MUSEUM OF IDAHO PRESENTS:

Museum After Dark: Slightly Irreverent Tours

Dirty Little Secrets
SCARY MARY AND THE CULT OF THE MANNEQUIN

Or... what’s really hidden in your basement?
Sometimes referred to as “Scary Mary” affectionately.
Let me introduce you to our sweet friend, Mary... Scary Mary. She lives in the curator’s office now but her story started slightly different than you might think at first blush. She was made by the LA Darling Company, and you might image what my Google searches showed when I looked for her model title “LA Darling Playmate!” But in addition to interesting Google searches, Mary has some interesting marks that got us thinking about her past and wondering what kind of life she has led...
DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE?
We’re not really sure where Mary came from. She’s been in the museum for a long time. You see, we’ve been a museum since 1979… but Mary predates the museum. She likely comes from the early 1950s. In fact, we’re not sure, but check out this number on her head and note how similarly this looks to the number on the car.
Much activity about J. C. Penney's yesterday as atomic test-bound mannequins were being shepherded for their last trip. One Flamingo girl, Kathy McGuire (formerly of Waikiki Beach) almost got carried away with some of the other pretty redheads (window-models). 

J. R. (Hillman) Lee, manager of Penney's and Leonard Liberman, information officer, Federal and Civilian Defense Administration — were conducting the 'bus voyage' project. Assembling the ladies, men and children of was were W. J. (Pap) Paprocki, assistant manager of Penney's, Eustace Wylie, Boyd Stevenson, Thure Wallen and a host of others.

The mannequins weren't melting under the hot sun but the above named were. (Which recalls that the gypsy fortune teller wax model cut at Frontier Village has suffered from the heat; as you'll note next time you stare at her, otherwise, clear cut features.) Anyway, a lady ap- proached her next at the height
The number on that car comes from a video shot in March 1953 at Yucca Flat, the Nevada nuclear test site. The whole video shows a number of mannequins that were set up in homes and business and used to measure the effects of atomic bombs. Interestingly, these mannequins, provided by the LA Darling Company, were dressed up to look real nice by JC Penney. And its astonishing how similar they look to Mary.

So after the mannequins were tested in atomic bomb testing sites… they were actually displayed, like in a museum, for people to see. And then we don’t really know what happened to the mannequins. Now, I’m not saying that Mary is one of these mannequins… but I guess I’m not saying that we’re not sure she’s not. After all, there are some mysterious happenings around Mary…and we have plans to get out a Geiger counter.
YEP, FOR REAL

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<th>J. C. PENNEY CO.</th>
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<td>IS PROUD TO CONTRIBUTE THE ARTICLES OF WEARING APPAREL PICTURED ON THESE MANNEQUINS TO THE A.E.C. FOR USE IN OPERATION ST. PAT. ON MARCH 17TH, 1953.</td>
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One of the purposes of Operation St. Pat is to determine the effects of ionizing radiation on various fabrics and materials used in today's wearing apparel. A wide variety of clothing, including men's, women's, and children's clothing, consisting of all types of fabrics and materials, including wools, cottons, silks, polyesters, denim, and cottons, was tested. The results of the test are unreliable, but the effects of the elevation may be a powerful factor in deciding future trends in the years to come.

[Signature]

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BEFORE THE BLAST
DAMAGED DUMMIES — The photo above was taken Friday morning after the scores of mannequins which went through the atomic detonation in Operation St. Pat were brought back to Las Vegas from Yucca Flat. The dummies were placed in various positions around the flat — in automobiles, in the two houses which were tested during the blast — to determine what effect the atomic detonations might have on human beings if an atomic bomb were to be dropped on any of the United States communities. The damage, in some cases was complete, with nothing left of the mannequins which were placed in the forward house which was destroyed by the explosion. Those seated in cars near ground zero, were badly battered, while those in the far house, in the basement, were hardly touched by the force of the blast. The dummies are to be sent east for study by technical experts and reports of the effects of the detonation on the clothing and other wearing apparel, will be made and published.
YOU CAME HERE TO LEARN ABOUT SOME DIRTY LITTLE SECRETS, DIDN’T YOU? WELL, I’M GOING TO SHOW YOU ONE OF OURS.

