



## News Release

### V&A acquires briefs, boxers and bras for underwear exhibition

#### Undressed: A Brief History of Underwear

Sponsored by Agent Provocateur and Revlon

16 April 2016 – 12 March 2017

[www.vam.ac.uk/undressed](http://www.vam.ac.uk/undressed) | #vamUndressed

Ahead of the largest museum exhibition of underwear ever to go on display, the V&A has acquired more than 60 individual pieces of underwear for its permanent collection. The objects, which are mainly contemporary and include men's briefs designed to enhance the crotch, a waist trainer slimming aid, and an early example of a woman's panty thong will be added to the Museum's fashion collections, which are among the largest and most comprehensive in the world. In addition to bringing up to date the Museum's holdings of important items of dress, many of the objects will be shown in *Undressed: A Brief History of Underwear*. Charting the history of underwear from the 18th century to today through corsets, crinolines, boxers and bras to pyjamas and underwear-revealing fashion, the exhibition opens at the V&A on 16 April.

Amongst the new acquisitions are a 2015 butt lifter and waist trainer for women, chosen to show contemporary foundation wear designed to modify and enhance the natural shape of the body, and a pair of 2015 men's 'EnlargerIt' briefs by aussieBum made to add volume to the crotch. In the exhibition they are shown alongside historical corsets created to mould the body to the fashionable ideal and in a display dedicated to volume. An austerity 1917-18 corset made from woven paper twine, an example of *ersatz* clothing produced in Germany and Austria to compensate for severe textile shortages during the First World War, has also been acquired. By contrast a luxurious bra and brief set from Parisian lingerie house Cadolle, featuring a 'Porno Chic' open bra, introduces a contemporary take on seduction.

Other items collected for the V&A include a pair of unisex briefs (2015) by fashion brand Acne Studios, displayed in the exhibition to explore the way that underwear represents issues of gender, and a bra and brief set (2015) by leading maternity brand hotmilk which will be shown alongside a 19th century maternity corset and bust bodice. The V&A has also acquired a mastectomy bra and prosthesis by leading mastectomy underwear brand Nicola Jane, showing possible design solutions for women following breast surgery.

Rudi Gernreich is credited with naming the thong, designing panty thongs for women in America from 1975 – a rare surviving example in ‘golden nude’ from 1978 has been added to the collection. More overtly erotic pieces include a flocked tulle playsuit by French lingerie designer Fifi Chachnil, a black lace bedroom set from Agent Provocateur’s Soiree Collection, and a ‘Shibari’ girdle dress made especially for the exhibition by London-based atelier Bordelle which references an artistic form of Japanese erotic bondage. New acquisitions representing the close relationship between nightwear and loungewear include a La Perla menswear pyjama ensemble from 2015. A contemporary Lululemon yoga outfit, chosen to explore the link between underwear and sportswear, sits in the exhibition alongside 19th century corsets made for sport.

Following their display in the exhibition, the new acquisitions will be stored at the V&A’s Clothworkers’ Centre for the Study and Conservation of Textiles and Fashion, which offers appointments to researchers and visitors to study the Museum’s archives.

*Undressed: A Brief History of Underwear* will also display a number of important loans, including an exquisite Swarovski crystal embellished corset designed for Dita von Teese by couture corset maker Mr Pearl. Worn by the burlesque artist for a performance in 2011 and never exhibited before, the corset has the smallest waist in the exhibition at 18 inches. Other objects on loan include a rare example of home-made ‘stays’ worn by a working woman in England in the 18th century; an 1842 man’s waist belt used on the wearer’s wedding day; a ‘healthy’ corset designed by campaigner Roxy Anne Caplin from 1851; a late 19<sup>th</sup> century corset designed for cycling, a luxurious negligée by Carine Gilson, like that worn by actress Bérénice Marlohe in the film *Skyfall*; and a latex corset with matching underwear by House of Harlot. Additional highlights include a wearable brass bra made by jeweller Helen Newman in 1970, a sheer dress by Liza Bruce famously worn by Kate Moss in 1993, and flesh-coloured leggings decorated with a mirrored glass fig leaf designed in 1989 by Vivienne Westwood.

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