

# *International Costumer*

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March–April 2015

## Transforming in Costume



*Maleficent costume at FDIM, designed by Anna Biedrzycka-Sheppard and worn by Angelina Jolie. Photo courtesy of Phil Gust.*

## President's Message

*By Philip Gust*

As I write this in mid-February, the weather across the U.S. and Canada is literally all over the map. On the east coast, record snowstorms are blanketing the region, leaving many feet of snow in their wake and making it difficult and dangerous to be out and about. The west (or as some would say, "left") coast, where I live is experiencing an early spring, with temperatures in the mid-50°F to the mid-70°F range, making it easy to go out and do things. I hope that wherever you live, the weather isn't interfering with your ability to work on whatever costuming projects that may be on hand.

Kathe and I were guests at the opening of the *23rd Annual Art of Motion Picture Costume Design* exhibit at the Fashion Institute for Design and Merchandising (FIDM) Museum in Los Angeles last weekend. This show displays costumes from movies that have been nominated for 2015 Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences "Oscar" awards in costuming. It's a wonderful exhibit, and it was a real thrill to see the work of the costume designers and those who constructed them up-close.

The workmanship on many of the costumes is truly amazing, and we spent considerable



*Phil and Kathe Gust at FIDM*

time studying details of their construction. However, that's not always the case. The quality of some movie costumes is not that good, due to either budget or time constraints, but the costumes still "read" surprisingly well on the screen. It is just as interesting to study why these costumes work. I highly recommend getting "up-close and personal" with costumes designed and made by others whenever you can, whether they are professional or hobbyist costumers. There's a lot to be learned from studying their techniques and choices.

If you have a chance to go, the exhibit goes through April 25th and admission is free. For those who can't make it, there's an excellent report and photos from the exhibit on the "Tyranny of Style" website:

<http://tyrannyofstyle.com/23rd-art-motion-picture-costume-design>.

ICG members have an opportunity to participate in two very important activities over the next several months. The first is nominating a costumer for ICG's Lifetime Achievement Award (LAA). This award recognizes a body of achievement in the costuming art and service to the costuming community. You still have time to submit a nomination on or before March 7, 2015. See my note on the ICG-D Yahoo group: <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/icg-d/conversations/messages/49329> for details. You can learn about past LAA recipients on the ICG website: <http://www.costume.org/lifetime>.

The second is completing a proxy statement for the ICG Annual Meeting that takes place at Costume-Con 33 in Charleston, South Carolina if you are unable to attend. A proxy allows another ICG member to vote on your behalf for the election of 2015-2016 ICG officers, and any other business that may come before the meeting. Your vote really does count, so please complete your proxy statement and give it to another member who will be attending. You can find a copy of the proxy on the ICG website: <http://www.costume.org/documents/proxy.html> If you need help locating someone who is attending, please post a note to the ICG-D Yahoo group, or contact your chapter ICG Board of Directors representative.

## ICG'S Marty Gear Fund Makes First Grant

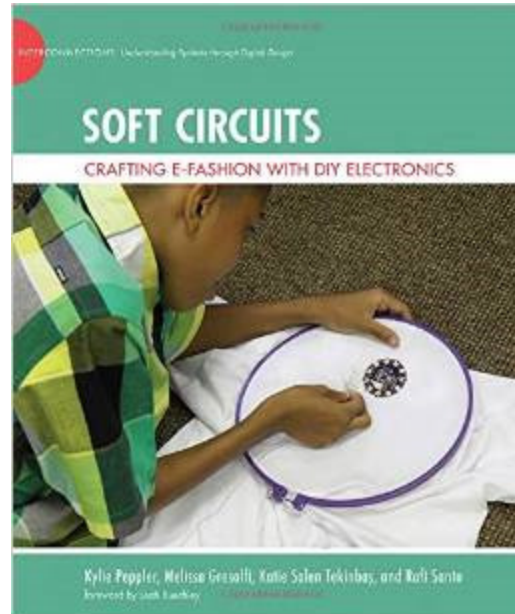
By Byron Connell

On December 31st, the International Costumers' Guild's *Marty Gear Costuming Arts and Sciences Fund* approved ICG member Lisa Ashton's application on behalf of *Miss Lizzy's Traveling Historical Fashion Show* for a grant to support the Show's efforts to increase knowledge of the clothing of the Victorian and early 20th century periods as well as better understanding of their culture and mores, politics and daily life. Ms. Ashton is the Show's founder and curator. This was the Fund's first grant.

