

International Costumer

Volume XIII, Issue 1

International Costumers' Guild

January-February 2014



Preserving Our Histories

President's Letter

by Phil Gust

Welcome to this first issue of ICG's International Costumer newsletter for 2014. I hope that your holiday season was and continues to be safe and happy, and that those of you who are hard at work on costuming projects found time to work on them over the holidays.

Some of you are making costumes for upcoming conventions that will take place during the first quarter of 2014. Some of you are making costumes for other purposes. One colleague who is involved in costuming for her daughter's high school is gearing up for a full-on production of *Pride and Prejudice* with over 40 cast members. Still others who do reenactment are researching and creating historical costumes for upcoming events. Whatever your interests, costuming offers many outlets for creativity and expanding your skills.

I'd like to highlight one of the most popular pages on our website, and the person who is responsible for it. The *Mega Convention List* that assistant webmaster Susan Toker maintains at

<http://www.costume.org/conventions.html>

has gained the ICG worldwide notice both inside and outside the costuming community. On it, you will find events listed all over the world. It includes not only costuming conventions, but other events that are also of interest to our members. Thanks to the hard work Susan does to update the list, and answer emails suggesting new events with interest and encouragement, the ICG's *Mega*

Convention List has become a go-to place for listing conventions. Please join me in thanking Susan for her continuing efforts on behalf of the ICG.

Don't forget that Costume-Con 32 happens early this year, so be sure to register soon. The convention runs from April 25-28 in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

<http://costumecon32.com>

The ICG Board and Annual Members meetings take place during Costume-Con. If you can't attend CC32, please fill out the proxy ballot in this issue and send it with someone who will be there. Your vote counts! ICG also awards its Lifetime Achievement Award (LAA) at Costume-Con each year, so start thinking about costumers you think should be considered. A formal call for nominations will come out shortly. See past winners and criteria for this award at:

<http://www.costume.org/lifetime/index.html>

I hope to see many of you at conventions and other events this year!

In honor of *The Hobbit*, Philip Gust as Bilbo Baggins.
Designed by Ngila Dickson;
created by Kathe Gust, photo by Don Searle.



From the Editor

by Carole Parker



LonestarCon3 Art Show display of my dye work.

It has been fun working on the

International Costumer, but the May-June issue will be my last one. Nothing is wrong. I am on the Costume-Con 33 (Charlotte, SC) and Sasquan (2015 Worldcon in Spokane) committees, and I expect to be rather busy starting mid 2014.

For those that wonder, all that is needed to be editor of the *International Costumer* is current membership in the ICG, a desire to do the job, and a computer with reliable Internet connectivity. You will have the Editorial Board to help you out with proofreading and advice if you want it.

One common question is *how long does it take to put the newsletter together?* Well, that depends on you. What with creating, getting proofreading done, incorporating changes, and then getting it checked again, I would say about a week. If you have your articles in ahead of time, it can go even quicker. *Do I need a particular tool?* No particular tool is needed. The only thing your application needs to do is produce PDF files.

I have a *personal* policy of having at least one picture or graphic per page if possible. Again, that is what *I* try to do, and the next editor may feel differently.

Please send your inquiries to President Phil Gust at icg-president@costume.org.

Cosplay and Its History

by Philip Gust

Costuming today is as varied as the people who wear them. Historical costumers recreate clothing from the past, using period-accurate patterns and materials, or as historical interpretations of what might have been. Sci-Fi and Fantasy costumers focus on clothing from alien worlds and mystical cultures. Steampunkers make clothing for a steam-powered world where gears and gauges are also fashion statements. Furries create anthropomorphic characters with personalities all their own, ready to give a hug to an awestruck bystander.



