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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **PROFILE PICTURES RARELY SEEN ON FACEBOOK**

**Bartow-Pell Exhibit, *Shade and Shadow: A Selection of British and American Silhouettes*, Shows Social Profiles from Another Age**

*Bronx, NY, August 16, 2012*— Before photography became widely available, silhouettes were a quick, easy, and affordable way to obtain “likenesses,” as they were often called. Artists—both professional and amateur—used a variety of techniques to produce profiles (or “shades”) of a wide range of sitters from American slaves and English country vicars to John Quincy Adams and Jane Austen. The term silhouette was later applied, derived from French finance minister Etienne de Silhouette (1709–1767), who was known for extreme cost-cutting *and* for cutting paper portraits for amusement.

*Shade and Shadow: A Selection of British and American Silhouettes* presents British and American silhouettes dating from 1788 to about 1850 from Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum and four private collections. Included here are American folk portraits, elegant ladies, family scenes, charming children, and more.

### **Variety and Legend**

Although we commonly think of profiles cut from black paper against a white background, the art form has great variety: cut out or hollow cut; painted on paper, plaster, and ivory; or reverse-painted on glass. Mechanical devices—like the physiognotrace—were sometimes used to trace and reduce a profile, but many artists took pride in cutting silhouettes freehand. The English child prodigy Master Hubard dazzled many with his ability to cut silhouettes “with common scissors...without drawing or machine” in under 20 seconds. Augustin Amant Constant Fidèle Edouart produced an astounding 100,000 recorded silhouettes during his career.

### **Timeline for an Era**

For some, a connection between silhouettes and fashion might be unexpected, but many fashion trends—dainty lace cornet caps, *en bouffant* sleeves, M-notched lapels, or a man’s haircut à la Titus—can be identified in profile likenesses. In addition, silhouette portraits were usually less formal than oil paintings or portrait miniatures, so they can offer a glimpse of fashion and form in everyday lives.

Perhaps not as telling as a Facebook timeline, *Shade and Shadow* nonetheless offers a view of a social medium before photography took over in the mid-1800s shortly after the Bartow family

built the mansion where the exhibition is installed. *Shade and Shadow: A Selection of British and American Silhouettes* opens on September 7<sup>th</sup> and runs through November 18<sup>th</sup>.

**September 7: Exhibition Opening and First Friday! Music**

Enjoy the exhibition opening, the magic of the mansion at night, and the fresh-voiced harmonies of singer/songwriters Hannah & Maggie. Tour the mansion, stroll the garden, and savor light refreshments. Then hop on the free Bronx Seaside Trolley to explore City Island. The trolley makes a continuous loop from the #6 Pelham Bay Park subway station to BPMM to City Island. Registration requested. Cost \$8 adults, \$5 seniors & students; members free. **5:30 to 8:30 pm.**

**Saturday, September 15: Make Your Own Silhouette Family Workshop**

Make your own silhouettes at this fun family workshop! Using a simple technique, participants young and old will create greeting cards and frameable pictures with cut-out portraits while learning about 19th-century silhouettes in our fall exhibition *Shade and Shadow*. Suitable for ages 7 and up. Registration requested. Space limited. Cost \$12 adults, \$8 students. **10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**

**Tuesday, November 13: Exhibition Lecture**

Bill Ketchum, award-winning teacher, curator, and author of forty books on American art and antiques, will trace the history of silhouettes, from their social role as the first truly affordable likenesses to their gradual decline in popularity as the daguerreotype camera came into fashion. **7:30 p.m.**

*Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum is located at 895 Shore Road, Pelham Bay Park, Bronx, New York. To reach us by public transportation, take the #6 Lexington Avenue Local subway to Pelham Bay Park station, followed by the Westchester Bee-Line #45 bus direct to the mansion gate. For driving directions, please visit [www.bpmm.org](http://www.bpmm.org). The mansion and carriage house are open to the public for guided tours on Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday from noon to 4 p.m. The gardens and grounds are open daily from 8:30 a.m. to dusk. Mansion admission is \$5 adults, \$3 seniors and students; free for children under six. Visiting the garden and grounds is free.*

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