The grant, for \$656, will enable Ms. Ashton to participate in the spring 2015 *Civilian Symposium: Mid-19th Century Clothing and Culture* in the Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, area. This will help the Traveling Show to enhance its display of vintage photographs and clothing. As a result, Ms. Ashton will provide docent-led tours of the collection and other educational programming at Costume-Con 33, in Charleston, South Carolina, in May 2015. She also will prepare articles about the collection enhanced by her participation in the Symposium, as well as articles resulting from that participation, for costuming-related journals.

## Book Review

By Kathe Gust



*Soft Circuits : crafting e-fashion with DIY electronics*

by Kylie Peppler, Melissa Gresalfi, Katie Salen Tekinbas, and Rafi Santo.

368 pages, Cambridge, MA : The MIT Press, 2014.

\$19.55 - 28.50 at Amazon

If you ever wanted to try e-Fashion, but were afraid to attempt it because of the difficulty of dealing with electronics, this may be just the book for you.

*Soft Circuits* uses Modkit, an accessible electronics toolkit with LEDs, to teach

middle to high school level students how to make three different projects: e-textile cuffs, "electrici-tee" shirts, and solar-powered backpacks. At the same time, it offers basic instruction in how electronics and connections work.

In partnership with the folks at Sparkfun Electronics, the authors have identified parts kits for all the electronics and tools needed to accomplish each of the projects in the *Soft Circuits* book. A list of links to those kits can be found at the National Writing Project blog:

<http://digitalis.nwp.org/resource/6184>

Not certain you would need a complete book? Take a look at these two additional, related resources you can get for free.

There is an online *Soft Circuits: Workshop Facilitators Guide*

at <http://alumni.media.mit.edu/~emme/guide.pdf> with other activities such as an electronic brooch and bracelet, a light up patch and a quilt project.

And if you just want to try a tiny little project, make a "monster" companion craft piece or patch. Look at the instructions at <http://alumni.media.mit.edu/~emme/monsters.pdf>

## Transformations Cosplay

By Richard Man

As a professional photographer who is married to a costumer, the father of two more costumers, and who has assisted with prop creation and being put into costume on many an occasion, I have been seriously photographing costumers since 2002. I have done official masquerade photoshoots for several Worldcons, Costume Cons and a number of regional SF&F and Anime conventions.

In 2012, I began using a large-format 4x5 film camera for my personal work (“4x5” refers to the dimension in inches of the film negative.) At that size, the negative is about 14 times as large as a traditional 35mm negative (“normal” film size, or “full frame” digital SLR sensor size). In terms of resolution, a 4x5 negative is equal to at least a 60-megapixel image (which is not available in digital for less than \$30K), and the tonal range is still unmatched by anything available from a digital sensor. Combined with the other features available from a large format camera system, these add up to a unique large-format “look” that cannot be matched by smaller cameras. I have printed several very nice 24”x30” photos from scanned 4x5 negatives, and

with professional scanning, much larger prints are possible.

While thinking about how to best combine large-format photography and my love of costume photography, I hit upon the idea of featuring portraits of costumers, both in *and* out of their costumes, in order to better portray the talented artists behind their fantastic creations. Costumers are people involved in a versatile and creative hobby that has actually been around for quite some time, but which has currently been attracting a certain amount of media attention, particularly due to the subgroup who currently refer to themselves as cosplayers. With the surge in popularity of literary & media SF/Fantasy/Comics/Movies/Gaming related events, such as San Diego Comic Con and Anime Expo drawing 100,000+ and 50,000+ attendees over a few days, cosplay has recently become a more mainstream-accepted and popular subculture hobby in America.

While cosplay photographs are now fairly ubiquitous on the Internet, and even show up in the mainstream press (sometimes due to a few outrageous and occasionally quite scantily-clad cosplayers), very little focus has yet been paid to the actual *people* who become involved in costuming. Despite

some media depictions of them as “obsessive fringe weirdos”, costumers / cosplayers typically are regular people who have fairly normal jobs and lives, and who simply find that the costuming hobby offers them a good outlet for their personal artistic and / or theatrical expression.