Of all the movements in what many consider to be this Golden Age of Costuming, none are more vibrant and exciting than Cosplay. While the word is a modern coinage (an abbreviation of the first two moras of “costume” and “play”), its roots are much older. Photos from the late 1800s and early 1900s

show people wearing costumes and accessories that represent favorite characters or ideas, and a photo from the mid-1900s shows super-fan Forrest J. Ackerman as a young man, dressed up as a superhero at an early Worldcon.

What sets modern Cosplay apart is that participants don’t just dress up: they actively participate, interact, and immerse

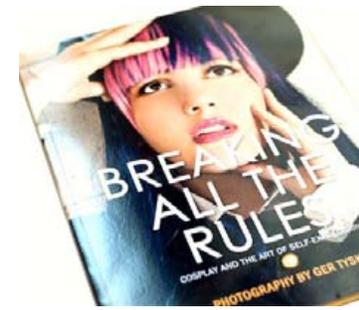
themselves in the subcultures they represent. Cosplayers don’t just portray their characters; they know and become their characters, and strive to experience all of their emotions and feelings. It’s this level of emotional engagement and investment in their characters that drives many cosplayers to spend so much time creating their costumes, striving to get every detail right. The level of workmanship is often astounding.

Cosplay is also about costuming as a performance art. Most costumers enjoy the attention that wearing a costume brings, but cosplayers take a special pride in being who they portray, and remaining in character at all times while in public.

Competitions at cosplay-oriented events focus as much on the performance as the costume. Instead of using performance to simply show off the costume, cosplay competitions put performance on equal footing with the costumes, and encourage participants to come up with entertaining skits that are judged on their own merits.

The inclusiveness of Cosplay is part of what makes it so popular. Many associate Cosplay with its roots in anime and manga, but it is larger than that. It also encompasses characters from sci-fi and fantasy, historical characters, as well as those from mainstream fiction. Inspiration can come from books, movies, TV shows, video games, and graphic arts. It also reaches out to include those who enjoy seeing cosplayers at conventions and onstage, along with those who chronicle the costumes by photographing them and making videos of performances that are all too ephemeral.

Photos by Ger Tysk and used with permission.



Ger Tysk’s new book, *Breaking All the Rules: Cosplay and the Art of Self-Expression*, captures the many aspects of what makes Cosplay so vital. Traveling

around the country, she interviewed cosplayers from many different genres and from all walks of life to find out what makes them tick, and what drives them to put so much of themselves into their art. By asking each one a well-chosen set of questions, she captures the collective spirit of the art of Cosplay as seen through many different eyes.

Ger’s book is also a stunning visual work of art in its own right. She is a talented photographer who has managed to look into each of her subjects and capture what makes each one unique, and what binds them all together. Ger’s images at once freeze a moment with each of her subjects, yet conveys the movement and sense of performance that was there when she talked with them.

Most of us will never experience all the conventions that Ger attended while writing this book, or have a chance to talk with all the people that she got close to during her two-plus year, crowd-funded odyssey, but reading *Breaking All the Rules: Cosplay and the Art of Self-Expression* is as close as most of us will come, and we are grateful to her for giving us that. For more information on the book, visit:

<http://www.breakingalltherules.net>

Miss Lizzy

by Lisa Ashton

I am Miss Lizzy of *Miss Lizzy's Traveling Historical Fashion Show*. This project is an outgrowth of my interest in Victorian photographs and culture, along with the influence of fashion and style in people's daily lives.

Gem size 1 inch hand tinted tintype in small case.

Here are some scans of photos and garments dating from

the early 1800s to the 1930's. Of course, photography wasn't invented until about 1839 and wasn't much available to the public until the late 1840's. By the 1860s—the American Civil War era—photos were commonplace and had evolved to be portable.

I wear a reproduction of my great-grandmother's dress, worn the day after her wedding about 1895. It took much research to figure out that it was probably remade from a dress 15 to 20 years older, and that it was a little strange-looking given the styles of the time. Reproducing this dress from one of very few photos I have of her, got me very interested in my own history.

