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Wearing both hats: President's Message/Acting Editor's Message

This is the 2004 just-before-Halloween issue of the Virtual Costumer. As a result, many of us are eyeball deep in projects. Costumers have a project-oriented worldview. Periodically everything else goes on hold while we create huge messes and start attaching one thing to another. The creative spirit seizes our brains, takes our lives hostage, and off we go.

Sometimes the projects are costumes for Halloween or Hall costumes, or for shows or competitions, or Renaissance or Dickens Fairs.

Sometimes the projects aren't costumes. The creative mindset tends to spill over. We are people who like taking concepts from our heads and making them into reality.

I know that in the SiW this creative impulse shows up in other areas, as well. Ari does art projects. Arlin is supervising the building of her house. I am putting together a complex photo calendar (and the VC).

I am asking for the membership to send in a photo and a very brief description for the next issue of the Virtual Costumer of a creative project you are or have been involved in over the last year. Let us see how many of our members we

can get to participate. It will also help us to get better acquainted.

Remember, this invitation is for costume or other projects.

There should be one more issue of the VC before the end of the year, and that issue of the newsletter must have the input of more of our members.

Email to me (DmacD@MNouveau.com)

Briefly, on another note:

For the SiW membership that are U.S. citizens (and of voting age), please get out and VOTE. Democracy is also something that needs frequent assembly and alterations.

Dana MacDermott, President, SiW, Acting Editor, Virtual Costumer

SiW member profile: Jaron Hollander

Creating a profile of SiW member Jaron Hollander is timely, and of particular interest because he has just been cast by Cirque du Soleil as a clown and actor.

VC: How did you get involved in Costuming?

Jaron:
Asking me how I got involved in Costuming is like asking me how I got involved in walking or speaking English. I was raised in it. There is probably a better metaphor somewhere.

It is also difficult to answer how long have I been in circus. There is a gray area between theatre and circus, and I don't know when one stopped and the other began.



For Costuming, there is no story or single event. I remember being a Jawa with the two little lights in front of my eyes on Halloween after Star Wars came out. I pressed a button and it connected the batteries, and the lights went on. And I couldn't see. It was a problem.

As an actor or student my resources were very limited, and I couldn't come up with costume materials that met my standards. It was very frustrating.

V.C.: We put all kinds of things on you for Cons, how did that affect you?

Jaron: I am in theatre, I am in Cirque and I am a clown partially because of the costuming; very literally and physically directly because of the Costuming. I became a performer because of the costuming.

When we went to our first WorldCon, and I did Rayek (from *Elf Quest*), I never saw the costume as the whole thing; it was the presentation and it was the character. I don't know how any kid who was costumed as a character out of their own mythology would not take on the character. It was RatCon, in 1984, and I was eleven. I remember having a kinesthetic sense of the character. Of course, I didn't have the vocabulary, then, but I remember the feeling.

I always have the feeling of the quality of the movement of a character, and of course, a lot of the time the movement is dictated by the clothing.

The snail, (Beneath Alien Waves) was also a movement thing. The slime trail was my idea. I asked, "do I get a slime trail?" and you said, "... Yeh!".

Photo by Michael Jhon



VC: What about your own costuming? What do you do?

Jaron: I do masks. I made masks before, but it is part of the curriculum at D'ell Arte. (Jaron attended the D'ell Arte School of Physical Theatre after he graduated from UC Santa Cruz in Theatre.)

So many cultures deal with masks. They help you take on a persona entirely different from your own. It can be ritualistic and religious; they

even believe they are talking on the personas of the Gods. So, in an odd way it is spiritual.



When I create a mask, especially when it is one that goes on my own face I am sculpting the character, creating a character that is appetite driven. I have taught mask making, and used it with the actors in developing a production as director. Again, there isn't a clear line between the physicality and the costume; it is a continuum.

I also develop my own clown costumes. When I do clown, I am always trying out new costume pieces, putting new things on. The idea behind it is to find something that frees the playful. It is common to have something that makes a

clown look and feel bizarre, not just for the audience's reaction, but for our reaction to ourselves. This is the same as mask in some ways, and is why the European clown came out of Commedia.

VC: What influenced you?

Jaron; Well, the Muppet Show, of course - the craziness, the bizarre ideas. The Muppets *are* clowns and the movement and the techniques behind them are directly related to mask. They are physical characters, just slightly removed from the body. There is a continuum that goes from Mask to puppetry. Those characters are very clearly to me passionate. Both the puppeteers and the characters are passionate.

VC: It is the same with costumes. There is a continuum from puppet to costume. Our work is related to puppets and mask, and the costumes in Lion King show that, too.

Now, let's talk about Cirque. Tell us about the audition process.

Jaron: First, you send in information and videos, and you may be invited to an audition. You audition under the category of your work. I did the general clown/actor audition two years ago; it took two days. There were somewhere between thirty and fifty people to begin with, and they cut all the way through until at the end there were four left. I was one of those. We entered their "talent pool".

They take the people who are there at the end of the process and edit (the extensive tapes they made during the audition) into their (personal) videos. We were told to keep our passports active. The talent pool has access to listings and information, and is encouraged to keep Cirque informed about what they are doing.