Remember that Geiger counter we mentioned? We might just need it where we’re heading next.
And now: Welcome to our basement
Yes, the Museum of Idaho does indeed have more than just Scary Mary in our midst; in fact, we have an entire basement full of mannequins. However, these are not really “museum” mannequins, but rather, these are mannequins used for other purposes… though we’re not entirely sure what those purposes might be. One thing I will say is that in all the history of mannequins, these are some very fine specimen. There was a time when stores started displaying quite lifelike “Miss Modesty” shyly showing off her undergarments. The Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) protested against these stores and their mannequins and lobbied hard to banish them. Because of their success, some cities passed laws that forbade dressing or undressing mannequins without first covering store windows. The law remained in effect until the 1960s.
HEY GIRL
One of the other results of the WCTU was that mannequins that had once taken on a very womanly, or correct shape, became a little more seamless, or bump-less, if you know what I mean. And then in the 60s, voila, bosoms came back! So I don’t know a lot about these specific mannequins that hang out in our basement, but I do know that were created after the 1960s, as you can see. They’re also made of fiberglass, another hint that they were created after the 60s, because before that, mannequins were made of some crazy stuff! So maybe, we should investigate a little more of this history.
THE MANNEQUIN

A Short History

Because this is something you probably didn’t know about that you actually really want to know about.
The oldest known mannequin came from King Tut’s tomb in 1350 BCE. It was a torso made out of wood that measured to the King’s body proportions. This bust was likely used to model Tutankhamen’s elaborate garments and jewelry, providing a stationary figure matching the king’s specific measurements to assist with clothing design and adjustment. “That would be more like a display form made for tailors and seamstresses, used almost like clothes hangers back then,” says Dr. Martha Bentley Hales, one of the world’s foremost mannequin experts. Eventually, mannequins would become figures that sell fashion, not just as a model for the king’s finery.
As Emily and Per Ola d’Aulaire wrote in their overview of mannequin history for Smithsonian Magazine, “Most experts agree that the succession of stages set in motion during the Industrial Revolution—the manufacture of large, steel-framed, plate-glass windows, the invention of the sewing machine, the electrification of cities—cleared the way for its arrival. The men and women who strolled the boulevards were the audience; all that was needed were players.” Thus, the familiar pastime of window-shopping was established, and mannequins became central to the drama unfolding on these lighted stages.
FROM OLD AND HEAVY TO EASILY MANIPULATED
The use of mannequins, as we are familiar with, originated in the 15th century. "Milliners miniatures" were used to demonstrate the latest fashions for customers. But it wasn’t until the mid-18th century that full-sized mannequins became the norm. Materials also changed over time, to lengthen the useful life of the mannequin. At the beginning of the journey, there were wooden mannequins. Then usability changed the materials to wire, wicker, and even leather, before things got really fancy!
As mannequins started to become popular in store windows, new materials were used. Heavy models (some weighing as much as 800 lbs!) made of wax were used to create realistic forms. The wax was problematic, though, when the weather got hot…and the wax began to melt.

Next came papier-mâché mannequins, with a light-as-a-feather weight of a mere 200 lbs! Yet, this material also struggled with time, given that it easily became distorted, especially in the presence of water.

In the 1950s, plastic mannequins became a hit, until the failure came with a discoloration of the material, and all of a sudden these mannequins turned green.

Polyurethane was tried and was incredibly lightweight and waterproof. But finally, it was the invention of the fiberglass mannequin that would stick.

Today, fiberglass and plastic are the two main materials used in mannequin-making.
LESTER GABA AND CYNTHIA...THE GABA GIRL
Lester Gaba, an American sculptor and retail display designer, created Cynthia in 1932. She was modelled after a wealthy socialite, Cynthia Wells, and had all sorts of realistic imperfections like freckles, pigeon toes, and even different-sized feet. She was perpetually seated and always had a cigarette in hand.

