

Information for mass media

**At the End of October, a New Exhibition Will Open at the Fashion Museum**

**On 25 October a new exhibition “The Crinoline Lady” will open to visitors at the Fashion Museum (Riga, 24 Grecinieku Street). The exhibition has been prepared in cooperation with Alexandre Vassiliev Foundation and will uncover the secrets of splendid dresses from the middle of the 19th century.**

In the 19th century Europe was changing at a rapid pace – cities and towns grew, communication between them was provided by expanding railways along with the mail coaches used until then. In many places the narrow streets so common in the Middles Ages were replaced by wide and straight avenues. Population of cities and towns grew due to influx from the country, people worked at countless factories, whose chimneys became an intrinsic part of the landscape.

It was a world invented and built by men: cast iron, steel, steam locomotives and steam ships, impressive buildings, central heating, water pipes and sewage systems at homes, the unusually bright light of gas lamps along with new workshops, banks, trade, politics – were all in the male domain. The men wore elegantly demure clothing in dark colours, conducted business, founded enterprises and visited gentlemen's clubs. Women in dresses from fabrics dyed using the new bright aniline dyes were like bright flowers or exotic butterflies set against the bleak landscape of towns and cities shaded by the smog.

As Gustave Flaubert wrote in his immortal novel “Madame Bovary” (1857): “A man, at least, is free; he can explore every passion, every land, overcome obstacles, taste the most distant pleasures. But a woman is continually thwarted. Her will, like the veil tied to her hat by a string, flutters with every breeze; there is always some desire luring her on, some convention holding her back.”

In 50s and 60s of the 19th century the social role of women was insignificant, but women's dresses had never taken up more space. A construction made of steel hoops and strips of fabric similar to a bird cage – the crinoline – became popular. It replaced numerous layers of petticoats worn during the previous decades. It is paradoxical that at a time in which women's rights were so limited and home and children were considered their main purview, ladies' dresses widened by crinolines occupied streets, parlours, ballrooms, boxes at theatres, place in carriages and compartments on the train.

At that time a woman in addition to being an exemplary wife and a mother, was also required to become an adornment of the sitting room or a box at the theatre, which meant multiple change of clothing during the day and strict adherence to etiquette and social norms. Maintaining a respectable public image required considerable financial means, therefore ladies in splendid, costly attires often were indicators of their husbands' status and wealth. Enormous expenses on dresses were not only considered justified, but even necessary.

The exhibition will be on display for six months, until spring 2020, and will include **splendid dresses from the middle of the 19th century from Alexander Vasiliev's (*Александр Васильев*) collection**. Such dresses reflect the wardrobe of a wealthy woman of that period. Items are exhibited in accordance with the daily routine – from the moment the woman makes herself presentable after waking up to social visits, travel, walks and evening balls or entertainment. Tailcoats, waistcoats and top hats worn by men at the time will also be on exhibit. The exhibition will include refined accessories, jewellery and objects of interior that supplement dresses. The tradition established during previous exhibitions will continue –visitors will have an opportunity to try on clothing that corresponds to the style and fashions of the exhibition, they will also be able to complete a test prepared for this particular exhibition.

The Fashion Museum located at 24 Grecinieku Street in Riga was opened in Autumn 2016 in cooperation with Alexander Vasiliev's Foundation. It is a private museum created and led by architect Natalja Muzickina (*Nataļja Muzičkina*). Thematic exhibitions and a small permanent exhibition offers an opportunity to adults and children alike not only to see clothing and accessories, but also to put oneself in the ambience of bygone years, participate and learn many new things. This will be the 7th exhibition at the Fashion Museum: the museum has previously hosted such exhibitions as “Elegance of the 1930s”, “The Secrets of the East. Western Fashion and China”, “Dior”, “The Golden Twenties”, “1918. Freedom Chic”. **Until 14 October it is still possible to see “The Brilliant 80s” exhibition displayed at the Fashion Museum and dedicated to the vivid and extravagant fashions of the 1980’s.**

**Working hours of the museum:** every day from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. (from 1 October until 14 May – from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.).

**Tickets:** 7 EUR; for groups 6 EUR; schoolchildren, students, seniors and disabled persons 5 EUR. On the first Tuesday of every month discount for schoolchildren, students, seniors, and persons with disabilities: ticket only 3 EUR.

**FASHION MUSEUM**

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