

590323-38

FOR RELEASE: March 31

PRESS PREVIEW: March 30, 10 a.m. -  
5 p.m.

THE GIBSON GIRL, AN EXHIBITION OF COSTUMES AND DRAWINGS  
EVOKES NOSTALGIC PERIOD

An exhibition of 13 costumes on manikins against backgrounds of huge blow-ups of drawings from Charles Dana Gibson, as well as 8 original Gibson drawings, will open at the Brooklyn Museum on March 31. The show has been organized by Mr. Robert Riley, Curator of the Museum's costumes, to point up the continuing influence on fashion of the nostalgic 1890s, whose characteristic broadened bodice is an obvious influence today on both the American and the French collections. The display will remain on view on the 4th floor throughout the summer.

Charles Dana Gibson in his drawings established a debonair model girl with a flair that was the goal of all American women of the 1890s. For he was a social documenter who grasped the importance of these new trends which reflected changes in personality as well as in style. Sports were becoming important for women for the first time in America. (Gibson himself had married Irene Langhorne, a beauty and horsewoman from Virginia.) The shirtwaist dress of the period was a major American contribution to fashion; shirts and skirts have been worn ever since. The exhibition displays both the sporty and the elegant. The emphasis across the top, in bodice and wide puffy sleeves, was a reaction to the preceeding slim silhouette, just as today's broader bodice follows after a decade of thin-skirted fashion.

Among the original Gibson drawings to be displayed is the famous, much-reproduced one of "A Little Story Told by a Sleeve," and several others which poke fun at the social mores, as well as a "documentary" of some noted art lovers of the day gathered around the sculptor Frederick MacMonnies in his studio. These 8 drawings were purchased at Gibson's first exhibition in 1895 by the well-known architect Stanford White for a hotel he was then building in Garden

City. They have been lent to the Museum by the Garden City Hotel.

The costumes to be displayed against large Gibson backdrops are grouped as follows:

1. Against an opera box scene with a lady accompanied by decayed old noblemen is a manikin in a green brocaded velvet opera cape with a large sable collar, made by Worth of Paris. She is escorted by a gentleman in evening regalia, made by the noted Maurice of Paris.
2. In the background three gentlemen raise their glasses in a toast to a Gibson Girl clad in a lilac satin and lace evening gown embroidered with a wheat motif. This gown, made by Worth, was originally worn by Mrs. Arthur F. Schermerhorn.
3. "The Weaker Sex" is the title of the background drawing in which two dauntless Gibson Girls in a shipboard scene are supporting between them a very seasick gentleman. In the foreground is a black serge raincoat with large puffed sleeves and hood, as worn by the young American girl on her trip abroad.
4. The "Little Story Told by a Sleeve" shows the couple on the couch and, though at opposite ends of the couch, a look of consternation at being surprised, for the lady's crushed sleeve gives them away. Against this scene stand youngsters, one in a debutante ball gown of apple green crepe trimmed with pink ribbons; a younger sister in a plaided organza trimmed in green and pink ribbons.
5. In the background two romantic gentlemen look over a fence at a mother shepherding her two daughters, all in typically American-made sports clothes. The mother wears a muslin printed dress with beige and mauve daisies. One daughter wears a white cotton shirtwaist dress with insertions of drawnwork; the other, a green and white printed muslin.
6. A charming lady, dressed in a warp-printed taffeta decorated with cherries, is accompanied by an elderly admirer in white tie, top hat and tails. The backdrop is a drawing of a cupid with a tin cup and a sign reading, "I'm NOT Blind."
7. Here is a scene of shopping for a wedding gown. A model wearing a cream silk faille wedding gown is scrutinized by the prospective bride, who is dressed in a moss green mohair street dress. On the background a large exhausted mama sits in a chair which she overflows. The mohair dress was made by the eminent New York dressmakers, the Fox Sisters; it was worn by Mrs. Nelson Lloyd Deming of Litchfield, Connecticut.

All costumes are from the Museum's own large collection.

Photographs of costumes and of Gibson drawings  
available: Betty Chamberlain.