Lester decided to take his very lifelike 100lb beauty out for several public dates, where they garnered so much attention that they got a spread in *Life* magazine, and the pair become celebrities. Gossip columnists began writing about Cynthia as if she were a living, breathing socialite and Tiffany’s even sent Cynthia jewelry to wear, foreseeing a unique PR opportunity. Cynthia was even invited to a royal wedding and received tons of fan mail! Her sad demise happened at a salon, though, where she slipped from a chair and smashed and was no more…
The Stories go on…

OTHER DIRTY LITTLE SECRETS
OH, YOU THOUGHT WE WERE ONLY GOING TO TALK ABOUT THE DOLLS IN OUR BASEMENT?
DUGOUT DICK: HE ONCE LIVED IN A CAVE, NOW HE HAUNTS OUR BASEMENT
Dugout Dick came to the mountains of Idaho to “get away from it all.” After herding sheep with Emma Yearian (the “Sheep Queen of Idaho”), life as a hobo riding the rails, a short stint in the military, time on the ranges and ranches of Idaho, and forays into mines, the restless wanderer (at age 32) decided it was time to settle down. In caves. That he dug himself in the side of a mountain. Which he did not own. It was a dirty business.
Dugout Dick said, “I have everything here. I got lots of rocks and rubber tires. I have plenty of straw and fruit and vegetables, my dog and my cats and my music. I make wine to cook with. There’s nothing I really need.”
DUGOUT DICK SAID HE WAS A HERMIT WHO TURNED TO TOURISM

He never really lived alone. As soon as he started digging his caves, he attracted loads of attention and it wasn't long before he began to capitalize on his newfound popularity. What a chance it was to spend a few bucks to hang out with him for a night! And you might have been able to taste his special delicacy yogurt starter (he claimed that he was first person in Idaho to make it) made from moldy goat meat. Yum.
RENT A CAVE: $25

I’m not sure what to make of the love for rocks and rubber tires, except that he created some amazing artifacts (see the shoes and wheelbarrow)! He had caves that were 60 feet deep and as big as an apartment – which, of course, you could rent, by the night: two dollars. Want to stay a whole month? That was $25. Some folks stayed for years.
One of those people who stayed for years may have been Bonnie Trositt. Well, we don’t really know if that was her name. There is actually no record of her as far as we can find, though she could have been Bonnie Andrews, who was brutally murdered by her boyfriend with a fire iron. Dugout Dick reminisced often about Bonnie, who lived with him long enough that he thought of her as his wife, but then she left the caves, because, well, she didn’t want to live in a cave. Dugout Dick said she was murdered in Roberts, Idaho, by a vicious drunk vagrant and this story bears some striking similarities to the other Bonnie’s story. Regardless, Bonnie came to Dugout Dick in his dreams…for years. But not only did she visit him in his dreams, she bore him children in his dreams/visions. Redheaded twin girls. They didn’t stick around to live in the cave either.
A FEW RELICS
CLAIMING THE LAND

He carved switchbacks into the mountainside with his bare hands and bored refrigeration units into the dirt walls to use the earth’s natural cooling system. The dugouts had no electricity or plumbing, however; he got his water from a small spring trickle out of the mountainside.
Dugout Dick lived in a cave by choice. When a friend moved him to a care center in Salmon at age 93 because he was in failing health, he walked out and hitchhiked home. That same friend then washed and cared for Dick (including cutting off his long johns because had worn them so long that his body hair had grown through the fabric) so he could die on his own terms, in his own bed, in his caves...that he didn’t own, because the BLM owned it and he was a squatter for more than 60 years.
I WANT MY MUMMY

A Cursed Story
Egyptian Bronze Statuette of Isis and Horus, Late Dynastic Period, c. 600 BC.
A long time ago, the Museum of Idaho hosted a lovely exhibit on King Tut. And we had some super interested visitors. And we had some other super interested parties…parties who wanted to get rid of a family curse! So, it would seem that this interested party had a relative who knew Lord Carnarvon, the financial backer for the excavations of King Tut’s tomb, and he gave our interested party’s relative a couple of Egyptian statues…which did nothing but bring destruction and death and poverty to the family…and after much time and thoughtful contemplation, the family decided to rid themselves of the statues and send them to an unsuspecting museum in Idaho, of all places. And since then the museum’s fate has been…..

(The story will continue following the COVID-19 epidemic...)
THAT’S ALL FOLKS!

Thanks for coming on our Dirty Little Secrets Tour!