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“Showing their Levi’s” postcard from the California Rodeo, Salinas (July 13–16, 1939), 1939. Levi Strauss & Co. Archives.

BY KARLA KLEIN ALBERTSON

SAN FRANCISCO — “Levi Strauss: A History of American Style,” which just opened at the Contemporary Jewish Museum (CJM) in San Francisco, displays more than 150 items from the famous firm’s archives — everything from style-setting garments to promotional ephemera and vintage photos. Visitors will see an 1889 advertisement for the “Patent Riveted” pants, images of cowboys and cowgirls showing off their gear and a 1970s denim suit worn by Lauren Bacall. For work or play, in boom times and down times, Levi Strauss survived to supply the demand for denim clothing.

Antiques and The Arts Weekly asked curator Heidi Rabben about the show’s origin and she responded, “The idea of an exhibition about Levi Strauss has been a glimmer in the CJM’s eye for a long time. As one of the most influential Jews and figures in San Francisco’s history, and the man responsible for the most ubiquitous item of clothing in the world today, the context could not make more sense for our institution. The exhibition’s story traces both the life and legacy of Strauss, the man, alongside the legacy of his namesake Levi’s blue jeans — both legacies being of core importance to our mission here at the Contemporary Jewish Museum to make the diversity of the Jewish experience relevant to a Twenty-First Century audience by advancing culture, history, art and ideas.”

LEVI

STRAUSS

A History Of American Style

The story of Levi Strauss (1829-1902) is another fascinating tale of Nineteenth Century immigration and subsequent success in the New World. Strauss was born into an Ashkenazi Jewish family in Bavaria, and when he was only 18, he traveled with family members to New York. There they joined his brothers, who had started a wholesale dry goods company. In 1854, as the Gold Rush drew people to the San Francisco area, Levi moved west, where he sold clothing and supplies shipped from his brothers. Working with Jacob W. Davis, Strauss was able to devise and then patent in 1873 the riveted denim work pants that became the keynote product of the Levi Strauss company. In his private life, he was an important figure of the local Jewish community and an early member of historic Congregation Emanu-El.

As can be seen from the vintage advertisements in the exhibition, the emphasis for product promotion began to shift after the turn of the century from work clothes to western wear. An ad from the 1940s shows a denim-clad couple smooching on horseback. By the time rock and roll arrived in the 1950s, jeans were stylish for both the performers and the audience. Eventually, they became a universal costume in the United States and around the world. Hippies, bikers, Bruce Springsteen

Bib overalls, circa 1900. Levi Strauss & Co. Archives.

(continued on page 30)



Carol Cadou

Carol Cadou hit the ground running when she assumed the role of director and chief executive officer of Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library in Wilmington, Del., after nearly 20 years at George Washington's Mount Vernon. As the two-year anniversary of her tenure approaches, *Antiques and The Arts Weekly* caught up with Cadou to measure the impact of her leadership and get the forecast — both immediate and long-reaching — for Winterthur.

What was one of the first things you did once you got here?

We needed to establish new ways to engage visitors, which ties into larger shifts in changing demographics. They are diversifying and we need to reach new audiences to remain relevant. With our board, we drafted a vision statement — Winterthur inspires exploration of American culture and landscapes through compelling stories and experiences — and formulated a strategic plan, which took a year, and which just finished. Through the plan, we will shore up our core competencies in preservation and education while encouraging new visitorship at Winterthur.

Has Winterthur's 'average' visitor changed?

Yes. We first looked at all demographic information collected more than a decade ago. The largest slice of that demographic was a middle-aged female visitor. Thanks to the strategic planning, we are now collecting information more proactively to capture whether or not people are coming in groups or individually, how they are engaging, and the diversity of their zip codes. From this information, we are learning that our largest demographic, currently, is an individual or couple living locally, which is to say within the closest five zip codes. Winterthur is a national if not international treasure and we want to engage more broadly.

What audiences are you trying most immediately to reach, and how are you enacting that?

