

The Virtual Costumer

A monthly publication of the Silicon Web Costumers' Guild

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A message from the President of the Silicon Web Costumers' Guild

The first month of the SiW's official existence as a chapter of the International Costumers' Guild was a busy month. Several of us attended Costume-Con in Skokie, Illinois. We were quite proud of our ability to get pictures up and onto our website while we were still at the convention.

Costume-Con is always exciting. It provides a major dose of enthusiasm with an input of fabulous images, and introductions to all kinds of new techniques and their possibilities. You renew ties with old friends, and make new ones, while playing in an environment saturated with inventive experiences. This is an example of the costuming community at its best. I came home swimming in ideas for costumes and projects.

The Silicon Web chapter has the tools to create and maintain this kind of creative community even with our members scattered at great distances. In order to do this well, we have to learn to use the mechanisms at our disposal.

For example, I have frequent conversations with Sharon, (our Newsletter editor, web site manager and all around creative work-horse) using Yahoo's instant messenger. I sit down at my computer, notice that she is on line and available for chatting, and start typing. I would encourage all of our members to get that set up so we can talk to each other. Once enough of us are active, we can try a meeting with no need to comb our hair, wear a costume, or even get out of our bathrobes.

If you haven't sent Sharon your brief bio and picture for the web site, please do that, and take the opportunity to get to know your fellow members.

Let your far-flung costuming friends know that our chapter is up and running and looking for members and participants. We are enrolling our members on line, so other currencies are not a problem.

We'll be in touch!

- Dana MacDermott

The Matrix as the Ultimate Costume Movie for the Socially Malcontent
by Sharon Trembley

Past the age of 11, and still not received your acceptance letter out of the blue from Hogwart's, the Salem Institute, or a School for the Gifted in Westchester County, NY? Feel like you're special, but don't get treated that way? Maybe it's not you ... it's THEM.



Just look at the premise for *The Matrix* ... Here's poor, sleep-deprived Mr. Anderson slaving like a house-elf for a big corporation

in a cubical farm, and staying up all night chatting with his on-line, virtual friends as his alter-ego, Neo. Perhaps he's even fixed up a photo of himself with Photoshop to exchange with his pals.

We have a couple of different ways this movie could go, but the Brothers Wachowski are going for the biggest conspiracy theory here. None of this is real. Thank goodness for Neo and the movie-viewing audience.

So here's where the cool costumes come into play. Neo is approached by Trinity and Morpheus and given a choice – join them, or forget them and go back to the cube farm.

OK, they forgot to mention the waking up naked, wet, and cold with a shaved head part, but where it counts – the fictitious world of *The Matrix*, you're dressed as cool as the rest of your new group of friends, besides having a few powers and the ability to learn things really quickly, but it's the clothes and the sunglasses that matter most.

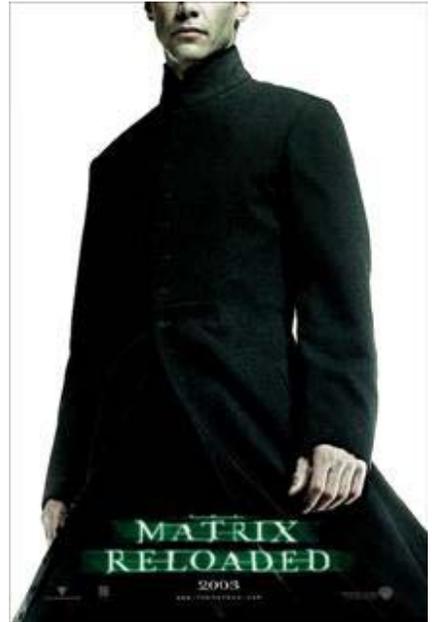


Is this a sort of high school reunion thing?

You've escaped from the narrow-viewed world, and now you need to go back and show them what a success you've made of yourself? Why aren't they wearing something comfortable, instead of all this leather, latex, and non-athletic shoes?



Deny it if you will, but just look at these movie posters for the sequel, *The Matrix Reloaded*:



Even Agent Smith looks like a sharp-dressed man in his Kennedy-era Secret Service suit.

Obviously, this is a movie about the clothes. They even chop off the actors' faces as unnecessary, and when they do show their faces in the publicity stills, they are of course, wearing their shades.



