

Artist's Alley & Art Show

When you walk into the main area of the convention the most noticeable thing is the Artist's Alley and Art Show. Picture a huge room full of tables set up with vendors selling custom made merchandise. There are tables set up for each vendor's personal booth for their merch. The items sold in the room could consist of clothing, jewelry, art work, body art, weaponry, DVD's, music, video games, character figures, comic books, magazines, and any hand-made crafts (cellphone charms or magnets ect.) This room is gigantic! Pretty much anyone that has something interesting that they make or simply own it can be sold at Acen. While you may be excited about all the cool things you can buy you can't forget about the fan art vendors of course. You can purchase copies of a seller's work and even make requests for something to be drawn during the 3 days of the convention.

The Artist on the Floor

The art work above is by Illustrator Eric Maruscak. For the past couple years I have attended Acen, Eric could be found in the Artist's Alley drawing with chalk on the floor. For hours he will remain outlining and coloring on a large piece of black paper. Somehow he manages to complete the picture before the convention is over on that Sunday. He also allows everyone to shoot videos and take photos of both him and his work.

Renting a Booth

To be able to sell merchandise at Acen there are fees involved. With that said it is important to know that a Membership Badge is required for all access at the convention. Working any type of booth requires booth fees and a separate purchase for the Membership Badge.



Eric Maruscak coloring characters from the anime "Lupin the Third"



One of many tables in the Artist's Alley selling plushies.



Cosplay

Cosplay, short for "costume play", is an activity in which participants wear costumes and accessories to represent a specific character or idea from a work of fiction. Cosplayers often interact to create a subculture centered on role play. A broader use of the term cosplay applies to any costumed role play in venues apart from the stage, regardless of the cultural context. Favorite sources include manga, anime, comic books, video games, and films. Any entity from the real or virtual world that lends itself to dramatic interpretation may be taken up as a subject. Inanimate objects are given anthropomorphic forms and it is not unusual to see genders switched, with women playing male roles and vice versa. There is also a subset

of cosplay culture centered on sex appeal, with cosplayers specifically choosing characters that are known for their attractiveness and/or revealing costumes.

Costumes

Cosplay costumes vary greatly and can range from simple themed clothing to highly detailed costumes. Cosplay is generally considered different from Halloween and Mardi Gras costume wear, as the intention is to accurately replicate a specific character, rather than to reflect the culture and symbolism of a holiday event. As such, when in costume, cosplayers will often seek to adopt the affect, mannerisms and body language of the characters they portray (with "out of character" breaks). The characters chosen to be cosplayed may be sourced from any movies, TV series, books, comic books, video games or music bands, but the practice of cosplay is often associated with replicating anime and manga characters.

Most cosplayers create their own outfits, referencing images of the characters in the process. In the creation of the outfits, much time is given to detail and qualities, thus the skill of a cosplayer may be measured by how difficult the details of the outfit are and how well they have been replicated. Because of the difficulty of replicating some details and materials, cosplayers often educate themselves in crafting specialties such as textiles, sculpture, face paint, fiberglass, fashion design, woodworking and other uses of materials in the effort to render the look and texture of a costume accurately. Almost all cosplayers wear wigs in conjunction with their outfit in order to further

improve the resemblance to the character. This is especially necessary for anime and manga characters who often have unnaturally coloured and uniquely styled hair. Simpler outfits may be compensated for their lack of complexity by paying attention to material choice, and overall excellent quality. The process of creation may then be very long and time-consuming, making it a very personal journey and achievement for many. This taxing and often expensive process is known to unite cosplayers and is considered a part of the culture of cosplay.

Cosplayers obtain their apparel through many different methods. Manufacturers produce and sell packaged outfits for use in cosplay, in a variety of qualities. These costumes are often sold online, but also can be purchased from dealers at conventions. There are also a number of individuals who work on commission, creating custom costumes, props or wigs designed and fitted to the individual; some social networking sites for cosplay have classified ad sections where such services are advertised.

