

# The Arts Paper

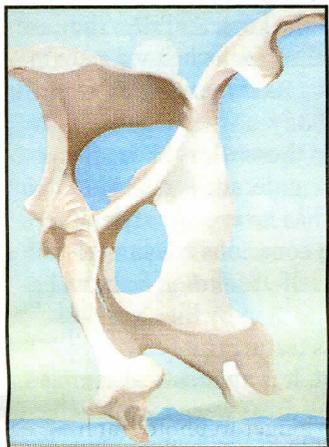
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## Must See



### Theater

Playwright Stephen Brown's first production is just 'Super Great.' Page AT14



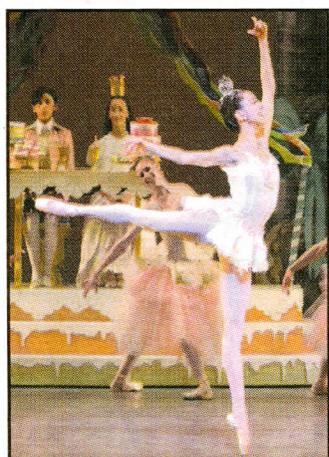
### Art

Norton show looks at life, style and art of Georgia O'Keeffe. Page AT15



### Theater

Whatever happened to 'The Goldbergs'? New play has answers. Page AT16



### Don't Miss

'Nutcracker,' 'Messiah' among holiday favorites being performed this month. Page AT17

## Art

# Underlying issues

Women's foundational fashions see the light of day in Flagler show

By Gretel Sarmiento  
ArtsPaper Art Writer

What came first, the desire to show off a tiny waist or the corset that squeezed internal organs out of the way? A dynamic new exhibition exploring how women's fashion has shaped American society, and vice versa, gives a Mobius-strip answer. How is that for a silhouette?

The gallery walls of the Henry Morrison Flagler Museum are uncharacteristically colorful these days. They have *Inside Out: Women's Fashion from Foundation to Silhouette* to thank. Running through Jan. 5, the fall exhibition serves more than 140 items, including padded-shoulder tops, corsets designed for post-surgery recovery, fitness bras, and hand-knit pussyhats. Easily absorbed in under an hour, the show playfully breaks down the evolution of the intimate relationship between American women and their undergarments into small bites. Furniture and intriguing artifacts reinforce the staging.

Organized and curated by the San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts in Texas, *Inside Out* took more than a decade from concept to fruition and faced a sizable amount of reluctance over "the unmentionables" subject matter.

"There is this kind of dichotomy. We live in a very progressive, permissible age. You can turn on the TV and see underwear ads, all kinds of things. On the other hand, we still have this silly idea about underwear," said Howard Taylor, director of the San Angelo Museum.

"It's the closest thing to our bodies. It tells so much about our culture, our time, and the individual."

The Flagler Museum is the only Florida venue to welcome the traveling exhibition, which orients viewers through eight chapters of American history from the 1790s

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The exhibit *Inside Out* at the Flagler Museum in Palm Beach includes this display of multiple layers of Victorian undergarments, circa 1890s. Photo by Brooke Mulkey, San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts



The Dew Fairy gets ready to wake the children in *Hansel and Gretel*. Photo provided

## Opera

# 'Hansel and Gretel' explores fairy tale's heart, and darkness

By Greg Stepanich  
ArtsPaper Editor

In Palm Beach Opera's upcoming trip to the land of make-believe, everything is made of paper, and grommets are our friend.

If that sounds odd, how about this: For its December production, which in past years has amounted to such things as outdoor concerts and presentations of huge symphonic works including Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and Verdi's Requiem, the company is returning to staged opera.

Using only its Young Artists as cast members, the troupe will present Engelbert Humperdinck's classic fairy-tale opera, *Hänsel und Gretel*, in three performances this month at the Crest Theatre on the campus of Old School Square in Delray Beach. The opera will be sung in English instead of the original German and will be accompanied by a reduced-size orchestra led by David Stern, to accommodate the environs of the Crest, which is much smaller than the opera's usual home in Dreyfoos Hall at the Kravis Center.

The opera, says Fenlon Lamb, a veteran director and semi-retired mezzo who has helmed several shows over the years for Palm Beach Opera, is at once about people pushed to their limits and about inhabiting a place of magic. A mix of dark and light, then, and

See **HANSEL** on page AT13

the present and questions the extent to which changing skirt lengths and necklines are the result of perceived roles of women in America.

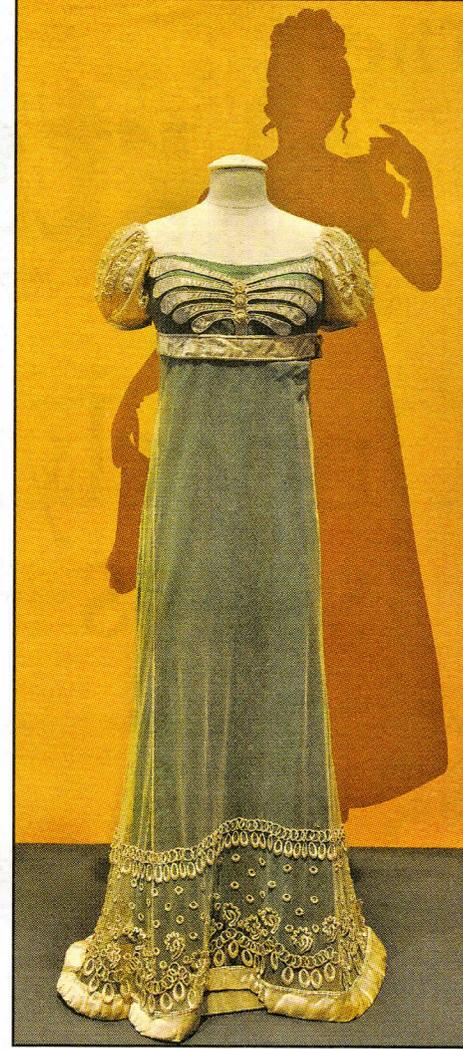
Didactic panels take off from the Federalist and Victorian eras and land on the MTV and contemporary eras. The wall color changes with each period's introduction, and each capsule suggests this is an ongoing negotiation between freedom and confinement, confidence and insecurity, individuality and belonging.

