



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## *New Exhibition at the Bata Shoe Museum to Explore Dangers of Fashion*

Toronto ON (2014) – The Bata Shoe Museum is excited to announce the upcoming opening of its newest exhibition, *Fashion Victims: The Pleasures & Perils of Dress in the 19th Century*, opening to the public on June 18, 2014.

In the 19th century, the beautiful outfits fashioned by seamstresses and shoemakers supplied the privileged with enviable ensembles. Swathed from head to toe in expensive garments and shod in delicate footwear, fashion-forward women graced the boulevards and the ballrooms with their colourful presence—a pleasure to behold for painters, poets, and passersby who saw them. Their tailored male companions cut equally refined figures in their black coats, spotless white linens, lustrous top hats and shiny boots. Yet, presenting an elegant exterior was not without its perils for both the makers and wears of fashion.

Curated by Elizabeth Semmelhack (Senior Curator, Bata Shoe Museum) and Dr. Alison Matthews David (School of Fashion, Ryerson) and building on Dr. Matthews David's research into the dangers of dress in the 19th century, this exhibition will explore a wide variety of pleasures and perils associated with fashion from head to toe. In addition to highlighting exquisite examples of footwear and clothing from the 19th century, the exhibition will also explore many of the often untold stories related to fashion and its production. Included in the exhibition will be the dangers of dresses and shoes dyed arsenic green, the plight of mad hatters and mercury poisoning as well as the effects of constricting corsets and impossibly narrow footwear. The exhibition will also look at shifts in the making of fashion from independent craft to fragmented labour completed in garrets or on factory floors. The move from traditional shoemaking to factory-made footwear will also be emphasized as will the role of those workers who were integral to the presentation of the fashionable figure from the seamstress to the shoeshine boy.

“Embedded in each artifact in this exhibition are multiple stories about 19th century fashion. From the challenges faced by those who produced fashionable dress to the risks taken by those who wore it, this exhibition will provide thought provoking insights into what it means to be a fashion victim,” says Elizabeth Semmelhack, Senior Curator, Bata Shoe Museum. “This unique look at 19th century dress includes important pieces from the Museum's collection and is a must-see for anyone curious about the history and evolution of this ever-changing industry.”

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The exhibition will feature over ninety artifacts from the Bata Shoe Museum's extensive holdings augmented by loans from private collections. Highlights from the exhibition include dresses that span the century, mauve-hued footwear dyed with the first synthetic colour invented in 1856, a shoemaking automaton monkey by famed French automaton maker, Jean-Marie Phalibois, beautiful hand-embroidered boots manufactured by the exclusive Parisian shoemaking firm of Francois Pinet, impossibly narrow Adelaide boots and gloves worn by Empress Elisabeth of Austria and a corset with a sixteen-inch waist from the Cleaver/Suddon collection.

*Fashion Victims: The Pleasures & Perils of Dress in the 19th Century* will be on view until June 2016.

The Bata Shoe Museum gratefully acknowledges funding provided by the Government of Ontario



*About the Bata Shoe Museum*

*For every shoe there is a story. With an International collection of over 13,000 shoes and related artefacts, the Bata Shoe Museum celebrates 4,500 years of footwear history in four distinctive rotating galleries. In addition to our popular semi-permanent exhibition, 'All About Shoes', the Museum has three galleries for changing exhibitions, ensuring that each visit to the museum offers a new experience. Through the creation of its innovative exhibitions, the Museum strives to enlighten and entertain visitors of all ages. Exciting adult and children's programming activities and a unique gift shop complete the experience. A cultural gem in the heart of the city, the Bata Shoe Museum is definitely for the curious! Further information is available at [www.batashoemuseum.ca](http://www.batashoemuseum.ca).*

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