And don't think I didn't notice the similarity between our new Neo in *The Matrix Reloaded* and Severus Snape from the other Warner Brothers film series, *Harry Potter*. Although Neo is more in the role of Harry Potter than a hard-working potions master.



Warner Brothers has given the public a lot of access to *The Matrix* and *The Matrix Reloaded* through their web site at whatisthematrix.warnerbros.com and provide lots of interviews with the costume staff for the movie.

Kym Barrett, the film's costume designer, has a long interview that she's given for our benefit. At first, Kym did theatrical costuming, and she answers questions regarding that and the difference, in her experience, with theatrical and film costume. There's also comments made regarding the budgeting for the first film, and the fabrics used as opposed to the second film, the color scheme, and patterns used to hide the harness and fiberglass plate for the wirework.



There's also an interview with Gloria Bava, a costume cutter, whose specialty is men's tailoring. She has a really fascinating history beginning with her fashion schooling, having her own design label then her eventual transfer from fashion into period costuming for opera and theatre. She's worked on a number of films including the first *Matrix*, *Moulin Rouge!*, *Star Wars Episode II – Attack of the Clones*, *Queen of the Damned*, and *Scooby Doo*. For the first *Matrix*, Gloria built Morpheus and Neo's costumes. The five coats for each of them were built in two weeks from initial sketch to going on camera.

Roger Tait, the costume cutter who made the Persephone latex dress for *The Matrix Reloaded*, along with some work on some of the Trinity outfits, is also interviewed, and he had a few words regarding the maintenance of the latex dress.

In her interview, Barbara Hartman-Jenichen worked at the American Conservatory Theater (ACT) in San Francisco, which by coincidence happens to be a topic of another article in this issue of The Virtual Costumer. She also compares the difference between theatre and movie costuming. Her experience regarding costuming hundreds of extras is worth reading considering all the alterations and repairs needed, along with outfitting all the Agent Smiths for the Burly Man Brawl.



Christine Renee-Dye's interview is very practical as a self-described jack-of-all-trades. She had to do all sorts of things requiring reporting to accounting regarding material usage, wrangling extras' flip-flop sandals, and ordering g-strings to be dyed for the extras.

Be sure to check out this article by Susan Carpenter in the LA Times too - <http://www.calendarlive.com/movies/cl-wk-movies15may15.story> because it quotes none other than Ricky Dick.

The Matrix and *The Matrix Reloaded* is owned by Warner Brothers. All images used are theirs with no intent to profit from them except for information purposes.



A column by Sharon Trembley

The second web site that strikes me as useful to other costuming enthusiasts from among the ICG chapter web sites, is that of the Southwest Costumers' Guild, based out of Phoenix, AZ USA, at www.southwestcostumersguild.org

This chapter lists some helpful hints written by Frances Burns within their site on <http://members.aol.com/souwesgld/hints.html>



Current hints included are on trains, scalloped ruffles, gores, underlining darts, serger threading, use of metallic thread, and alterations for costumers with rounded shoulders.

Randall Whitlock has also written a how-to on a medieval-style cowl on http://www.casfs.org/connote/columns/costuming101/6_2/index.html with excellent illustrations.



By the way, the Millennium Costumers' Guild, based out of the Denver, CO USA area, has about ten past issues of their newsletter, Glitz and Glitter, archived on their site at:

<http://millenniumcgl.tripod.com/>

Putting off an easy thing makes it hard. Putting off a hard thing makes it impossible.

- Charles E. Wilson

Costume Rental at ACT

by Dana MacDermott

Recently, I attended a meeting at the costume storage facility of the American Conservatory Theatre (ACT), San Francisco's premier regional repertory Theatre Company. The idea of the meeting was to familiarize local Theatres with the rental possibilities at ACT.

Most mid to large theatre companies maintain a substantial costume stock and inventory. There are multiple functions for this stock. Costume Designers working on shows for the theatre can go to the stock to find entire costumes or individual pieces for various productions. Even in the most affluent company, you do not buy or create all the details for each new production. Every tie, or Jabot, every shoe, boot or belt, all the hats, handkerchiefs and headpieces, the sword belts, armor and helms, each earring or tiara for every actor who emerges on stage has to be chosen, fit and provided.



Just one aisle of stored costume accessories, available for rental

Costumes are built and used, and saved to be used again. Or they are bought and modified, or perhaps they are rented from another company. There is camaraderie among Theatres, awareness that each company needs the support of the others in order to survive as part of the artistic community. In the perennial struggle for funding,



rentals both to other theatres and to individuals for special events and occasions can be a significant assistance.