So it was a natural progression to start buying and collecting Victorian vintage photos when I was looking for primary source material to research and



reproduce Victorian dress. Initially, I was most interested in using this knowledge for historical masquerades, but then the photos, garments, and accessories started to speak, to connect me more with the past.

Buying my first tintype photo was almost a spiritual experience, which I didn't recognize at the time (despite being fascinated). I began to look into the faces in the images, and see they cared about the same things in life—loved their children, went to work everyday, and wanted to look their best. I learned clues to identify date ranges and meaning—Victorian symbolism is everywhere.



Two boys dressed alike, probably brothers, note vertical jacket tucks.

Acquiring my first piece of vintage clothing—a long cotton petticoat with amazing fabric tucks—started another, parallel line of thought. It was a gift from a flea market dealer. He was initially going to throw it out.

How many more garments were out there? Quite a few, in fact, and often available.

At a Philcon years ago, on a Freebie table, I found a half dozen Harper's Magazines—from as early as the 1870's. Hard to believe

someone was getting rid of them. I brought them home, and started reading....

Then I branched out—and discovered some of my flea market dealers had old paper. Everything from old receipts for goods and services to old court cases, summonses, old hand written deeds and wills, even an old recipe for biscuits. I have an 1811 receipt for repair of a violin, and an 1872 receipt for "4 hogs for the sum of \$16.00." I would buy four hogs for that! I regularly find original Victorian fashion magazines. The ads are great, and some of them are outrageous by our standards. These items make people's lives within history much more immediate.

1920s snow ball fight.

I've learned a lot, and try to understand the daily culture and pass it on by writing articles, and by showing Miss Lizzy's photos and artifacts to groups. I like to

spread out dozens of photos on tables and have people sit around to just look at and discuss them. I feel that modern life makes us forget to look for small clues of dress and appearance. With all our images digital now,



we stand to lose a great deal. I just read an article, that we will likely see the final handwritten letter within our lifetimes. What does that say?

When I speak, people are stunned to hear there is no Powerpoint presentation, to shut off or ignore their phones and tablets, no printed handouts, and no digital links. I just want them to really look at the photos, and think about the people in them. Concentrate, just for an hour. To look beyond themselves, and hold history in their hands.

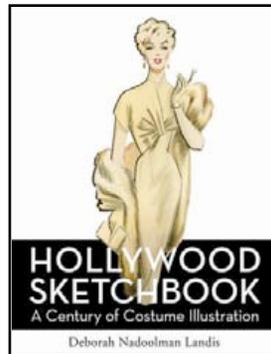
Miss Lizzy's project has grown beyond collecting and sorting photographs into something bigger. I am working to become a nonprofit under the *International Costumer's Guild*, to leave a legacy of Victorian culture. To preserve the clothing, dresses and artifacts, as well as learn more of the "unspoken" aspects of Victorian culture seems worthy. I hope to make the *traveling* part of the collection a reality as well, by displaying items at conventions and doing educational outreach to schools. I started with a small photo exhibit at my County Fair last summer, showing people in everyday activities—children building a snowman, people with their pets, and working on the farm. Some things never change.

So, if you don't know what to do with Great-Grandma's old petticoats or handkerchiefs, and would like to see them cared for and preserved—drop me a line. *Hand written, preferably.*

Hollywood History

by *Kathe Gust*

The book: *Hollywood Sketchbook: A Century of Costume Illustration*



by *Deborah Nadoolman Landis*

Conclusion: Expensive and mainly for enthusiasts, but worth tracking down at a library.

Deborah Nadoolman Landis is an Academy Award-nominated costume designer who has written several books on Hollywood film designs. *Hollywood Sketchbook* is a compendium of reproduced costume sketches that spans time and demonstrates the styles of some of the best film designers and their staff sketch artists.

1921s Forbidden Fruit by *Rambova*.

