



News Release

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**Special Exhibition “Silk and Steel: French Fashion, Women and WWI” Opens
Friday, Sept. 25 at National WWI Museum and Memorial**

*Exhibit explores the role of women during WWI and the impact of fashion on the economy,
uniforms and post-war emancipation.*

Exhibition images/captions available at:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/9t1q3xh6e6v46ap/AAAI9kKbXXFFKqvWblpf2B4Ta?dl=0>

KANSAS CITY, MO. – When the first World War exploded in the late summer of 1914, armies took the field in bright uniforms and navies steamed to sea flying the colors of their nations. For the ensuing years of global war until the peace treaty was signed on June 28, 1919, most history has centered on battles, leaders and empires.

Throughout this time, a largely unrepresented population in the histories were women in countries involved in the war. Women worked in war industries like agriculture, nursing and transport, while engaged in the fight for voting rights, equal pay and respect. In France, recent scholarship has shown that the survival of women’s fashion also played an important role in keeping up morale, maintaining ties with allies and even helping the war-time economies.

Opening Friday, Sept. 25, 2020, Silk and Steel: French Fashion, Women and WWI, features original dresses, coats, capes, hats, shoes and accessories from period French designers including Madeleine Vionnet, House of Worth and Hermès. From the evolution of the war-time silhouette, the influence of military uniforms and post-war emancipation, this exhibition provides a new chapter of the history of the war at the Museum and Memorial. Presented by PNC Bank, Silk and Steel will run through Sunday, April 11, 2021 in the Museum and Memorial’s Wylie Gallery.

“The war effort had an all-encompassing impact on societies, but the role of women is often overlooked,” says Dr Matthew Naylor, President and CEO of the National WWI Museum and Memorial. “Through the lens of French fashion, this exhibition exposes us to the many ways that women were full and equal participants in the Great War. It is an engaging examination – and the collection that will be displayed is truly remarkable.”

A previous iteration of the exhibition, entitled *French Fashion, Women, and the First World War*, was organized in 2019 by the Bard Graduate Center Gallery, N.Y. This exhibition, *Silk and Steel: French Fashion, Women and WWI*, builds upon the excellent research, graphics and assistance BGC provided, including most of the large subject and theme labels that have been adapted. The basis for the American projects was the 2017 exhibition *Mode & Femmes 14–18* organized by the Bibliothèque Forney, Paris, France. That exhibition, as well as the exhibition at Bard Graduate Center Gallery, was curated by Maude Bass-Krueger and Sophie Kurkdjian. Now, the National WWI Museum and Memorial expands upon these former exhibitions with curated pieces from its own collection including clothing, military uniforms, photographs and French fashion images and periodicals. Additionally, original clothing and accessories are on loan from the Kansas City Museum; Missouri Historic Costume and Textile Collection, University of Missouri, Columbia; Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka and the Preservation Society of Newport County, Newport, R.I.

Admission to *Silk and Steel: French Fashion, Women and WWI* is \$10 for adults, \$8 for seniors and military and \$6 for youth. When combined with a general admission ticket, admission to the exhibition is only an additional \$3. Guests are encouraged to purchase tickets online in advance at theworldwar.org to avoid lines.



THE NATIONAL
WWI MUSEUM
AND MEMORIAL



About the National WWI Museum and Memorial

The National World WWI Museum and Memorial is America's leading institution dedicated to remembering, interpreting and understanding the Great War and its enduring impact on the global community. The Museum and Memorial holds the most comprehensive collection of World War I objects and documents in the world and is the second-oldest public museum dedicated to preserving the objects, history and experiences of the war. The Museum and Memorial takes visitors of all ages on an epic journey through a transformative period and shares deeply personal stories of courage, honor, patriotism and sacrifice. Designated by Congress as America's official World War I Museum and Memorial and located in downtown Kansas City, Mo., the National WWI Museum and Memorial inspires thought, dialogue and learning to make the experiences of the Great War era meaningful and relevant for present and future generations. To learn more, visit theworldwar.org.

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