dawn of the Renaissance, 1515 and Beyond

The exhibition closes with “Dawn of the Renaissance, 1515 and Beyond.”

King François I was famous for his interest in Italian art and culture; he induced Leonardo da Vinci to join the French court. While Italian fashion had begun to influence northern clothing in the early sixteenth century, by the accession of François to the throne in 1515, the true Renaissance began in France, in art as well as in fashion. This is elegantly illustrated in the frontispiece to the king's own copy of the *Romance of the Rose* (ca. 1525) in which François, surrounded by courtiers, is depicted accepting the volume from its scribe. He and his court are all dressed in new Italianate style.

Doublets, in rich fabrics, are slashed on the chest and arms. The calf-length gowns have wide collars but short puffy sleeves. Shoes are square-toed.

Indicative of his lower status, the scribe's gown, with its hanging slit sleeves, is a tad out of date.



François I Receiving the Volume, by the Master of Girard Acarie. *Romance of the Rose*; France, Rouen, ca. 1525. Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M.948, f. 4 (detail).

Replicas

To enhance appreciation for the fashions of the era, four full-scale replicas of late medieval ensembles are presented, using period hand-sewing techniques and authentic materials—including silk velvet, gold brocade, linen, straw, and ermine. One is of the youth in the blue cote hardy from the *Vows of the Peacock*, indicative of the “Fashion Revolution.” Another is the luxuriously embroidered houpendant of the

aristocratic huntsman from the *Livre de la chass*. The voluminous gown and towering turret worn by Geneviève in the *Romance of Tristan* is brought to life in three-dimensional reality. Also featured is the houpeland of Catherine of Cleves, a replica on loan from Museum Het Valkhof in the city of Nijmegen, the Netherlands; the garment recreates the elaborate ensemble she wears while giving alms.



Recreation of the Houpeland of Catherine of Cleves, duchess of Guelders. Museum Het Valkhof, Copyright: Stichting Woud der Verwachting. Photography by Stef Verstraaten. © stef verstraaten, the Netherlands.

PUBLICATION

Illuminating Fashion: Dress in the Art of Medieval France and the Netherlands is accompanied by a publication of the same title. The 464-page volume includes 300 color illustrations and contains in-depth discussion of dress in late medieval art, encompassing examples not only from illuminated manuscripts from collections around the world, but also from panel paintings, woodcuts, sculpture, and tapestries. The book is the culmination of a thirty-year study by Dr. Anne H. van Buren (1927–2008), a specialist of Northern European art of the period, assisted by Roger S. Wieck.

ORGANIZATION AND SPONSORSHIP

Illuminating Fashion: Dress in the Art of Medieval France and the Netherlands is organized by Roger S. Wieck, curator of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts at The Morgan Library & Museum.

This exhibition is generously underwritten by a gift in memory of Melvin R. Seiden, and by a grant from the Samuel H. Kress Foundation.

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PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Family Program

The Morgan's Spring Family Fair

During this spring family fair organized in conjunction the exhibition, Henry Chapin and his early music ensemble will lead families in traditional dances and songs enjoyed in France and England 500 years ago. Children will try on costumes inspired by the books of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance in the Morgan collection, make their own wool chaperons and hats, and try their hand at fabric dyeing using centuries-old processes. Come with your own homemade medieval costume. Appropriate for ages 6-12.

Saturday, May 21, 2-5 pm

Discussion

From the Set to the Runway

Deborah Nadoolman Landis, Valerie Steele

What is the difference between costume (for film and theater) and fashion (on runway and street)? Deborah Nadoolman Landis, Academy-Award-nominated costume designer (Coming to America, Raiders of the Lost Ark) and author of *Dressed: A Century of Hollywood Costume Design*, will be in conversation with Valerie Steele, Director and Chief Curator of The Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology and founder/editor of *Fashion Theory*, and others to be announced.

Wednesday, June 15, 6:30 pm*

Tickets: \$15 for Non-Members; \$10 for Members

*The exhibition will be open at 5:30 pm especially for program attendees.

Gallery Talk

Illuminating Fashion: Dress in the Art of Medieval France and the Netherlands

Roger S. Wieck, Curator, Department of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts, The Morgan Library & Museum

Friday, June 24, 7 pm

Films

The Art of Costume Dramas

To coincide with the exhibition, the Morgan is screening a series of classic period dramas that sumptuously illustrate the fashion of the eras in which they are set.

Becket

(1964, 184 minutes)

Director: Peter Glenville

Set during the late twelfth-century, this drama focuses on the long and often tumultuous friendship between King Henry II of England (Peter O'Toole) and Thomas Becket (Richard Burton), from their days of friendly carousing to Henry's appointment of Becket as archbishop of Canterbury and the ensuing struggle between the Church and crown. Winner of an Academy Award for Best Screenplay, the film also stars John Gielgud, Gino Cervi, Paolo Stoppa, and Pamela Brown.

Friday, June 10, 7 pm

Restoration

(1995, 117 minutes)

Director: Michael Hoffman

With its lavish sets and stunning period attire, this film recounts the life and adventures of Robert Merivel, (Robert Downey Jr.) from his days as a favored physician in the service of King Charles II, to his trials as a doctor in a sanatorium, and finally attending to the sick during the Great Plague of London. Meg Ryan, Sam Neill, Ian McKellen, and Hugh Grant round out the outstanding cast in this Oscar winner for Best Costume Design.

Friday, July 8, 7 pm

The Leopard (Il Gattopardo)

(1963, 187 minutes)

Director: Luchino Visconti

This award-winning “fresco of Sicilian life” follows the Prince of Salina (Burt Lancaster) as he tries to preserve his family, integrity, and class during the chaotic Italian unification of the 1860s. Based on the Italian bestseller by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, the film also features Claudia Cardinale and Alain Delon. In Italian with English subtitles.

Friday, July 22, 7 pm

Films are free. Tickets are available at the Admission Desk on the day of the screening. Advance reservations for Morgan Members only: 212.685.0008, ext. 560, or tickets@themorgan.org.

The Morgan Library & Museum

The Morgan Library & Museum began as the private library of financier Pierpont Morgan, one of the preeminent collectors and cultural benefactors in the United States. Today, more than a century after its founding in 1906, the Morgan serves as a museum, independent research library, musical venue, architectural landmark, and historic site. In October 2010, the Morgan completed the first-ever restoration of its original McKim building, Pierpont Morgan’s private library, and the core of the institution. In tandem with the 2006 expansion project by architect Renzo Piano, the Morgan now provides visitors unprecedented access to its world-renowned collections of drawings, literary and historical manuscripts, musical scores, medieval and Renaissance manuscripts, printed books, and ancient Near Eastern seals and tablets.

General Information

The Morgan Library & Museum

225 Madison Avenue, at 36th Street, New York, NY 10016-3405

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www.themorgan.org

Hours

Tuesday–Thursday, 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.; extended Friday hours, 10:30 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Sunday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.; closed Mondays, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Year’s Day. The Morgan closes at 4 p.m. on Christmas Eve and New Year’s Eve.

Admission

\$15 for adults; \$10 for students, seniors (65 and over), and children (under 16); free to Members and children, 12 and under accompanied by an adult. Admission is free on Fridays from 7 to 9 p.m. Admission is not required to visit the Morgan Shop.