For a large Theatre such as ACT, rentals to small companies are in significant part a service. They offer a 50% discount (which makes it a non-profit situation) to groups with non-profit status. Un-



fortunately, renting to small theatres is not without risk. The anecdotal stories include tales of entire shows gone missing, of directors who have shredded the rental costumes, and fees gone unpaid. Since the value of a costume is roughly 10

times the rental, this can be costly to the Theatre.

Center Aisle of Rental Section

ACT also rents its vast array of costumes to private individuals. If you come (with an appointment) to ACT for a costume rental, you will get a fully accessorized, individually fit costume. For an entire costume from head covering to shoes, including alterations, an individual renter will pay \$100 for most of their stock. If you need only part of a costume, individual accessories are also available. You can rent period boots, crowns, hennins, overcoats, tuxes or cutaways, bloomers, panniers or corsets to fill out your costume. ACT maintains the largest costume rental stock in the San Francisco Bay Area.

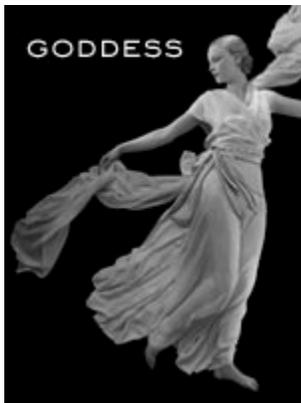


An aisle of ladies' historical costumes

This is certainly a bargain for the non-costume building public, particularly considering the quality.

Even for those of us costumers who do build our own, but may run into a costume event in an era or style we do not have in the closet, and have perhaps no time or inclination to create, it is a viable alternative to costume rental shops.

ACT is in the process of creating a database and cataloging their entire stock. On the racks, the hanging costumes are organized by era and type; the intimidating numbers of boxes of accessories are on multiple aisles of steel shelving. A complete database is a massive undertaking, and many of the larger regional theatres are currently undertaking similar projects.



Goddess

A review of the exhibit by Sharon Trembley

Madeleine Vionnet, French (1876-1975). Evening pajamas of white silk crepe with matching scarves, 1931. Photograph from Metropolitan Museum's web site for this exhibit.

Goddess, the Classical Mode is the theme of the Costume Institute's Spring 2003 Exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. The exhibit is open until August 3, 2003. The exhibit presents the manner in which classical dress has become a timeless style with displays of clothing from the 18th century onward.

The Museum's web site regarding this display - http://www.metmuseum.org/special/Goddess/goddess_more.htm#obj states that more than 200 items are on display, including clothing from the Directoire and Empire periods, along with works by designers Madeleine Vionnet, Paul Poiret,



Madame Grès, Yves Saint Laurent, Fortuny, Alexander McQueen, John Galliano, Gucci, Halston, Issey Miyake, Christian Dior, Roberto Cavalli, and Yohji Yamamoto.



The Museum has also put together a very nice presentation at http://metmuseum.org/special/Goddess/goddess_main.htm that includes paired images of the costume along with the work of art with which it is being compared, and gives a detailed description of what the ancients wore and how it has been modified from the ancient chiton, peplos and himation.



My daughter and I went to the exhibit that explored the continual influence of ancient Greek/Roman dress. The basis for the comparison with the ancient costume is from ancient sculptures and vases, since the originals are not available for study.



What inspires designers to be drawn back to these styles?



- π The classical ideal of elegance
- π The classical ideal of romance
- π The classical ideal of beauty
- π Illustration of simplicity
- π Aura of antiquity
- π Lure of Greek mythology and its attributes

It was suggested in the exhibit's accompanying book's introduction by Harold Koda, the Curator in Charge of the Costume Institute states, "In the end, with its aura of mythic beauty sustained over time, the classical mode is nothing less than the desire to transfigure women into goddesses." (19)

For those interested, yet unable to get to New York City for this exhibit, the accompanying book available from the Metropolitan Museum of Art's bookstore on-line is full of color pictures and detailed descriptions.

Works Cited

Koda, Harold, "Introduction." Goddess, the Classical Mode. Ed. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2003. 10-19.



