



1 July 2008

Top to Toe: Fashion for Kids

New exhibition at V&A Museum of Childhood relives 300 years of fashion for children

4 October 2008 - 19 April 2009

This autumn, the V&A Museum of Childhood will present a major exhibition exploring the history of children's fashion, reliving iconic and defining moments from the past 300 years of children's clothing, vintage fashions, rare objects and photography.

Top to Toe: Fashion for Kids will profile the changing attitudes, themes and fads of one of fashion's most intriguing and enduring demographics, and promises to provide nostalgic moments for all generations. Visitors may recall evocative brands like Ladybird and Clothkits, or encounter classic memories from their own wardrobes such as parkas, knitted woollen swimsuits, leg warmers and ponchos.

The Museum holds one of the most significant collections of children's clothing in the world with over 6,000 outstanding items ranging from the 1700s to the present day, over 100 of which will be featured in the exhibition. Other objects, including a group of paintings depicting historical outfits from the V&A's main collections, will complement the clothing on display.

The exhibition will demonstrate how children's clothing has changed over time, covering four broad themes: Milestones, Changing Fashions, Fashion Drivers and Practical Fashions. It will consider how materials, colours, shapes and styles have developed but will also show how many classic garments have remained unchanged or have been revived, due to practical design or enduring appeal.

Highlights of the exhibition will include:

- Luxury garments from the V&A Museum of Childhood collection, from a 19th century muff and hat made entirely of peacock feathers to a pair of popular children's 'Ugg' boots from 2007
- Examples to illustrate 'breeching', the milestone in every boy's life – continued until the 1920s – when he would be clothed in his first pair of trousers

- A beautiful pink silk and metal thread example or an 18th century 'pudding hat', commonly worn protect the head during inquisitive toddler years
- A range of real clothes and vintage advertisements illustrating more recent and memorable childhood must-haves, such as the 1970s 'snorkel' parka coat
- An exploration of the rise of commercially produced garments from 'cool' labels such as Converse to affordable mass-produced fashions at high street stores
- Classic character merchandise clothing ranging from costume based on the illustrations by Reginal Birch for the book *Little Lord Fauntleroy* by Francis Hodgson Burnett (1886), the 1930s Shirley Temple clothing range to today's ever-present film merchandising ranges.
- A re-examination of common myths and questions. Were children always dressed in a mini version of adult garments? Why do we now associate pink with a girl and blue with a boy?
- Examples of 'fashion drivers' such as today's desire for branded clothes, the influence of celebrity and popular culture alongside those from the past such as the influence of 19th-century Royal children as a driver for trends like the sailor suit

Today's children have become consumers in their own right and are actively targeted by leading brands, with increasing pressure on them to get the 'right' look, logos and styles. They have access to a huge range of high-end fashion choices with designers such as Phillip Lim, Marc Jacobs, D & G and Clements Riberio branching out to the lucrative children's market. The 'tween' fashion market is fast expanding with young girls being heavily influenced by the appeal of celebrities, television and magazines.

Changes in clothing are complex and inconsistent, but in considering three centuries of children's fashion, it is apparent that clothes – and having the 'right' clothes – are increasingly important. This exhibition will demonstrate that we are indeed what we wear, sometimes from an unexpectedly early age.

'DICTIONARY OF CHILDREN'S CLOTHES: 1700s to the Present' by Noreen Marshall – the first book of its kind – will be published by the V&A to complement the exhibition.

For further press information and images for publication please contact:

Sara Buck, Brunswick Arts, +44 (0) 20 7936 1281, sbuck@brunswickgroup.com or

Benjamin Ward, Brunswick Arts +44 (0) 20 7936 1297, bward@brunswickgroup.com

For further press information on the BOOK please contact:

Julie Chan, V&A Publishing, +44 (0) 20 7942 2701, +44 (0) 7747 607 822 or email
j.chan@vam.ac.uk

To contact the V&A Museum of Childhood directly:

Joanna Bolitho, +44 (0) 20 8983 5219, j.bolitho@vam.ac.uk

NOTES TO EDITORS

- **Museum Information:**

V&A Museum of Childhood, Cambridge Heath Road, London E2 9PA

Admission free. Nearest tube: Bethnal Green.

Open daily: 10.00 – 17.45, last admission 17.30.

Switchboard: 020 8983 5200

www.museumofchildhood.org.uk

- The book, 'DICTIONARY OF CHILDREN'S CLOTHES: 1700s to the Present' by Noreen Marshall will be published by the V&A on 4 October 2008 (£30.00 HB)

- **Curator biographies:**

Sarah Wood

Sarah Louise Wood has been working as an Assistant Curator at the V&A Museum of Childhood since January 2007. She was previously at the Embroiderers' Guild where she was the curator for 'Scholar'; a touring exhibition including costume and art works relating to stitch. She has a BA in Fine Art and History of Art (University of Reading) and an MA in Museum Studies (UCL).

Noreen Marshall

Noreen Marshall, BA, AMA, joined the curatorial staff of the Victoria & Albert Museum in 1974, and since 1978 has worked at the Museum of Childhood where she is Curator of the Dress, Doll & Childcare Collections. Her most recent research has concerned the childhood of Charles I, following the museum's acquisition of a rocking horse said to have belonged to him. She has worked on a number of V&A exhibitions over the years, including Stile Liberty, Jolly Hockey Sticks, The Pack Age, and a series of Christmas exhibitions. She has made contributions to many radio and television programmes over the years.