

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bard Graduate Center Awarded Henry Luce Foundation Grant

New York, January 20, 2017— Bard Graduate Center is pleased to announce that it has received a special grant of \$43,000 from the Henry Luce Foundation’s American Art Program to support the digital publication for the exhibition, *New York Crystal Palace 1853*, a Focus Project curated by David Jaffee, professor and head of New Media Research. The exhibition opens on March 23, 2017 and will be on view through July 30, 2017 at Bard Graduate Center Gallery, 18 West 86 Street, New York City.

The New York Crystal Palace of 1853 was an impressive cast-iron and glass structure on the site of present-day Bryant Park in the borough of Manhattan in New York City. Built to host “The Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations”—the first world’s fair in the United States—the New York Crystal Palace provided a venue to promote the innovations of this young nation and city and to display the artistic and industrial prowess of the United States as a worthy successor to more established European countries. Thousands of exhibitors would gather to showcase an enormous range of manufactured consumer goods, artworks, and technological marvels of the age, including Samuel F.B. Morse’s telegraph and Hiram Power’s *The Greek Slave*, that were publicized to a local, national, and transatlantic audience.

Designed by architects Georg J.B. Carstensen and Charles Gildemeister, the New York Crystal Palace simulated the shape of a giant Greek cross, with a soaring dome at its center, and a purported fireproof construction. When the exposition opened, July 14, 1853, guidebooks to the City made the New York Crystal Palace a must-see site along with P.T. Barnum’s The American Museum and A.T. Stewart’s Marble Palace dry goods store. In addition to displaying the latest novelties in art and design and industry and agriculture, the New York Crystal Palace became an important platform for elevating the consumer and cultural stature of nineteenth-century New York City and the United States. Visitors to the fair could purchase souvenirs, including commemorative medals, coins, and plaques as well as clothing and domestic wares that became integral to daily life. The exposition became a popular destination for urban dwellers and tourists in its first year—setting off the City’s first tourist boom—before it closed on November 1, 1854, and was destroyed four years later by fire.

The *New York Crystal Palace 1853* digital publication will consist of four multimedia components, which includes nine full-length essays, an audio guide, and two digital interactives focusing on the Crystal Palace’s history, architecture, and interior. “We are grateful to the Luce Foundation for their support of this initiative and very much appreciate this generous grant,” said Dr. Susan Weber, Bard Graduate Center founder and director. “*New York Crystal Palace 1853* informs how people lived, what they purchased, and their access to technological advancements in an age of rapid social, political, and economic transformation. It offers a revealing insight on this near-forgotten aspect of New York City’s cultural history.”

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Bard Graduate Center Focus Projects are part of an innovative program organized and led by faculty members or postdoctoral fellows through seminars and workshops that culminate in small-scale academically rigorous exhibitions and publications. Students, assisted by the Center's professional gallery staff of curators, designers, and media specialists, are closely involved from genesis through execution and contribute to each project's form and content. Focus Projects promote experimentation in display, interpretation, and the use of digital media reflecting the Center's commitment to exhibitions as integral to scholarly activity.

About Bard Graduate Center

Bard Graduate Center is devoted to the study of decorative arts, design history, and material culture through research, advanced degrees, exhibitions, publications, and public events. Our community encourages creative investigation of objects, from the everyday to the esoteric. For more information about the Gallery, MA and PhD degrees, programs and events, publications, and more, visit bgc.bard.edu.

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