



Cactus Needles

Newsletter of the
Southwest Costumers Guild

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Calendar

*Do you know an event of interest to Arizona costumers? Please contact your editor with the details. **Red text and an asterisk*** designate an SWCG-sponsored event. Unless otherwise noted, our monthly meetings start at 1PM. **Green text** indicates an event organized by our friends at SunaCosu.*

Third Saturday of Every Month, 10 AM – **Personal Projects Workshops*** at the Glendale Cascade Mobile Home Park community center, 5747 West Missouri Avenue, Glendale. Bring your current project, socialize, pick our brains, Stitch and B. . . . Contact VP Nyki or Secretary Sharan for details.

October 7, 2009, 7 PM - **Valentino: The Last Emperor** Originating and Designing a Fashion Exhibition. Film Screening in Whiteman Hall at the Phoenix Art Museum 1625 North Central Avenue in Phoenix.

Matt Tyrnauer's Valentino: The Last Emperor is an intimate and engaging fly-on-the wall exploration of the singular world of one of Italy's most famous fashion designers. It is a portrait of an extraordinary partnership, the longest running in fashion, and a dramatic story about a master confronting the final act of his celebrated career. Introduction and Q&A by Dennita Sewell, curator of fashion design. Valentino originals from the Museum's vault will be on view. Runtime: 96 minutes. More information at <http://www.valentinomovie.com> . Free and open to the public. First come, first seated

October 14, 2009 - **2nd Wednesday, Luncheon and Lecture Series** 11:30 luncheon, 12:30 lecture at the Phoenix Art Museum.

Margaret Geiss-Mooney, Textile and Costume Conservator, will present her findings of a recent assessment she conducted of the Fashion Design Collection storage facility. This important topic is a major initiative for ACI and the Fashion Design Department. You won't want to miss this one! Lecture is free. Lunch is \$20. Lunch reservation must be received by Oct. 7.

Ms. Geiss-Mooney will also address the topic of Preserving Fashion with objects from the Museum's Fashion Design Collection **that evening at 7 pm**. This is a great opportunity to meet

and talk with a nationally recognized expert on the care and preservation of textiles. No reservation is required. Free.

October 15-18, 2009 – **International Horror & SciFi Film Festival** at the Madcap Theaters, 730 South Mill Avenue in Tempe, Arizona. <http://www.horrorscifi.com/>

October 16-November 8, 2009 (closed Mondays) – **Arizona State Fair** at 19th Avenue & McDowell Road in Phoenix. <http://www.azstatefair.com/>

October 24, 2009 10AM-5PM – **State Fair Demo*** We'll be in the "Home Arts Building" which, through the McDowell at 19th Avenue Entrance, is the second building on the right. Those participating are intended to be demonstrating our skills, so bring Machine, all accoutrements needed, and a project to be working on. We do not know at this time just where in the building we will be situated. We'll try to get that information in time to e-mail the particulars, but cannot promise. *This event replaces the canceled Old Tucson field trip.*

October 30-November 1, 2009 – **Saboten-Con** at the Hilton Phoenix East Mesa Hotel. An anime' convention for the otaku in you. <http://www.sabotencon.com/>.

November 7, 2009, 6PM-1AM – **SunaCosu Halloween Party** Bring two nonperishable food items for St. Mary's Food Bank as admission. See <http://www.sunacosu.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=23&t=510> for details and to RSVP.

November 13-15, 2009 – **TusCon 36** at the InnSuites Hotel in Tucson, Arizona. This year's guest of honor is Stoker Award winning author Weston Ochse. <http://home.earthlink.net/~basfa/> **The TusCon Masquerade is back this year!** with categories for Steampunk, Anime' Cosplay and General. Check out the rules at http://home.earthlink.net/~basfa/t36_Cosplay_Rules.pdf

November 14, 2009, 10:05 AM – **Sunacosu Thermoplastics Workshop** at the Pyle Adult Center, Rural & Southern in Tempe, Arizona. Gail Wolfenden-Steib will demonstrate how to work with thermoplastics, including Fosshape and Wonderflex.

November 14, 2009 – **Phoenix Faerie Festival** at Estrella Mountain Regional Park in Goodyear, Arizona. A celebration of the myth and fantasy of the enchanted realms of Faerie right here in beautiful Arizona. Features art & craft booths. Stay after dark for Queen Mabb's Dark Courte and the Bad Faerie Masquerade Ball. Tix \$10, Kids under 5 free. <http://www.westerngatesfaierrealms.com/PhoenixFaerieFestival.htm>

November 22, 2009 – **The Clown Wars*** (tentative, depends on getting the teacher). Guild demo on the basics of clown costuming.

December 27, 2009 – **Glendale Glitters*** (tentative) Guild outing to the annual Glendale Glitters street festival. Time & day may need to be adjusted according to the festival's schedule.