We are ramping up our programming to engage families and a younger generation, as well as taking some of our focus outdoors. It is always hard to go after the millennial demographic, but we think and hope a lot of our programming will be attractive to a broader audience, including families and millennials. For instance, we had seven programs during our popular Yuletide tour season last year; this year, we will have more than 50 during the same time period and they will be geared to families as well as those who we hope will be drawn to experience Winterthur for the first time. We are also opening up for a festive meal and tours on Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day for those who may not celebrate those holidays or do not wish to cook. While the collections and estate are a national treasure, we remain a community resource and need to serve everyone.

Can you broaden your audience by working with other museums?

Definitely. We are having Winterthur exhibits in a number of different places, trying to form partnerships with institutions across the country, as well as internationally. We are just back from being the loan exhibition at the Washington Winter Show and will return to Washington DC on May 6 and 7 for a symposium we have planned with our new partner, the White House Historical Association. That will examine, in part, the relationship between Henry Francis du Pont and Jacqueline Kennedy and how they informed the American aesthetic. Internationally, we are strengthening our partnership with Tsinghua University in China thanks to our stellar scholars and conservators, who are spending weeks at a time teaching Chinese students to care for and preserve the country's rich cultural heritage. We have also made our first loans across the Pacific to the Hong Kong Maritime Museum, where senior curator of glass and ceramics Leslie Grigsby worked with Hong Kong curators to install our Chinese export porcelain in "The Dragon and the Eagle: American Traders in China A Century of Trade from 1784 to 1900." We look forward to more opportunities to share Winterthur's collection and America's wealth of international connections through upcoming loans and partnerships and are currently in discussions with the Palace Museum. We are also in the early stages of an exhibition that will take Winterthur to the Southern United States



Women depicted on a cast iron jamb stove plate, manufactured by Marlboro Furnace, Frederick County, Va., dated 1768. This stove plate will be included in the "Revision 2020" exhibition opening February 29.



Bob Leitch photo, courtesy of Winterthur.

in December — to Florida, where we can introduce Eighteenth Century design to contemporary audiences. We are thinking about showing off some icons of American furniture, but that is not yet confirmed. It is going to be exciting, so stay tuned.

How so? What can you tell me about that?

We are pushing outside the box a bit, going outside of everyone's comfort zone. We are trying to put Winterthur on view in a contemporary setting, where we can focus on different ways of looking at the collection, and hope to engage a new audience that might not recognize the relevance of Eighteenth Century designs to contemporary arts or may not know the way Henry Francis du Pont influenced American design. We need to engage people where they are and if their entry point is contemporary design then we need to go to them in that context.

In my opinion, museums, in particular those that are academically rigorous, can feel a little intimidating. Has making Winterthur more accessible been part of the conversation?

It has. We definitely want to make our scholarship more accessible to visitors. We need entry points to Winterthur throughout where visitors can relate. We have the ability to tell many stories through the objects at Winterthur and these rich and compelling stories are key to our vision for Winterthur's future. We can tell stories in the museum's rooms, in the galleries and through our lectures and symposia. Coming to a lecture at Winterthur should not make people feel as if they need to be a furniture expert to attend. We are all students who are continuing to learn, so we want to have symposia that encourage a range of people — those who are designers, decorators, history buffs or just generally interested in art and architecture — to join our curators and scholars as we try to learn from and unpack the history of fine and decorative arts. It is a delicate balance to continue to engage our hard-core scholarly audience while broadening, but I think we can do it well thanks to all of the creative people we have on our team.

(continued on page 8)



(continued from page 1)

A lot of museums are taking this centennial year of the Nineteenth Amendment to celebrate women's rights. Is Winterthur doing that, and if so, what are you doing?

We are! There are a few different ways Winterthur is celebrating women. On February 29, we will be opening "Revision 2020: Through a Woman's Lens," an exhibition that looks at objects in the Winterthur collection from the vantage point of the women who made, owned, used or inspired objects. There will be more than 60 new pieces on view in the first-floor galleries, but we will also be looking at objects currently on view that have previously been interpreted aesthetically.

