

Phoenix Art Museum

News Release

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Phoenix Art Museum Appoints New Jacquie Dorrance Curator of Fashion Design

Helen Jean, who has served as the Museum's interim curator of fashion design since September 2019, has been named to the permanent role

PHOENIX (March 9, 2020) – Phoenix Art Museum announces the appointment of Helen Jean as its next Jacquie Dorrance Curator of Fashion Design, following Jean's service as interim curator of fashion design since September 2019. Jean first joined the Museum in 2007 as a curatorial assistant for Dennita Sewell, Curator Emerita, who previously led the fashion design program at the Museum for nearly 20 years. Jean, who brings more than a decade of experience as a fashion scholar and educator, recently curated the Museum's latest fashion design exhibition, *India: Fashion's Muse*.

"On behalf of Phoenix Art Museum and the Board of Trustees, we are thrilled to appoint Helen Jean to this permanent role overseeing the Museum's extensive fashion design collection and exhibitions," said Mark Koenig, Interim Sybil Harrington Director and Chief Financial Officer of Phoenix Art Museum. "Not only does Helen bring a depth of experience as a scholar and educator, she also has significant insight into and experience working with the Museum's renowned collection. We are confident she will continue to expand the tradition of innovative scholarship and dynamic exhibitions that our community has come to expect from the Museum's fashion design program."

As the Museum's curatorial assistant for fashion design from 2007–12, Jean assisted in the management of the Museum's fashion design collection, which now includes more than 8,000 objects. She also researched new acquisitions and assisted with the development and installation of dozens of fashion design exhibitions. As an educator, she has presented lectures, gallery talks, object discussions, and demonstrations on various topics, including the history of French and Italian fashion, Slavic embroidery, mathematics in fashion design, the depiction of Western clothing in 19th-century Japanese woodblock prints, and the history of the ostrich-feather industry in Arizona and its impact on modern fashion. Previously, Jean served as a fashion design instructor with the Art Institute of Phoenix, and most recently, she was a college representative at the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising in Los Angeles. She earned a BFA in Costume Design at Stephens College and an MFA in Fashion Design at the University of Nebraska.

"I offer my sincere congratulations to Helen Jean," said Jacquie Dorrance, who in 2016 endowed the curatorial position to which Jean has been appointed. "As a longtime believer in fashion design as a compelling art form throughout history and today, as demonstrated in the hugely exciting *India: Fashion's Muse* exhibition, I am grateful that the stewardship of this important collection will be entrusted to Helen's talent and expertise. This is an important moment for both the fashion collection and for the Arizona Costume Institute, which are jewels within the Museum and our community."

"It is an incredible honor to accept this new role, and I am grateful for the opportunity to work with and steward this truly exceptional collection as it continues to grow and evolve," said Jean. "I am also grateful for the opportunity I had to learn from Dennita Sewell, without whom the collection and its national acclaim would not have been possible. I look forward to continuing the work that Dennita and, before her, Jean Hildreth began at Phoenix Art Museum."

"We have been fortunate to have Helen serve in the interim role since September, and we are grateful that she was able to step in and provide continuity for one of the Museum's most vital and important collecting areas," said Gilbert Vicario, the Deputy Director for Curatorial Affairs and the Selig Family Chief Curator. "Helen's work within

the collection, her stewardship of ongoing acquisitions like the recent gift of works by Geoffrey Beene from New York-based collector Patsy Tarr, and her exceptional creative vision as evidenced in *India: Fashion's Muse* made her an ideal choice for this permanent role.”

On February 28, 2020, the Museum premiered its first major fashion design exhibition curated by Jean entitled [India: Fashion's Muse](#). The exhibition's opening event, hosted by Museum support group Arizona Costume Institute (ACI), welcomed nearly 400 guests, establishing it as the largest fashion design exhibition opening in ACI's more than 50-year history. Showcasing more than 50 ensembles with a variety of ephemera, including gold jewelry, purses, and other accessories, *India: Fashion's Muse* explores Western fashion's centuries-long love affair with the riches of India and highlights how Indian aesthetics, patterns, traditional garments, and more have inspired designs from streetwear to couture, as well as global fashion trends that have outlived empires. Featured works include 19th-century examples; historical and contemporary saris loaned to the Museum by local collectors; and designer works by Pierre Balmain, Jean Louis, Branell, Bob Mackie, Olivier Lapidus, Halston, Givenchy, and more from the Museum's fashion design collection. The exhibition culminates with works by contemporary Indian fashion designers, in particular Anamika Khanna, who are expertly merging the exquisite craft of the ancient world with the aesthetics and technology of the 21st century.

India: Fashion's Muse is now on view through June 21, 2020. Jean will next curate a new exhibition in the Museum's Ellman Fashion Design Gallery scheduled to open in summer 2020, followed by a major fashion exhibition in the Museum's Steele Gallery featuring mod fashion from the 1960s and 1970s.

About Phoenix Art Museum

Since 1959, Phoenix Art Museum has provided millions of guests with access to world-class art and experiences in an effort to ignite imaginations, create meaningful connections, and serve as a brave space for all people who wish to experience the transformative power of art. Located in Phoenix's Central Corridor, the Museum is a vibrant destination for the visual arts and the largest art museum in the southwestern United States. Each year, more than 300,000 guests engage with critically acclaimed national and international exhibitions and the Museum's collection of more than 20,000 works of American and Western American, Asian, European, Latin American, modern and contemporary art, and fashion design. The Museum also presents a comprehensive film program, live performances, and educational programs designed for visitors of all ages, along with vibrant photography exhibitions made possible through the Museum's landmark partnership with the Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona. To learn more about Phoenix Art Museum, visit phxart.org, or call 602.257.1880.

About the Fashion Design Collection of Phoenix Art Museum

Founded in 1966, the fashion design collection of Phoenix Art Museum is recognized for its quality and comprehensiveness. It is composed of more than 8,000 objects of American and European men's, women's, and children's dress and accessories, dating from the 18th century to the present day.

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