Showcase

A Stitch in time

Costume exhibit brings Hollywood's biggest characters to life. Pages 14-15

'Big Hero 6' knows how to delight and entertain. *Page 6* Discover Aloha Spirit with Hula from the Heart. *Page 17* Video games use exotic locales for inspiration. *Page 19*

Contributed photos

AGELESS CREATIONS — Above, from left, iconic costumes from the Golden Age of cinema to the present, including pieces from "The Addams Family," "The Birds" and the superheroes of the DC and Marvel universe on display at the "Hollywood Costume" exhibition in Los Angeles. At left, costumes worn in "Mary Poppins" and other classic films are displayed.

Magicians of the Screen

Costume designers enjoy spotlight in exhibit

By Jill SKEEN
Valley Press Business Editor

Just past Edith Head's eight Oscars, but before "The Little Tramp" and Mary Poppins displays, Deborah Nadoolman Landis' costumes in a few words — are costume designers being welcome.

Landis, curator of the new "Hollywood Costume" exhibition at the Exhibition Hall Building in Los Angeles, writes of how costumes help the audience discover the personality, world and emotional condition of the characters.

"Films ask their audiences to believe that the people in them are authentic and had a life prior to the start of the action," Landis writes at the beginning of the exhibit. "We join the characters at one moment of their lives. Everything about them must ring true, including their clothes."

"I have to convince everybody costume matters" Landis tells visitors after a tour of the exhibition. "This is the lesson I want you to remember forever."

Landis has learned it in.

Presented by The Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences and the Victoria and Albert Museum, the "Hollywood Costume" exhibition is filled with costumes that helped bring the industry's most iconic characters to life, including Judy Garland's Dorothy ruby, Harrison Ford's Han Solo, Julie Andrews' Mary Poppins, and Marilyn Monroe's "the dress" from "The Seven Year Itch."

The show's scope of the exhibition is astounding, covering 100 years of film — from Charlie Chaplin's "The Little Tramp" costume to Jared Leto's dress from "Dallas Buyers Club." More than 130 costumes are on display. Thirty-one films represented in the exhibition have won Academy Awards, including 12 for costume design.

The work of 85 costume designers is on display, including 16 who have won Oscars. Landis discovered the eight Oscars won by designer Edith Head in storage at the Academy and used them to open the exhibition.

The exhibition was curated by Landis, an Academy board-member, noted costume designer and founding director of UCLA's David C. Copley Center for the Study of Costume Design. Her credits include "Animal Laurpool's Animal House" (1978), "Raiders of the Lost Ark" (1981), "Coming to America" (1988) and the music video for Michael Jackson's "Thriller" (1983).

Working with her was Sir Christopher Frayling, Professor Emeritus of Cultural History at Royal College of Art in London and set and costume designer Gemma Jackson, the assistant curator at the Victoria and Albert Museum where the exhibition was first held in 2012.

Pulling the exhibition together was a five-year effort, Landis said. There are garments on loan from 62 different lenders. About one-third of the costumes are from private collections.

Nearly 45.5 million British pounds (about $73.6 million in today's U.S. dollars) is finance the exhibition.

"There has never been an exhibition like this," Landis said.

Equally impressive as the size of the exhibition is its presentation.

The clothes are exhibited along with production stills, video from the directors, and designers on pages during the film. Also on display are sketches by artists, including Charlie Chaplin talking about the creation of his Little Tramp character and Julie Andrews talking about how the jacket and smaller studs her feel like Mary Poppins.

The exhibition features an astute use of multimedia. Projections of face shots, most moving over so slightly, give an illusion the actor or actress is there with the viewer. In the display of Sean Connery's costume from "The Hunt for Red October," the famous pilot-ground scene is hinted at with the use of silhouettes.

There are a standout uses of multimedia is the use of interviews with writer-director Quentin Tarantino and costume designer Sharon Davis, who collaborated on "Django Unchained" (2012). Two video displays, one for Tarantino and one for Davis, switch back and forth, showing an exchange of ideas between the vision builder and one of the people who must help bring it to life. Davis talks about designing costumes for actor Samuel Foxx is a mix of spaghetti western with Little Joe from TV's "Bonanza" in a tight, rock-star fit.