I call this project “Transformations: Cosplay”. “Transformations” refers to how the cosplayers transform themselves from their “mundane” daily outward appearance to temporarily “become” the characters they portray. (I use the term “cosplayers” and “costumers” interchangeably, as the word “cosplay” is now in the normal lexicon and gets the meaning across.) The costumes I have photographed so far have ranged from Anime cosplay, to historical, to movie/TV recreations, to “original concept”, and everything in between.

This project formally began in Jan 2014 at Anime Los Angeles. Since then, I have met up with costumers at other conventions and various outdoor locations. It is a bit of a challenge to use the large format camera (and an occasional studio flash), as setting up the whole ensemble takes 15 to 30 minutes, and even a shot itself takes a few minutes to set up. It is even more difficult outdoors, as wind can be a problem. The actual exposure is of course very quick, but

the subject has to remain in place without moving during the final preparation for each shot. However, one upside of the long set-up time and the high cost of each exposure is that the costumers seem to appreciate that the process takes a lot of care to get everything just right, and I have found them to be very supportive of both the process and the project itself.

Each sheet of 4x5 color film costs about \$4, and it takes about \$1 worth of photo chemicals to hand-process a negative in my garage darkroom (instead of about \$12 per sheet in a lab). I can only afford to take one or two shots of each pose, so each shot must be prepared carefully. Recently, I ran a "gofundme" fundraiser to help defray the cost of film, and Arisia Inc. (the people behind the Arisia SF&F convention) awarded me a grant to help fund the project. Although the cost of the equipment and consumables is high, I am firmly committed to pursuing this.

My initial goal is to produce at least 30 compelling pairs of images to publish in book format, along with accompanying text from interviews with the costumers. I also plan to contact galleries to see if they may wish to feature selections of the images for large-print display. The project will still not be "complete" at that point, though, as I

wish to photograph costumers from all over the USA and if possible, Canada and even beyond, in order to show how the costuming / cosplay hobby is realized on a more global scale.

As I approach the 12-month mark of this project, I currently have about a dozen pairs of photos that I am quite happy with, although I still have a few costume photos that need accompanying photos of the costumers in their normal "mundane" clothing to be complete. (I will be attending Anime Los Angeles again right after this article is submitted.) Arisia 2015 will also have a special exhibit in their art show featuring 12 of the images printed at 32x40".

In 2015, I hope to venture up to the Portland and the Seattle area. Arizona also has a good number of (ICG) costumers whom I would like to photograph as well. With Costume Con in South Carolina and Worldcon in Washington in 2015, there will hopefully be more opportunities to meet with costumers outside of the California region. Whether I can afford to attend these events remains to be seen, but if I can, I certainly hope to work with some of you!

More photos can be seen at <http://facebook.com/Transformations.CosplayPortraits>. If you are interested in participating

in the project, please contact me at [richard@richardmanphoto.com](mailto:richard@richardmanphoto.com). If you wish to generously contribute to the project, please visit: <http://gofundme.com/TransformationsCosplay>.

Tasu makes most of their costumes, and Ivy



*Tasu and Ivy*



*Tasu and Ivy*

has been playing with wig styling. They have been cosplaying together for over 10 years, and in October 2013, these two best friends got married. Tasu is a hairdresser, and Ivy is a retail manager.

Tasu: "Do cosplay for fun, be with friends. Don't get stressed out."

Ivy: "It's an exciting thing to be able to look back. You have

costumes that are like milestones of you as a person and as a fan. You can see how you have evolved and changed.”

Tasu and Ivy were the first photo I have taken for the project. The initial costume photos were taken at ALA 2014 and the normal clothing shot was initially done in March. However, as the project progress, I have certain look that I want to achieve with the pairing and in October, I managed to photograph them in their normal clothing again.



*Carolyn*

Carolyn had an interesting introduction to the world of costuming. By virtue of a resemblance to Frodo, she was drafted into a Lord of the Rings masquerade

entry. The entry promptly won Best in Show at Baycon; which eventually culminated in the group being invited to an official gala event for Return of the King.