January 15-17, 2010 – **DarkCon** at the Grace Inn Phoenix, 10827 South 51st, Phoenix. <http://www.darkcon.org/>

May 14-16, 2010 = **LepreCon 36** at the Phoenix Mesa Marriott Hotel in Mesa, Arizona features guests of Honor George R.R. Martin, Charles Vess and James A. Owen. <http://www.leprecon.org/>.

HELP WANTED: Chairman Lee Whiteside seeks a Masquerade Director for LepreCon 36. Contact him via leewsftv@yahoo.com.

May 27-30, 2010 – **Phoenix ComiCon** at the Phoenix Convention Center and Hyatt Regency Hotel. Guests include Jonathan Frakes and Jim Steranko. <http://www.phoenixcomicon.com/>

September 4-6, 2010 – **CopperCon 2010** at Windemere Hotel and Conference Center 5750 East Main Street in Mesa, Arizona features a masquerade directed by our veep, Nyki. <http://www.coppercon.org/>.

January, 2011 – **MythosCon** at a yet-undisclosed, but undoubtedly very scary location in the greater Phoenix area. This is a convention for fans of H.P. Lovecraft and his works, hosted by local author and fan of note, Adam Niswander. <https://www.mythoscon.org/>

Fantasy Fete Fantasique – September 12, 2009

Reviewed and Photographed by Cathie Yankovich

Who are the Arizona Costumed Revelers? Sorry, everyone, I still don't know. However, it would have been difficult to find them at Alwun House's Fantasy Fete Fantastique. For those not familiar with [Alwun House](#), you've missed a Phoenix treasure, - a funky, exciting art venue. Founded in 1971, the organization is famous – or infamous – for the spring Exotic (Erotic) Arts exhibition; according to Director Kim Moody, the Fantasy Fete Fantastique (or FFF, for short) was created to be a fall fund-raiser.

Times have changed. At the time of Alwun House's funding, the area around it was controlled by the 12th Street Gang. So, I was unprepared for the bumper-to-bumper cars lining the parking for blocks around the event. But Alwun House at night is magical itself; the arrival is worth the walk.



Alwun House Entrance



Dragon guarding the door by Vida

Appropriate for an art venue, the walls were lined with art work. Sarah Clemens, a regular at Phoenix conventions, filled a room with prints from her "Magnus and Loki" (Dragon and kitten)

series; Tray Mead's collage-acrylics of fairies and mermaids filled a second room and the fire-breathing dragon was provided by Outsider Vida. (The exhibit continued through September 25.)

After walking through the house, we stepped outside – and into a fantasy. The garden's at Alwun House are magical, the perfect spot for a fantasy event – a green oasis filled with stone walkways, mature trees, a pool - and at least a hundred people. Fairies, of course, were everywhere, but there were enough pirates and ren-fair folk that my impromptu gypsy outfit fit right in. A gaggle of vendors dominated one corner of the yard, a stage one side, and in-between were too many tables and chairs. A lizard with breasts lounged atop the beverage booth.



Lizard woman.



The garden at Alwun House.

After Kim Moody welcomed everyone, encouraging us to eat, drink and support the organization, entertainment began in the form of Danielle Franklin, a harpist/singer. Delightful. Of the Earth followed, a tad funky for my taste, but obviously relished by the younger crowd dominating the event. All in all, there were 9 different acts including a magician, belly dancers, a “Fiery Fusion performance artist” and others. Unfortunately, we only survived until halfway through the third. Age – and the mid-September heat – taking its toll on us.

Did we have fun? Definitely. Did I take enough pictures? No. (A typical failing of a photographer trained with real film.) Would I recommend the event? With caveats. It was as crowded as a Con Suite with real food available and even at 9 p.m., the temperature was well over 90 degrees. Do I wish I'd found the Arizona Costumed Revelers? Yes. Luckily they seem to like downtown events, so eventually we will probably cross paths.

The Pause Restarted:
A Brief Commentary on Fan Photography at Masquerades
by Randall Whitlock

This is an expansion of the piece I wrote after CopperCon 25 in 2005. Since then I've directed two more CopperCon masquerades, directed the North American Discworld Convention Maskerade, and attended masquerades in other parts of the country. I've had the opportunity to try some experiments and make some more observations. The original version of the article can be viewed at <http://members.cox.net/coppermask/pause.htm> and is included in my book, “Yardstick and Chalk: Randwulf's Ramblings on Costume Volume Two.”

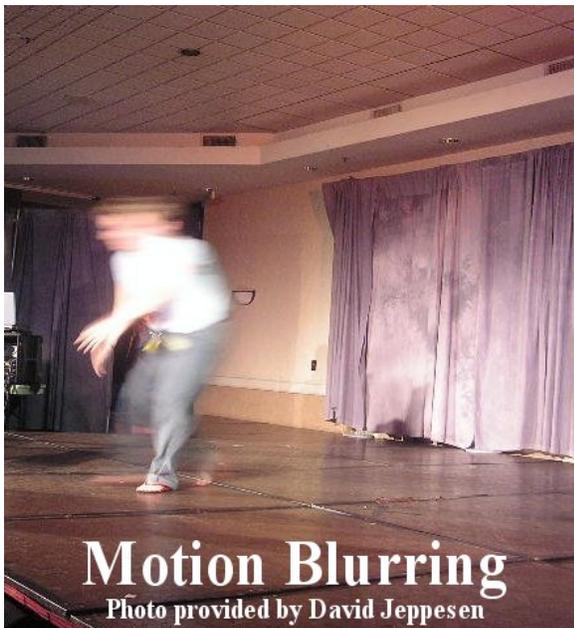
These days everybody and his dog has a digital camera. (I'm a bit behind the technological curve - my dog's camera is only 1.3 megapixels.) This creates a new set of opportunities and a new set of problems for the SF convention masquerade.

