



LEFT, VOGUE DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL EVENTS STEPHANIE WINSTON WOLKOFF.



LEFT, COCHAIRS JULIA ROBERTS, GIORGIO ARMANI, AND GEORGE CLOONEY.



FROM LEFT, ALEXANDRA KOTUR, JILL DEMLING, AND VIRGINIA SMITH.



BELOW, A DISPLAY FROM THE COSTUME INSTITUTE EXHIBITION, WITH WIGS MADE BY JULIEN D'YS.



EVENT DESIGNER RAUL AVILA AND JENNIFER LOPEZ.



LEFT, MET DIRECTOR PHILIPPE DE MONTEBELLO. RIGHT, HAMISH BOWLES.



LEFT, MET PRESIDENT EMILY RAFFERTY. RIGHT, COSTUME INSTITUTE CURATOR ANDREW BOLTON.



SUPERHEROIC

As we put this issue together, my staff and I took a not insignificant amount of pleasure in poring over photographs of galagoers at the Met's Costume Institute Ball. May 5 was an exceptional night for fashion: I can't remember a time when so many guests were inspired to look as glamorous, original, and cool as they were to celebrate the opening of "Superheroes: Fashion and Fantasy." All of this preparation and drama is captured in Hamish Bowles's "A Hero's Welcome." Equally dazzling is the fact that through the generous and tireless efforts of Stephanie Winston Wolkoff (*Vogue's* Director of Special Events), my cochair—Giorgio Armani, Julia Roberts, and George Clooney—and the staffs of the magazine and the museum, we were able to raise \$7.3 million for the Costume Institute in a single evening.

It is an honor for *Vogue* to be able to make a contribution to the Metropolitan Museum, not least because of our great respect for the museum's director, Philippe de Montebello. If all goes according to plan, "Superheroes" will be Philippe's last Costume Institute exhibition, and the extraordinary privilege of collaborating with him is something that I will dearly miss.

The world of fashion owes, I believe, a particular debt of gratitude to Philippe. Alone among world-class museum directors, he has had the vision to acknowledge the role that style, self-presentation, and design play in Western culture, and has executed that vision in a way that has inspired millions to think of fashion as one of our most complex and rich decorative arts. In the Costume Institute's greatest shows during Philippe's tenure, he gave his curators the freedom to explore the connections between what we wear and how we live—"Dangerous Liaisons," "Poiret,"

"Jacqueline Kennedy," "AngloMania." These exhibitions succeeded in being both totally modern and directional while at the same time offering the sweeping historical perspective that is, of course, the signature of what his museum stands for.

Fortunately for all of us, Philippe likes the mix of costumes included in the exhibitions to be as diverse, provocative, and exciting as the guest list for the Costume Institute's gala dinners. So Catwoman is as welcome as Coco Chanel, or the Prince of Wales as the Artist Formerly Known as Prince. And although the fashion world may not be his world, Philippe has taken delight in introducing the treasures of his institution to everyone from David Bowie, Jack White, and Beyoncé, to Marc Jacobs and Karl Lagerfeld, and to the cute young things of *Gossip Girl* (all of whom were with us on May 5). And he is always the most gracious, unflappable, and hospitable of hosts.

I'll end with a little story. In April, I was leaving a "Superheroes" meeting held in the Temple of Dendur when I saw a man in a stone-colored coat standing inside the stone-colored tomb that leads from the Egyptian galleries to the Great Hall. Our committee met at 7:30 in the morning, and it was possibly 8:00 A.M. As he blended in so perfectly with the architecture, I wondered who this person could be. It was Philippe. "I often come here very early in the morning just to walk around," he told me. His passion for the Metropolitan, with all its majesty and contemplative magic, is inspiring and heroic—indeed, superheroic.

A. Mahtani