It contains over 500 previously unpublished drawings ranging from rough sketches to some very finished pieces. Some of these designs are immediately

recognizable, but others are from less known designers and films. This is a fun book to look through and may give some ideas to those who are designing costumes, but essentially it's a large, and very weighty coffee table book. It is heavy on the pictures and light on the text and context of the costumes, designers, and films that were included.

If you always wanted to collect original costume sketches, but can't afford the price they bring at auction, this book may be just



the ticket. You get a selection of the best, reproduced in very nice color and printed on good paper. Luckily, I was given a copy of this expensive book, and did not have to buy it. The best price appears to be at Amazon.com

Some photos of the finished product from the *Adrian* sketch for Cecil B. DeMille's film *Madam Satan*. It was quite the scandalous gown at the time. The formfitting nude souffle front with strategic sequining and complete lack of back coverage was a shocker! Surprisingly, the *Madam Satan* gown still exists and now resides at the

New York Metropolitan Museum.



The original sketch.

The front view is the center cover photo.

The back view.





The ICG Needs You!

To run for office! While the ICG may seem like the Muppets - a bunch of crazies - we're a rather talented bunch who need people to guide the organization to our future. Many of our members have skills that can be applied to helping run the organization. Please consider stepping up to fill a position.

If you don't want to be an officer at this point, we can use your knowledge in any of our committees. Without *you*, the ICG doesn't work nearly as well. *Photo from College Humor website.*

From the ICG

This year's International Costumers' Guild (ICG) annual members' meeting takes place in April at Costume-Con 32 in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. If you will not be attending the meeting, and you want to vote, please print, fill out, and sign this proxy form. Then give it to a member who is attending. You *must* fill in the form completely and sign it. *Incomplete or unsigned forms will not be accepted.*

ICG 2014 Annual Meeting Proxy Assignment Form

On this _____ day of _____, 2014, I, _____ assign my vote to _____, and authorize the above-named ICG member, belonging to the _____ Chapter, to represent me in all business before the 2014 Annual Meeting of the International Costumers' Guild (ICG).

Assignee Name*: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State/Province: _____ Zip/Postal Code: _____

Assigner Name**: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State/Province: _____ Zip/Postal Code: _____

Signature: _____

**Who you are authorizing to vote on your behalf. **Your name.*

Chapter Newsletters

Does your chapter publish a newsletter? Is there a costuming e-zine that would be of interest to ICG members? Send your recommendations to:

icg-newsletter@costume.org

If your ICG chapter wants to start a newsletter, the Publications Committee can help you get started. To learn more:

icg-pubscommittee@costume.org

ICG By E-Mail or Internet

All members are welcome to join the ICG general discussion *Yahoo! Group* and participate in lively conversations on costuming. Please send comments and suggestions to the board and the standing committees using these e-mail addresses:

WebSite: <http://www.costume.org/>
Yahoo! Groups

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icg-board@costume.org

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Publications Committee

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Technology & Web Committee

icg-techcommittee@costume.org

ICG Membership Benefits

Your ICG membership benefits include participation in a chapter(s) of your choice, voting rights, and a subscription to the *International Costumer*.

ICG Editorial Board

Betsy Delaney, Kathe Gust, Philip Gust, Bruce Mai, Patrick O'Connor, Carole Parker, Jeanine Swick, and Randall Whitlock.

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Members who have an e-mail address on record are notified when a new edition is available. Those who receive the print edition are welcome to view the online edition by going to:

<http://www.costume.org/currentnewsletter>

When prompted, enter the user name "costumer" and the password "history."

Back issues of the ICG newsletter are available online for the entire costuming community to enjoy. Contact the newsletter editor e-mail address to report problems or comment on the newsletter. If your postal or e-mail address changes, notify your local chapter promptly, or send your updated information to icg-membership-corrections@costume.org. Returned copies of the print edition will not be re-mailed.

Online Submissions

Submit copy as rtf, doc, docx or txt files to the newsletter editor e-mail address. All current graphics formats are accepted.

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