



## Chris and Christy Bertani's Presentation

**Christy Bertani\***

Chris and I felt honored to be asked to participate in this panel. With a small child in our lives, we find time to actually make costumes has been very short, so this was an ideal way to stretch our costuming skills in a new way without having to worry about a toddler eating pins or electrocuting himself on the sewing machine.

Chris did most of the textual research, picking out costume descriptions, and trying to puzzle out exactly how naked was naked and how far we could stretch the word "harness" to cover our characters. I did a lot of what I call "idea research", finding pictures of interesting historical garments and techniques, seeing what other people had done with the same text, and looking at historical and contemporary versions of "harness", from ancient armor to current parachute and rock climbing gear.

Our biggest challenge was always time. We did a fair amount of verbal brainstorming and had a fairly good idea of where we wanted to go with our designs long before we got a chance to put pencil to paper. We began by creating "style guides" for the different Martian cultures, with style variations within each culture to differentiate further. We wanted even background characters to be recognizable as

coming from a particular place of their particular culture.

Eventually, we just sat our toddler down at the table with us and broke out the paper and crayons. We sketched a lot of partial designs, critiquing each other's work. Things we both liked went into the final designs. Each of us had our pet characters that we spent more time working on, but the overall look of our "world" was really a collaborative effort. At left is our toddler's contribution to the project.



When we had designs we were happy with, Chris made clean outline copies. I photocopied the outlines and started playing with color choices. We wanted the drawings to carry the feeling and idea of our world, so we didn't worry too much about swatches or models. We just tried to present our images as cleanly as we could.

We chose to focus on a very literal adaptation of the books, which was a choice based on our audience: science fiction fans. If we had been pitching to a Hollywood studio, we may have taken more liberties with the text, but I think the extreme limitations we chose made us work harder to

come up with some really novel ideas. We also came up with some really horrible ideas. Part of the design process is knowing when to discard something that's really not working and start again from scratch.

### Style Guide

John Carter begins his adventures on Earth, "out west" after the Civil War. He is transported to Mars, or (as the inhabitants call it) Barsoom, where he engages in fantastical adventures among the many races and cultures there.

We wanted to capture the spirit of thrilling adventure for a modern audience, while adhering as faithfully as we could to Burroughs' text. Furthermore, as most of the characters John Carter encounters are described explicitly in a state of undress, our primary challenge was turning a few scraps of leather and some jeweler's work into costumes that not only preserve contemporary modesty, but also outline both individual characters as well as distinguish visually between the distinct cultures of Barsoom.

We have not included a design sketch for John Carter as he appears in the beginning of his adventure, but imagine, if you will, John Carter of the American West in the latter half of the 19th Century. The red dust of Arizona has grimed everything he owns, and the world itself has taken on the sepia hue of an old photograph. He falls unconscious and wakes up naked on Barsoom...

Everything on Barsoom is bright, colorful and larger than life. Lines should be crisp and sharp, colors clear and saturated, metal bright and intricately worked. Most Barsoomians wear "harness" and jewelry, and little else. Any cloth is in



squares or rectangles, draped uncut pieces, unshaped by the tailor's art. The textures are smooth and rich and sensuous. And yet, each race has its own unique expression of this design philosophy.

