

## POSITION AVAILABLE

**JOB TITLE:** Curator of Costume

**DEPARTMENT:** Curatorial Affairs

**FLSA STATUS:** Exempt - Professional

### **JOB SUMMARY:**

Keeping in mind the constant goal of helping people make meaningful and personal connections to history, the Curator of Costumes will lead the acquisition of new costume material and the de-accession of out of scope collections. They will develop new exhibitions that feature costumes and explore history through dress. Serving as the main spokesperson for the costume collection, they will work closely with the Museum's Costume Council, continually and creatively experimenting with ways to share the collection with the public to maximize engagement. They will be a tireless advocate for making history accessible and relevant to everyone.

### **ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS:**

- **Develop experiences with history** for existing and targeted audiences, including families, school groups, and members, specifically experiences that explore history through dress. Emphasize accessibility, cognitive as well as physical, as the primary objective, and develop these experiences in terms of stories. This work is done primarily with colleagues in the departments of exhibitions, publications, collections, and education, but it is also the product of rich and deep dialogues with colleagues and communities outside the organization. Developing and maintaining these relationships and engaging in conversation with and about various communities that have influenced the city is critical to developing substantive experiences with Chicago history.
- **Invest in research** to develop new thinking about urban, specifically Chicago, history; seek the input of existing and targeted audiences; evaluate new collecting opportunities (evaluate the origin, authenticity, heritage, aesthetic, archival and historical value of documents and artifacts); stay abreast of current, relevant historical scholarship; explore contemporary thinking about urban life in literature, social sciences, and other related disciplines; and remain aware of current theories, methodologies, and standards of practice in the museum profession.
- **Curate exhibitions**, including: developing proposals; identifying and locating artifacts and images; conceptualizing, researching, and interpreting collection materials and their historical context; developing exhibition narrative and walkthrough documents, contributing to the development of A/V and interactive experiences, a writing label copy and publishing catalogs. Focus on the costume collection as a primary source for research and inspiration and seek ways to use costume to explore public history themes that will engage targeted audiences.

- **Develop the collection** and make acquisition decisions as part of a team process with the other members of the Department of Curatorial Affairs and collection management staff. Develop a thorough understanding of the existing costume collection, as well as the other collecting areas, and seek opportunities to add new materials, de-accession out of scope items, and pursue a costume-specific collecting plan within the over-arching collection goals for the Museum. Identify and document new acquisitions emphasizing opportunities for substantive and accessible interpretation and/or research and make recommendations regarding their preservation or disposition. Address backlog collections and contribute to ongoing de-accessioning efforts. Establish a positive and effective working relationship with the members of the Costume Council and keep that group excited and engaged with the variety of work going on in support of the costume collection.
- **Provide information and perspective** on historical themes to external colleagues, local educators and lecturers, CHM visitors, and the media. Establish and maintain excellent relationships with local, regional, national, and international museums; community and neighborhood organizations; university and college history departments; private collectors; and historical agencies. Submit regular posts for the museum's blog and participate in other forms of social media as a way to expand our circle of communication, and develop content for public consumption, engagement, and dialogue. Continue to hone public speaking and accessible writing techniques and skills to achieve the greatest impact in all avenues of communication.
- **Contribute to and promote** a positive culture at CHM.
- **Other duties as assigned**

**QUALIFICATIONS:**

- Masters degree in the history of dress or fashion history, American history with an emphasis on historic dress, public history, or related field. Or a bachelor's degree in costume or fashion history with a masters degree in American history or public history.
- Minimum five years experience in a museum curatorial department OR as a historian researching/interpreting material culture OR as a developer of costume exhibitions for significant historical agencies.
- Experience working with diverse members of the public
- Experience interpreting material culture
- Demonstrated success collaborating with others in a team setting
- Effective public speaking skills
- Knowledge of American, urban, or Chicago history
- General knowledge of the range of American material culture
- Knowledge of current theoretical and methodological issues in the fields of American history and museology
- Ability to interpret history to diverse audiences
- Superior verbal and written communication skills
- Commitment to the mission, values, and programs of the Chicago History Museum

- Experience communicating with institutional board members a plus.

**SALARY and BENEFITS:** Salary is competitive. Excellent benefits package.

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Please send cover letter, resume with salary history, and the names and phone numbers of 3 work references **in 1 document** to:

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Salary History Required.

Resumes submitted without salary history will not be considered

Background check required No phone calls please \_\_\_\_\_