Bay to Breakers

by Dana MacDermott

San Francisco's Bay to Breakers footrace is the largest footrace in the world. Every year, thousands of participants do the run (or walk) on a 7.5-mile course that stretches from the San Francisco Bay through the City and Golden Gate Park to the Pacific Ocean.

Those of us who live in the Bay Area know that the urge for pageantry lurks just under the surface of the population, and that it doesn't take much for it to break through. Although there are numerous serious runners involved, Bay to Breakers does its thing in an inimitable San Francisco fashion. And that fashion includes lots of Costumes.

Bruce and I are not runners. That is an understatement. We were motivated, however to get out early on Sunday, May 18, and wend our way into Golden Gate Park to watch the race go by. It was a spectacular morning with a cloudless sky, warm sun and flowers blooming their hearts out.

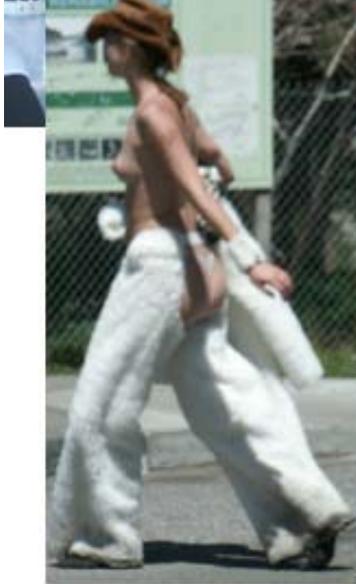
We worked our way to a vantage place in Golden Gate Park, around 9 AM, after the competitive racers were past. The myriads that were on the course at the time we arrived were running. Soon, the numbers slowed to a trot, and eventually the crowds sauntered on their way.

By noon, the party crowd was going by. Contrivances and decorated shopping carts were transporting kegs of beer. That was also when the 20-foot thatch topped cabana on wheels passed by on its way to the beach.

The costumes came in clusters. Groups of friends would dress alike in silly hats or wigs or strange T-shirts, or in full Halloween type regalia. There was a smattering of extravagant structures, and groups who obviously had a unifying concept in mind. I would estimate that no more than one in fifty were costumed, but when participation exceeds 70,000, that results in a lot of costumes.

And, since it was Spring, and San Francisco, there were a fair number of runners/joggers/walkers who wore no more than their registration number and perhaps a touch of make up or a hat. The largest contingency of naked runners wore fluorescent yellow-green baseball style caps with "Bare to Breakers" on the front.









News from around the ICG:

As gathered by Sharon Trembley

The Board of Directors had three motions in May:

Motion 503-1 Amend Standing Rule 10

Moved:

10) If a chapter fails to submit membership lists and dues (if applicable) to the Corporation for a period of twelve (12) months from the date of last report, the Corporation may withdraw official recognition of the chapter. After six (6) months in arrears, the Corporation Corresponding Secretary shall contact the chapter treasurer to confirm contact information and try to reconcile with the chapter. If the chapter remains in arrears at nine (9) months, the Corporation Corresponding Secretary shall send at least one (1) warning of pending deactivation to the chapter president as well as the chapter treasurer. If the chapter remains in arrears at forty-five (45) days from the date of pending deactivation, the Corporation Corresponding Secretary shall send a final warning notification by certified mail, return receipt requested, to both the president and treasurer of the chapter in arrears. Timely submission of membership lists containing at least six (6) members and all dues fees paid for those members included on the list shall constitute reactivation. A chapter which has been deactivated may be reactivated by following the admission procedure for new chapters as above.

What does this mean? Up till this point, chapters had an 18-month window of opportunity to report members without threat of penalty, and a notification was to be sent at 12 months by the Corresponding Secretary of the ICG.

Motion 503-2. Amend Standing Rule 9

Moved:

Replace the "," between the words "dues" and "membership" in the first sentence and replace it with "and". Remove the words ", and CQ subscription fees [see Standing Rule 23, below]"

Motion 503-3. Replace Standing Rule 23

Moved:

Replace Standing Rule 23 with new Standing Rule 23 Members of the corporation shall receive, as a benefit of membership, a subscription to the ICG Newsletter.

What does these two mean? As previously reported in the last issue, The Costumer's Quarterly is no longer an ICG publication. The ICG Newsletter has been instated as the official publication, and every member of the ICG will receive it. These motions update the wording of the two standing rules that refer to The Costumer's Quarterly.