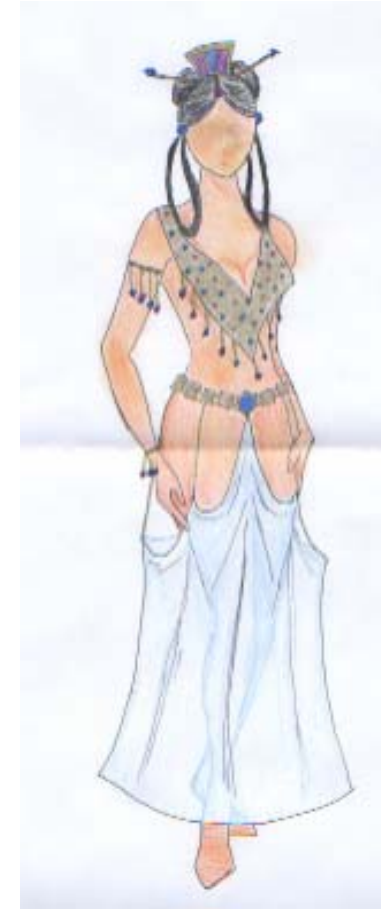
## Character Guide

### Tars Tarkas, a Green Man of Thark <

Perhaps the most alien of all Barsoom races, Green Men of Mars have four arms and tower over a normal human. Tars Tarkas, John Carter's first true ally on Mars, is shown here with a six foot human to scale. The Green Men are nomadic. They wear harness of brown and other "natural" colored leathers with metal decoration. Metalwork is small pieces, as could be produced in a portable forge setup. Lots of pot-iron and chunky pieces, also, worked wire. Bright color flashes around arms and legs are ceremonial, captured or traded for, not produced by them. They decorate their personal gear with rustic and wild shapes symbolizing important events in the bearer's history. They are expert marksmen, and practical.

### Dejah Thoris, Princess of Helium

At John Carter's first meeting with Dejah Thoris she is entirely unclothed. Our challenge was to create a look for her that spoke of nudity without being entirely naked. Instead of clothing, we adorned



Dejah Thoris with custom jewelry pieces, particularly a chain mail inspired "necklace" and chain bedecked girdle that holds up a sheer length of silk. The silk reveals almost more than it conceals, but leaves plenty to the imagination. We're not sure Martian women understand the concept "too much jewelry."

## John Carter, Prince of Helium

When John Carter becomes a Prince of Helium, he should embrace the local style. Here we have fitted his harness with a lederhosen-inspired central chest plate, a more casual style. Compare this to Tardos Mors' formal x-shaped harness design. The

plate itself is enameled gold, encrusted with jewels. His purple leg flash is a memorial to his time among the Green Martians. Throughout these concept sketches we've given John Carter a number of different hairstyles. The final design will depend on casting choices and consultations with hair and makeup designers.



## John Carter, among the Green Men

Green Martian harness is not scaled to human proportions, but among the Green Men of Mars, John Carter wears as close to their styles as possible. Look for the echoes of Tars Tarkas' kit in John Carter's harness.



## Tardos Mors, Jeddak of Helium

Ruler of the powerful city-state of Helium, Tardos Mors is dressed regally in Heliumite blue and noble purple. His harness utilizes the x-shape chest plate popular in Helium.



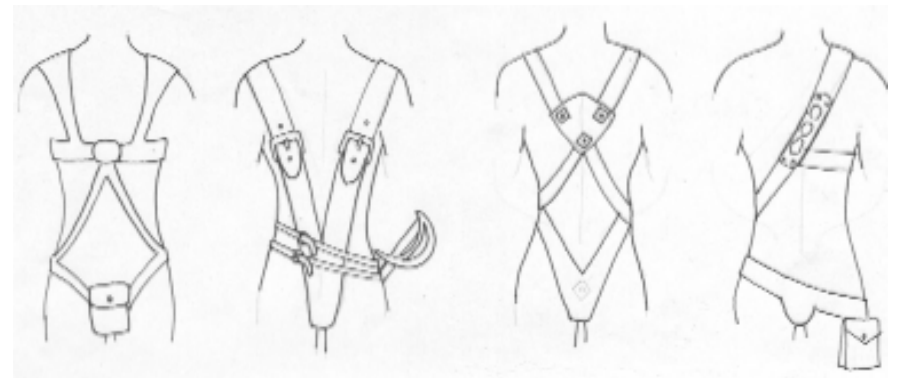


### Marine of Helium <

This Marine from Helium wears formal harness, similar in shape to Tardos Mors' regal costume, but subdued for practical use. The metal is strong and should be polished brightly silver. They wear Helium blue.

### Harness Styles >

The harness styles of the Red Men vary, loosely depending on their city of origin, but are generally symmetrical in design, with central chest plaques of gold or bright silver, often with jewel-toned enamel, in several basic shapes. Leather is often dyed; colors are bright and saturated. Metalwork is sophisticated and omnipresent, more likely to be gold and silver than iron or bronze.



### Black Pirate >

The Pirates of Mars are lawbreakers. Unlike the highly symmetrical harness of Helium and the other civilized cities of Mars, piratical harness is asymmetrical. Their decorative metal is either the best sort of worked gold "liberated" from their victims, or very cheap, rather shoddy second best gear they make themselves. The more decorated a pirate, the more ruthless they probably are.



### A Holy Thern >

This is a generic Thern. Therns wear long blond wigs to disguise their baldness. The central jewel on this Thern's forehead reflects all nine colors of the Martian spectrum. His decorative harness is worked with symbols that reflect their culture.