This time, I saw the listing and contacted them, and they also contacted me directly, knowing it was an appropriate role. For this audition, there were a lot of character games and movement. There was an initial cut based on physical characteristics. They cut everyone over 5'8".

The show is interactive and improvisational and will start in the Caribbean on cruise ships run by Celebrity Cruises. They haven't told me enough yet to make me sign a non-disclosure form.



Editor:(The current information on the cruise and the show can be found at <http://www.cirquedusoleil.com/CirqueDuSoleil/en/pressroom/prinfo/news/news80.htm>)

VC: On a cruise you will not be part of a big Cirque Community, just a very small community.

Jaron: But for the next month (during rehearsals in Montreal) I will be part of the big Cirque community, and I am going to get as buried in it as I can.

VC: You will have the opportunity in Cirque to wear some of the most astounding costumes on the face of the earth.

Jaron: I will take pictures.

VC: The way they create their characters, particularly their clowns, is very heavily involved with the costumes. It is going to be very interesting to hear your feedback on that.

Jaron: Ask me again in a month.

Two weeks later, Jaron is rehearsing in Montreal. The up to date printable news (I assume he *has* signed that non-disclosure form by now) is that there are four characters and five actor/performers who rotate through the rolls for each of the two ships, the *Constellation* and the *Summit*. The report is that the costumes are the most elaborate Cirque has done. Pictures are promised as soon as Cirque du Soleil allows it.

There is a tiny glimpse of preliminary costume renderings on the web site. <http://www.celebrity.com/#> At one point there were larger drawings linked to those thumbnails, but they seem to have disappeared.



Jaron's personal situation is that the troupe he is in will be aboard the Summit, which will travel in the Caribbean starting in February and then switch to the Alaska cruise later on. This means that Jaron will be back at home early November after the month



of rehearsals, and will join the ship early in 2005.

The cast members were warmly welcomed to the Cirque family, and given a tour of the facilities. Jaron reports that there is a huge costume shop, with separate rooms for producing shoes, hats, for the application of designs to fabric, and, of course a vast array of specialized sewing machines.

Housing is at La Résidence des Artistes.

The SiW has been promised updates. In the meantime, for more information on Jaron, you can go to www.CyberJaron.com

Enjoy the show.





The Costumes of Burning Man

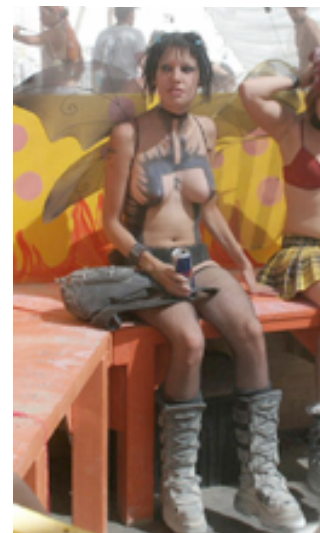
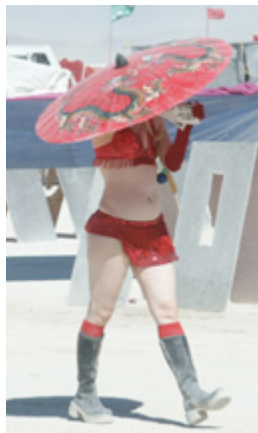
Dana MacDermott

The Black Rock desert in Nevada is a challenging environment. During the winter, the Playa is a lakebed. In the hot summer, it dries out and the alkaline ground hardens and crusts. In the daytime, it is hot, often exceeding 100 degrees, with the ultraviolet reflecting from the compressed ground. It is subject to high winds, which raise the powdery gray broken crust, and can lead to white out dust storms lasting from brief intervals to several hours.

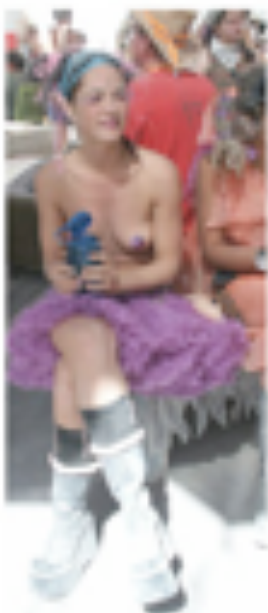
Nighttime, in contrast, can be cold, with the desert rapidly losing its heat to the sky after the sun has set.

And it is in this environment that 35,000 people gathered to create art, community and festivities. Go figure.

Clothing appropriate to the demands of the desert has to take into account a number of conditions: temperature, dust, protection from the sun and the need for very easy access to water. Comfort and mobility can also be a significant consideration. Modesty often is not.



These comfort and survival issues are immediately complicated by the desire for pageantry, often the more outrageous, the better. There are many solutions to the multiple requirements; some are better than others.





One of the repeated “themes” I have noticed at Burning Man is Men in Skirts. The Y chromosome carriers have discovered that skirts are comfortable in hot weather, and they can be very decorative, too.