All three passed. For further information on the ICG's Standing Rules or By-Laws, please refer to the ICG's web site: www.costume.org Also, if you have an interest on how different chapters voted on issues, please check out the new web page devoted to tracking the Board's votes: www.costume.org/bod

There was further discussion in the areas regarding membership and chapters, benefits of membership, and a negotiation to enable local newsletter exchange with other chapters' newsletter editors and the ICG Archives, President and ICG Newsletter Editor.

Since The Virtual Costumer is already making the rounds with its first issue, three chapters have sent us their newsletter: Chicagoland, Southwest and Millenium. Hopefully, the other chapters of the ICG have added us to their mailing list for their next issue.



The Last Emperor

A review by Sharon and Madelaine Trembley

The Last Emperor is about the last emperor of China prior to the country adopting a communist government. It follows Pu Yi's life from just prior to his becoming emperor, at three years old, to his twilight years working as a gardener in communist China.





The facets of the movies such as filming on location in the Forbidden City, the costumes, the soundtrack and the story itself are all excellent, in Sharon's opinion.

In Madelaine's opinion, it is too long a movie.



We're not experts on Chinese costume, but they look pretty good to us. Even the extras look good close-up.

Not much is seen of the lower classes until China becomes Communist. At that point, the populace has adopted a uniform look.



Awards:

- 1988 Academy Award: Best Picture
- 1988 Academy Award: Best Director: Bernardo Bertolucci
- 1988 Academy Award: Best Writing Adapted Screenplay
- 1988 Academy Award: Best Cinematography
- 1988 Academy Award: Best Film Editing
- 1988 Academy Award: Best Sound
- 1988 Academy Award: Best Art Direction
- 1988 Academy Award: Best Music Score
- 1988 Academy Award: Best Costume Design
- AFI: Top 100 Movies nominee



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Movie Overall:
 Sharon: 8
 Madelaine: 5

On Costumes
 Sharon: 10
 Madelaine: 7





Looking to get out and wear a costume? Not that you need a reason, but to meet others in costume, outside of your typical places, and also discuss and study costume and techniques?

Well, here's a few places and times to meet up with others with an interest in costuming:

Costume Society of America Annual Symposium, Gateways of Fashion: Influence of Global Trading
www.costumesocietyamerica.com/natsym2003.html

Where? Charleston, SC United States

When? June 11-14, 2003

What is it? This is an academically oriented conference held annually by the Costume Society of America.

The CSA is more about the study of dress in the museum curator sense of research and study, rather than our 'how do I make one?'

Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA), War of the Lilies XVII
calontir.sca.org/lilieswar/lilieswar.html

Where? Kansas City, MO United States

When? June 13-22, 2003

What is it? Rather than me trying to explain the SCA – their web site is sca.org. It's Medieval/Renaissance and getting to wear it constantly while also camping out. There is no restriction as to where you are from, so 1400's Japan is OK with them, if that's your preference.

There's also a week's worth of elective events with a good deal of time devoted to the Arts and Sciences of this, so a lot of SCA stuff spills into costuming (everyone's gotta have garb, even if they don't make it themselves).

The Costume Society Symposium 2003, Life in a Georgian City
www.costumesociety.org.uk/symposium03.htm#prog

Where? Bath, England United Kingdom

When? June 27-29, 2003

What is it? This appears to be another academically oriented conference.

Costume College
www.costumecollege.org

Where? Van Nuys, CA United States

When? August 1-3, 2003
** Registration Deadline * June 20th*

What is it? This is an established weekend of costuming held by the Costumers' Guild West (a big chapter of the ICG). This is its tenth year!

There's classes - with over 50 panels, lectures, workshops, and demos already planned for this year. The teacher list is extensive and includes two special guests, Sally Queen and Edward F. Maeder. Many more talents are listed on Costume College's web site on the teachers' page, including bios.

There's events – A Friday Night Social, a Time Traveller's Gala and Sunday Fantasy Tea are planned.

2003 Costume Symposium, A Master Class in Tailored Costumes
www.usitt.org/costume_symposium/costume_reg_form.pdf

Where? Cedar City, UT United States

When? Aug. 4-6 or 7-9, 2003 (2 identical sessions)

What is it? This is the United States Institute for Theater Technology's (USITT) annual Costume Symposium.

This Symposium is a hands-on workshop concentrating on the fundamentals of 19th century men's wear using pattern drafting and grading along with tailoring.