Anybody with a lick of sense knows that flashes are naughty. It's as rude to fire a flash from the masquerade audience as it is to talk on your cell phone at the theatre. At its worst, the flash can dazzle the person on stage and cause a nasty accident. The small flashes built into consumer-grade cameras are ineffective beyond about 15 feet and won't help your pictures anyway. Professional grade flashes will look like a supernova to your fellow audience members.

Even after the MC begs people not to take flash pictures, the flashes still pop. I suppose some of these people don't understand their cameras well enough to disable the flash.

Rant ended. What follows is for the rest of us:

I've been looking over some CopperCon 25 Masquerade photos shared by David Jeppesen and Tee Morris, who kindly switched off their flashes. Both gentlemen had excellent working positions, with David at house right and Tee at house left.



The striking thing about both sets of pictures is the "motion blurring" problem. There was not enough light for the cameras to use a short exposure time. David had a camera with a small lens mounted on a tripod. His backgrounds are rock-steady while the subjects often blur out into horizontal steaks. Tee's camera has a wider, faster lens, but he was holding the camera in his hands. His pictures have less subject blurring, but there was more camera motion, causing some of the backgrounds to go out of focus.

What can we do about it?

In my experienced but humble opinion, the audience should be allowed and encouraged to take pictures. It's part of the fun of a masquerade

and most contestants really, really want good pictures of their performances.

Suggestions for the Masquerade Director:

--Put as much light on the stage as you can. Brighter light allows shorter camera exposure times. More light also improves visibility for persons in the back of the audience. Use professional lighting instruments if you can get them. The hotel house lights are not intended for stage work. Make sure your technical director knows the ratings of the ballroom's circuit breakers! Neutral-colored gels can help take the harshness out of the bright light. For small stages, lights which throw a broad, diffuse beam are better than ones that project a tight beam.

--Offer a Photo Call. A “photo call” is an opportunity for the contestants to pose for pictures. Since it is not part of the masquerade performance, the no-flashes rule doesn’t apply.

There are several practical ways to do this. Some conventions set up a photo area with backdrop and fixed lights outside the ballroom. At the Future Fashion Show at Costume-Con 24, the entire show was run twice. The second run was specifically for the benefit of photographers and flashes were permitted.

My favorite photo call procedure is simply to leave the stage and lights set up for an hour after the masquerade for the use of contestants and fan photographers. We did this at the North American Discworld Convention. Since the stage background and lights are the same, these pictures will resemble pictures taken during the performance, but without so many technical problems. In all cases, make certain the when, where and how details of the photo call are properly announced to the photographers and contestants.

--Prompt for a Practice Shot. Many fan photographers have new cameras and don’t yet know how to turn off the automatic flash. When the master of ceremonies makes the “Please, no flash photography” announcement at the beginning of the show, he should prompt the audience to take a practice picture of him. If your flash goes off, you know you need to change a setting. (Thank you to Seth Breidbart, House Manager for the NADWCon Maskerade, for passing me this idea.)

Suggestion for the Fan Photographer

--Steady your camera. This will help reduce camera motion problems. As a random audience member, you may not have room for a tripod. I use a monopod, available from any camera store.

Please Turn Off Cell Phones and Camera Flashes



A monopod looks like one telescoping leg from a tripod with a camera mounting bolt on top. It allows you to brace your camera against the floor and hold it much steadier. With a little decoration, your monopod can become part of your hall costume as a walking stick or a wizard’s staff. In a pinch, the person in front of you may let you lean your camera on the back of his chair.

Suggestion for the Contestant

--Pause in the middle. If the dynamics of your presentation allow, please stand still for a couple of seconds in the lighting "hot spot" at center stage. Maybe count to five. If the stage is wide, you may wish to do additional pauses for the benefit of persons seated at stage left and stage right. Aim a pause straight at the videographer’s station.

Group costumes should form themselves into a tableau at the end of the presentation.

The pauses will allow just enough time for the auto focus to set and the camera to expose.

Your reward may be a fine photo of your costume on stage!

Wandering Camera



Erica visited once again for our September meeting, demonstrating the many uses for specialty sewing machine feet.

Randall adapted a heavier version of the same tech that built the Pipe & Drape system for conventions into a storage rack for his kayak.



A bit of wood grain print fabric makes a quick and dirty disguise for a water jug at medieval camping events



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