

EXHIBITION

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Bricks and Mortarboards: Wellesley College 1875 – 1975

Historical exhibition opens at the Davis Museum March 29

Wellesley, MA —As part of its year-long celebration of the 125th anniversary of the founding of Wellesley College, the Davis Museum and Cultural Center announces the opening of “Bricks and Mortarboards: Wellesley College 1875 – 1975,” on Wednesday, March 29 in the Bronfman Gallery. The exhibition continues through June 17.

The exhibition examines three pivotal periods of the college’s past: the founding of the college in the 1870’s; the 1920’s when Wellesley established itself as a premier women’s college; and the 1970’s, a time of considerable debate and reexamination of the role of a women’s college.

The exhibition features approximately 75 works from the College’s archives including photographs, clothing, furniture, paintings and watercolors and architectural renderings that illuminate the College’s past.

The exhibition is curated by Rebecca Bedell, assistant professor of art and Rebecca Mongeon, Liliane Pingoud Soriano ‘49 curatorial assistant. On **April 4** at 7 pm, Professor Bedell, will introduce the exhibition in an illustrated slide lecture in the Collins Cinema, adjacent to the Davis Museum and Cultural Center, with a reception to follow.

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Bricks and Mortarboards at the Davis Museum and Cultural Center – 2-2-2

“What’s fascinating about each of these periods is that Wellesley’s identity as a liberal arts college for women was under attack—either from without or from within,” notes Professor Bedell.

“In the 1870s, critics claimed that higher education would damage a woman’s fragile health and, worse, ‘masculinize’ them. In the 1970s, there was a sense that the usefulness of women’s colleges had run their course, and Wellesley was debating whether to eliminate its single-sex status. Concurrently many Wellesley students were eager to dismantle the college’s reputation as what was described by one as “a plushy, middle-class, lily-white haven for future wives of Ivy League men.”

The exhibition draws upon Wellesley artifacts to determine how the college reshaped itself in response to and in defiance of such challenges. In particular, the exhibition looks at the role of architecture in giving expression to institutional identities.

In conjunction with the year-long celebration of Wellesley, the College recently published, “The Landscape and Architecture of Wellesley College,” by Peter Fergusson, James F. O’Gorman and John Rhodes, three members of Wellesley’s art faculty. The book details the development of the 125 year-old campus, recognized as a masterpiece of campus design in North America.

Related Programs

On Tuesday, **April 17**, *The Dance Collective*, the Wellesley College student modern dance group, presents an evening performance of original choreography inspired by “Bricks and Mortarboards,” at 7pm in the Towne Gallery, in the Davis Museum and Cultural Center. On Thursday, **April 26**, Miriam Horn, author of *Rebels in White Gloves: Coming of Age with Hillary's Class -- Wellesley '69* will present a lecture at 7pm in the Collins Cinema, co-sponsored by the Education Department.

The Davis Museum and Cultural Center, located at 106 Central Street, on the campus of Wellesley College, Wellesley, Mass., is open Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday from 11-5, Wednesday and Thursday from 11-8, and Sunday 1-5. Admission is free and free parking is available. Recorded information about Davis Museum exhibitions, events, and driving directions is available at 781-283-2051.

<http://www.wellesley.edu/DavisMuseum/davismenu.html>

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Wellesley College celebrates its 125th anniversary during the year 2001, by noting its place in education and the world, recognizing the accomplishments of its alumnae, its historic architecture and landscape and its legacy today.