Then, in April, we will open "Lady of the House," which will focus on Ruth Wales du Pont. We know so much about Henry Francis du Pont but much less about his wife...this will change that!

Finally, in the fall, we will open an exhibition on Erica Wilson, who was a needleworker and entrepreneur in the 1960s and 1970s. Her husband was a furniture artist and she supported their family with needlework kits and a TV show. Winterthur is known for its focus on craft and design, and we feel this will appeal to a core audience of avid needleworkers as well as younger generations who are turning to needlework for relaxation and a break from the busy pace of the digital world.

That is a great lineup to look forward to! Dare I ask about 2021...?

Winterthur will celebrate its 70th Anniversary as a museum in 2021. We are taking the opportunity to focus on the history of American craftsmanship, design and Henry Francis du Pont's lasting influences. We are making the Dominy Shop — a quintessential element of Winterthur's craftsmen story — more experiential and immersive. On the same floor of the galleries, we will install "Inspiring Design," an exhibit that will look at the design and influence of some of Winterthur's key holdings. And, then, we may just add a piece by a contemporary artist as we consider the future of American fine and decorative arts — it would make an interesting juxtaposition against traditional Eighteenth Century pieces.

Will Winterthur's graduate program in American Material Culture see any changes too?

It is broadening in its scope a little, which will only make it better. This is a terrific graduate program and it has gotten so much better since I was in it. One of the things we have done is take the students out on field trips to get them to understand American Material Culture in context. As we speak, the students are in England studying British design. We are also doing both a Southern and a North-



"Country Life" designed by Erica Wilson, wool on linen; ribbon.
Gift of the family of Erica Wilson, accession #2015.0047.016 a,b. Courtesy of Winterthur.

ern trip and going to some unexpected places. We are looking at vernacular and a range of local design, as well as looking into contemporary. As far as the student's research is concerned, we have expanded thesis topics to areas of their interests, including into the Twentieth Century.

Will Winterthur start to acquire more Twentieth Century objects?

Winterthur is evolving to meet both students' level of interest and needs as well as to meet our expanding visitor demographics. We are acquiring works that students can use to expand their study as well as those objects that tell a more complete American story. Our collecting policy now provides for Winterthur to accept gifts of late Nineteenth and Twentieth Century objects that can be used to inform the study of design, material and con-

struction changes over time. We are also adding Eighteenth and early or mid-Nineteenth Century objects that provide windows in people or areas of the country that are underrepresented. Curator emeritus Charles Hummel began this practice with his acquisition of a Louisiana armoire. This last year, we expanded Winterthur's slim collection of American landscape paintings to include a work by an African American artist working in the South — Robert Duncanson, whose compelling work "Short Mountain" now hangs in the Winterthur galleries. These additions are allowing us to broaden the stories we tell.

Does the conversation include technology and digital scholarship?

When I started, I was very interested in advancing digital scholarship and to have Winterthur be on the cutting edge of how we interact digitally with collections, and how it can be used to engage visitors in the galleries. Since I have been here, I have realized our huge preservation needs, which mean that the stewardship of our infrastructure must also be a priority. For example, we have 118 buildings here "of historic significance." We have to address and figure out a strategy for what we have. Digital technology is a heavy investment and I think we will spend our money much more purposefully once we have figured out exactly how we want to use that technology. I think that will take shape over the course of the next 18 months.

Any other plans you can give us a sneak peek at?

I cannot give full details yet, but I can say that we are looking to build on the visitor response to "Costuming *The Crown*" to highlight costumes and objects closely related to our collection and history and that tell the stories of important historical figures — for instance, the Nineteenth Century's Jane Austen and the Twentieth Century's Jacqueline Kennedy. So, again, stay tuned. There is a lot in store these next couple of years.

—Madelia Hickman Ring



Painting of Ruth Wales du Pont (Mrs Henry Francis du Pont) and daughter Pauline Louise by Harrington Mann, 1921, Bequest of Henry Francis du Pont, courtesy of Winterthur.