The inclusion of strange devices such as the "braided-ire bust improvers" (ca. 190) and "Pomeroy surgical corset" makes the first room look like a torture chamber, an effect the Virginia Reel Medley audio track attempts to soften. Specialty corsets like this one make a connection between beauty and health. They were designed for lumbar support, nursing, pregnancy and postpartum healing. This one is claimed to hold in place a moveable kidney, prolapsed stomach and other abdominal weaknesses."

Another corset dating back to 1865 showcases the array of materials involved in forcing the hourglass figure. "The whalebone, we learn, was the new ingredient of choice for corset boning for decades until whales fell in short supply. The lining in this corset, which features steel and cotton, is actually made of reeds.



**ABOVE:** Hoop crinoline, 1860s, cotton covered watch spring steel and cotton tapes; corset, ca. 1865, cotton, steel and reed, embroidered tulle and silk, all by J.C. Smith, manufacturer, New York. **RIGHT:** Evening gown, ca. 1810-1815, embroidered tulle and silk. **Photos by Brooke Mulkey, San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts**



If it looks like some of the dresses in this room are left undone, that's to reveal the substantial layering and intricate mechanisms supporting unrealistic outward appearances. They have been dragged out from under delicate fabrics and left exposed, for all to see.

The second gallery delivers whispers of change. Clockwise, it takes us from the roaring '20s to the 1940s when women

first entered the workforce and served as WASPS (Women Airforce Service Pilots). On display is an official flying uniform — worn by Doris K. Duren Muise — consisting of slacks, a white shirt, black tie and a fitted waist-length jacket with an adjustable waist band and bellows breast pockets. Women were the first pilots to don what became known as the "Ike" jacket, a roomier style designed by General Dwight

Eisenhower during World War II for better functionality.

The inclusion of curious objects such as a "Ban the bra" protest button helps lighten the mood. We are told the owner of this button took it with him to the Vietnam War. Both survived the war.

Meanwhile, a hint of androgyny is found in the unlikelyst of places: a silk black dinner dress featuring an Art Deco design and stunning beading. This decorative design breaks down the body into geometric planes and would have normally sent our eyeballs in different directions. Instead, they settle on the metallic necktie-like piece at the center.

Dressed up in vibrant hues and daring color-blocking technique, the last room is decisively closer to our time. It pairs up the revolutionary energy of counterculture and feminism that characterized the 1960s with the defiant unapologetic confidence of modern days. The orange walls declaring FDA approval of the pill graduate to a pale rose announcing what we know firsthand: "what goes around, comes around."

Underwear is something to flaunt, not conceal, this room says. Since it joined other pieces of clothing in the light of day, it's clear that more creative energy was poured into underwear. Evidence of its enhanced decorative value is the "glow-in-the-dark rave bra" on view. Highly popular in the rave scene of the 1990s, loud

**If You Go**

**Inside Out: Women's Fashion from Foundation to Silhouette** runs through Jan. 5 at the Flagler Museum, 1 Whitehall Way, Palm Beach.  
**Hours:** 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Tues.-Sat., noon-5 p.m. Sun.  
**Admission:** \$18  
**Info:** 655-2833 or [flaglERMuseum.us](http://flaglERMuseum.us)

pieces like this one made the wearer feel right at home amid laser light shows and turned her into a beacon in a dark room.

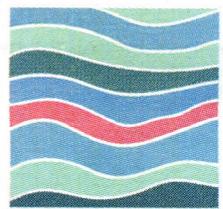
An accessory that broadcasts sexual independence doesn't necessarily grant spectators access. A futuristic corset-style belt featuring padlocks and keys designed by Dolce & Gabbana in 2007 embodies this seeming contradiction. The belt, which appears on a figure-hugging animal print dress by the same fashion house, sets boundaries and flirts with seduction. The woman gets to hold the keys, literally. They are attached to the belt via a chain, giving its owner control over her body.

To those who believe the current decade is devoid of flair and has no specific style other than conscious consumerism and self-absolution fashion, be sure to stop by the sleeveless dress featuring a red-poppy print. It is an identical sample of the dress worn by Michelle Obama to the August 2013 ceremony commemorating the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. Despite its flattering quality and striking bead clusters, this black-and-red floral number by Tracy Reese is better known for fueling the controversy over the former first lady's bare arms. Unperturbed by public criticism, the fashion-forward former FLOTUS went on to wear similarly bold designs that accentuated her toned guns.

Going back to the initial chicken-or-egg question, Taylor admits he doesn't really know the answer. External pressures and social movements no doubt play a part, he explains, but then there's the primal need for courtship.

"The peacocks with the fancy feathers are actually male, you know that? They do that to attract the opposite sex," he said. "In our world, women are the peacock. They have always, in almost every culture, done things and worn things to conform to male expectations about feminine beauty."

Never mind.



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