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PRESS RELEASE

Historic Deerfield Presents

Body by Design: Fashionable Silhouettes from the Ideal to the Real

*an Innovative Exhibition Exploring the Enduring Power of Fashion
to Enhance the Human Form*

*From corsets and hoop skirts to Spanx, Body by Design will explore the ways fashion has
been used to shape the human body over the past three centuries.*

(Deerfield, MA) – [Historic Deerfield](#) announces the opening of [Body by Design: Fashionable Silhouettes from the Ideal to the Real](#), an innovative exhibition that explores the power of fashion to shape and redefine the human body over three centuries. **Opening May 3rd** at the museum's [Flynt Center of Early New England Life](#), this exhibition will be a compelling investigation of attitudes toward the body and their expression in changing fashionable silhouettes. The exhibition will run through February of 2026.

Drawn primarily from Historic Deerfield's renowned historic clothing collection, *Body by Design* showcases 25 garments from the 18th to 21st centuries, displayed alongside the intricate understructures – stays, corsets, crinolines, and bustles – that helped wearers achieve the era's aesthetic ideals.

The show will begin with the artificial shapes of the 18th century, illustrated by a 1760 silk formal dress with a dramatically wide skirt and a man's elegant three-piece suit made with pink and gold brocaded silk fabric. 19th century fashions include a range of silhouettes with voluminous sleeves, tightly corseted torsos, and full skirts supported by crinolines and bustles. Fashion plates from the museum's collection provide delightful visual context for these historical garments, while carefully selected modern garments create intriguing connections between the past and present.

Lauren Whitley, Historic Deerfield’s Curator of Historic Textiles and Clothing, brings a wealth of expertise to organizing this exhibition. Before joining Historic Deerfield in 2023, she was senior curator in the Department of Textile and Fashion Arts at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, where she developed more than fourteen exhibitions, including *Fabric of a Nation: American Quilt Stories* (2021), *Beyond the Loom and Subversive Threads in “Women Take the Floor”* (2019), *#techstyle* (2016), and *Hippie Chic* (2013).

Body by Design marks Whitley’s first exhibition at Historic Deerfield. “I am absolutely thrilled to curate an exhibition that explores fashion and attitudes to the body in such a fun way,” says Whitley. “It’s a great opportunity to showcase Historic Deerfield’s remarkable collection of historic clothing and reveal the stories behind these garments. In addition, the inclusion of modern garments, such as Spanx, allows us to draw strong parallels between the past and the present — reflecting the ongoing human desire to shape and present our bodies.”

The Flynt Center of Early New England Life is open Wednesdays-Sundays (and Monday holidays) from 9:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. May 3 through November 30. *Body by Design* is included with admission to Historic Deerfield (\$20 for adults 18+, \$5 for youth 13-17, and free for members and kids 12 under).

To learn more about Historic Deerfield, visit the website, historic-deerfield.org.

Images to accompany this release, including a caption sheet, are available [here](#).

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About Historic Deerfield. Historic Deerfield is a museum of early American life situated in an authentic 18th-century New England village in the Connecticut River Valley of Massachusetts. Its historic houses and world-famous collection of early American decorative arts open doors to new perspectives that inspire people to seek a deeper understanding of themselves, their communities, and the world. Visitors are invited to stay at Historic Deerfield’s [historic inn](#), eat at its [restaurant & pub](#), and shop at its [museum store](#).