"It's about the conversation," Landis said of the creative collaborative between director and designer. "To use a tennis term, they are constantly trying to have someone return their serve."

Another video describes how "Avatar," a movie that employs heavy use of computer-generated imagery, also had a stealth touch by designer Mayes Rabeo and Deborah Scott. The pair provided the animation team with actual costumes, which the artists, mathematicians and design illustrators for the project then used to render in CGI.

Some of the displays are done with whimsy. Spider-Man is seen climbing down a wall. Uncle Ruben's costume from "Beetle Bong" (2005) is seen on using chopsticks to eat dinner with a swallowing. Errol Flynn in an period fighting with Johnny Depp's Jack Sparrow from the "Pirates of the Caribbean" movie series. A video with costume from "The Addams Family" shows "Thing," a disembodied hand, crawling across the stage.

The exhibition is divided into three sets, "Art Into Costume," "Costume Design" and "Costume in the Movies" to the walls of costume designer.

"I want to get the general public from script to screen," Landis said. "It's not the director's film, it's about the story. It's about making the people in the story come to life."

The first room is very much about silhouettes and how costumes are shown," Landis said.

Costumes in this section include costumes from "The Social Network," "Dracula," "Tight Club," and "The Addams Family."

"Art Into Dialogue" examines the creative collaboration among directors, designers and costume designers. This section includes the back-and-forth videos with Tarantino and Davis and as well as videos featuring the collaborations of Alfred Hitchcock and Edith Head, who worked together on 11 films including "The Birds", This Darkest and Cultiest Attempt, "Rear Window" and "To Catch a Thief." Edward Scissorhands" (1990) and "Dark Shadows" (2012); Martin Scorsese and Sandy Powell who created "Gangs of New York" (2002) and Mike Nichols and Ann Roth who designed "Silkwood" (1983) and "Closer" (2004).

Landis finishes with dramatic flourish in "Act Three: Finale." Here visitors will see costumes from "The Wizard of Oz" (1939), in "Gentlemen Prefer," designed by Lindy Hemming in 2008 and Marilyn Monroe as "The Girl" with that now-iconic pleated white halter dress in "The Seven Year Itch," perfected by William Travilla in 1955.

Other famous creations include Julia Roberts' Pretty Woman dress in "Pretty Girl," dressed by Ilona Sherriff in the 1969 film, the Hepburn school costume for Daniel Radcliffe in "Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince," made iconic by Amy Tanimo in 2009, and costumes from "Brian Sykes's Dracula," created by Eiko Ishioka in 1992.

Visitors will also see costumes from DC and Marvel comic movies such as the title.

"Visitors ask how I got the DC and Marvel worlds together. I tell them it's the Academy, everybody plays nice here," Landis said. "I tell them it's the Academy, everybody plays nice here."

The last room in the exhibition is a retrospective of the greatest piece of clothing in the history of cinema — Dorothy's gingham dress and ruby slippers. Also on the ruby slippers designed by Adrian Greenberg, widely known simply as Adrian, for 1939's "The Wizard of Oz."

It's believed that four pairs of slippers were used in the filming, Landis said. The ones on display are from the collection of Debbie Reynolds, who purchased them from Judy Garland were during close-up scenes.

The slippers were originally white silk pumps made by the Innes Shoe Company in Los Angeles, Landis said. They were later dyed red at 30-50 studios and then decorated with sequins and bugle beads by Gwen Applegate Neggins. The display for the shoes shows them first at the artifacts they are, then the lighting changes to bring out the deep, rich red color seen on film.

"The general public has no idea about costume designers do. They don't know what we do," Landis said. "The characters are in the rights of the audience at all times. Our work is at the center of each frame."

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If You Go

Hollywood Costume

WHEN: 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday; from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Friday; and from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, through March 2. The exhibition is closed on Wednesdays.

WHERE: Wilshire May Company building, 6067 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, adjacent to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

COST: $20; $18, seniors ages 62 and over; $10, students with ID and children under 13. Tickets are on sale at www.oscars.org/hollywoodcostume. Advance booking is advised.

DETAILS: (310) 247-3049; email HollywoodCostume@oscars.org or visit HollywoodCostume.