Carolyn is an avid gamer, and frequently costumes in the Extended Star Wars universe. Her day job is working in a woman’s shelter - a real-life “Jedi Knight, if you will.



*Carolyn*

I met Colleen at Anime LA 2014. She is a full time student majoring in art design, and has been going to Anime cons for 5 years. While she makes her own costumes, she calls herself “pretty new” to sewing.



*Colleen*

cosplay is getting it done, wearing it, and becoming the character. If you play the game, Princess Agitha seems to have Asperger’s. She is quirky and seems to be shy... she has “something”, like the positions of her hands. She won’t really make eye contact very much. I have

Asperger’s myself, but it’s not really bad. If people ask, I would tell them... Now that I am older, I can see from her that that’s how I was.”

I love Colleen and her story. It took us getting together 3 more times before I got a normal clothing image that I like. Perseverance pays off.



*Colleen*

Bryan and Mette have won many awards at



*Bryan and Mette*

major convention masquerade competitions. Initially, they did not intend to compete, but were eventually convinced by their friends to share their work onstage.

Mette recalls, "I said: fine, I will do it once..." It turned out to be like trying to eat "just one piece" of chocolate. Bryan says: "You get kind of a 'masquerade high'. It kinds of validate the intense work we put in."

Like many people, they have "stage fright" and a "fear of failing". They typically wear costumes involving masks and suits, which makes it easier for them to "lose" themselves in the characters.



*Bryan and Mette*

Why costuming? Mette says: "I tend to get nerdy - when I get into something, I get all the way. Also, the culture I grew up in (Sweden)

looks at dressing up as a childish thing, so being able to do it here is awesome."

Bryan says: "Why not?" :-) His advice: "Don't start! (laughs) It's like a drug: once you started, you can't stop. You try to get better and better, where does it end?"

Caitlin (cosplaying since 2003) and Julia (cosplaying since 2006) are sisters. Caitlin is a graduate student getting a Master's degree in theater design, and Julia is a playwright living in New York. They have been competing in ALA since 2008 and have matured greatly as costumers in the last 6 years. At ALA 2014, they won Best in Class in Workmanship.



*Caitlin and Julia*

Caitlin: "I started cosplay because I love the characters, and the interactions I have with people at the conventions when they see me dressed up. Then I realized that I enjoy the technical aspect of it. I really enjoy building patterns and taking something 2 dimensional and make it a reality. This means more to me now even though it is still for the love of the media and love of the characters."

Julia: "I started cosplay when Caitlin did. It was the 13 year old younger sister wanting to cosplay because the 16 year old sister was cosplaying, but then I realized I liked the challenge of turning something 2-D into 3-D. It's a lot of problem solving in cosplay. I love turning into the character. My favorite part is when the costume is all done and I put it on and it's like: "Holy Shasta, I really do look like the character!" It's great to meet new friends, and this is my community."



*Caitlin and Julia*

To view a slideshow of Richard's works in progress, please visit: <http://richardmanphoto.com/PICS/TransformationsCosplay-WIP/>

*All photos in this article are courtesy of Richard Man.*

## About the ICG

### **Membership Benefits**

ICG membership benefits include participation in local chapters, Special Interest Groups (SIGs), voting rights, eligibility for grants, online forums, learning and volunteer opportunities, and the newsletter, *International Costumer*.

### **ICG Online**

Visit the ICG website for current information and resources:

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

Join us on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/internationalcostumers>

Join the ICG-D Yahoo! group for lively discussions on costuming-related topics:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/icg-d>

Send comments and suggestions to the ICG board and standing committees:

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## **The International Costumer**

The *International Costumer* newsletter is published bi-monthly by the ICG. The current issue is for members only. Back issues are freely available to the costuming community on the ICG website.

### **Online Submissions**

We welcome short costuming articles, book reviews, event reports, and news items. Submit your copy as rtf, doc, docx or txt files to the International Costumer editor: [icg-newsletter@costume.org](mailto:icg-newsletter@costume.org). All graphics formats are accepted.

### **Contacting the Editor**

Please contact the editor to report problems, or to offer comments and suggestions: [icg-newsletter@costume.org](mailto:icg-newsletter@costume.org).

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