PARKING: Parking is $12 and available in the Pritzker Parking Garage on Sixth Street, just east of Fairfax Avenue, and on the corner of Wilshire Boulevard at Spaulding Avenue. Additional parking is available in the Academy's Fairfax parking lot located on the corner of Wilshire Boulevard and Fairfax Avenue, the Museum Square parking lot on Curson Avenue, and at meters located on 6th Street.

From stage to screen, museums get movies

By Jill SKEEN
Valley Press Business Editor

There are two extraordinary exhibitions available for movie fans this fall. The Academy Museum of Motion Pictures in Hollywood, 1933-1939" at the Skirball Cultural Center and an exhibition offering an inside look at costume design at the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising (FIDM).

More about "Light & Noir" in a moment, but first an update of FIDM's "Designing Hollywood: Sketches from the Christian Dior Collection" that I told you about this fabulous exhibition in June (Showcase, June 29). The good news is the exhibition, originally slated to close Nov. 1, has been extended and now runs through Dec. 20.

The exhibit features 100 sketches from Hollywood's glamour era, including those by Adrian, Edith Head, and Walter Plunkett.

Thousands of such drawn were made from the 1920s through the 2000s, but the vast majority of them were destroyed.

The sketches, done in watercolor, had to look great to help win approval from producers and private clients, and each of the display includes notations, either from the designer or the director. In one sketch, a director drew arrows to show how much lower a hemline had to be in order to get the costume past censors.

Also on display at FIDM is "Bound to Impress: Costumes from The Helen Larson Historic Fashion Collection," which runs from the 1760s to the 1920s on an display.

Whether critically-shaped with rigid boned underpinnings, draped or wended hourglasses with shaped shoulders and cinched waistlines, garment silhouettes followed the dictates of those concealed under garments," the FIDM website said.

The exhibition runs through Nov. 22 — from the Ancient Egyptian through the French Revolution, the Victorian era and the 1920s, the era of British Renaissance."

Both exhibits are at the FIDM Museum and Galleries and free to the public.

The "Light & Noir" exhibition highlights the impact of costume — actors, directors, writers, and designers — on the film noir movies in Europe and went on to shape Hollywood's "Golden Age."

Through a never-before-seen exhibited selection of film footage, drawings, props, costumes, posters, photographs, and motion-bilia, "Light & Noir" examines different genres in which the cinepics were especially productive: the early film, the anti-Nazi film, the war, and comedy, according to the

RAZZLE DAZZLE — A sketch of a costume designed by Mary Wills for the 1982 MGM film "The Wonderful World of the Brothers Grimm" is on display at the "Designing Hollywood" exhibit at the Fashion Institute of Design Merchandising.

Jill SKEEN/Valley Press

Skirball Cultural Center

"Light & Noir" reveals the significant legacy bequeathed by European émigré filmmakers to Hollywood," says Robert Eberhardt, Skirball Museum Director. "It shows how exiled outsiders became Hollywood insiders, bringing a sensibility to filmmaking of stress tragic and ironic."

The exhibition also examines the barriers the émigrés faced. For example, many could not speak English and frequently ran into certain restrictions. There are materials showing the anti-Semitism in the United States during that time. And there is a section of the exhibition that deals with anti-communist witch hunts in Hollywood.

Films represented in the exhibition included "Stavisky" (1939), "Sunset Boulevard" (1950), and "Touch of Evil" (1958).

One section of the exhibition features letters of declaration, the first steps toward citizenship,

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If You Go

Light & Noir, Exiles and Emigres in Hollywood, 1933-1950

WHEN: Tuesday-Friday Noon-5:00 p.m. Saturday-Sunday 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.; closed Mondays and holidays, through Dec. 28.

WHERE: Skirball Cultural Center, 701 North Sepulveda Blvd.

COST: $10; $7, seniors, full-time students and children over 12; $5, children ages 2-12.

DETAILS: Free on-site parking available.

Designing Hollywood: Sketches from the Christian Dior Couture Collection

WHEN: 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday-Sunday, through Dec. 20.

WHERE: Fashion Institute of Design Merchandising Museum, 919 South Grand Ave., Los Angeles.

COST: Free.