

Exhibit Review

Fabulous Fashions: San Diego Style

The San Diego Historical Society's costume exhibit featuring *Fabulous Fashions: San Diego Style* opened on October 1, 2009, in the Museum of San Diego History to celebrate eighty years of remarkable dresses worn by outstanding San Diegans throughout the city's history. An appreciative and stylish crowd viewed the exhibit designed by Timothy Long, Curator of Costumes at the Chicago History Museum, who created a magical setting with the support and expertise of the society's curatorial staff. San Diego's history was graphically presented with the life-size manikins expertly shaped to show off the elegant formal and casual wear of yesterday's San Diego. Each article of clothing on exhibit was worn by a local San Diegan whose biographical sketch contributes to the story of "who was who" in the city's past.

The San Diego Historical Society's renowned costume collection includes more than 7,000 items, including clothing for women, men, and children together with accessories. The collection ranges from military uniforms to beachwear, from



San Diego Style exhibit showing a 1986 cocktail dress designed by Vicky Tiel on the far right. Photo by Chris Travers.



Left to right: José María Ybarra, David Kahn, Executive Director and Tim Long, Exhibit Designer. Photo by Chris Travers.

Halloween costumes to formal wear. It documents the entire span of San Diego's history. Highlights include late 18th and early 19th century items brought to California by the first settlers and an incredible array of elegant dresses and evening gowns dating from the Gilded Age of the 1870s to the present.

The Historical Society, which began to assemble material as soon as the organization was founded over 80 years ago, has made the costume collection one of San Diego's greatest treasures. Today the Society's holdings represent one of the largest historical costume collections on the West Coast. New material is constantly being added through the generosity and interest, of San Diegans. The exhibit will continue until April 1, 2010.

Because of the glamour associated with costumes, exhibitions featuring selections from the collection have been extremely popular. Costumes are also important historical documents; they chronicle changing tastes and values and help us understand our collective past. The San Diego Historical Society Costume Council, celebrating its twentieth year, helped preserve and share this important collection with the people of San Diego and the world. The Council, founded in



Anne Jones, a Costume Council founder and Burl Stiff, long-time columnist for The San Diego Union. Photo by Chris Travers.

September 1989, was modeled after similar organizations at the Chicago History Museum, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and Houston Museum of Fine Arts. When the idea was introduced, a group of nearly fifty San Diego women and organizations stepped forward and contributed \$1,000 each to get the organization started. A majority of these individuals remain involved with the Costume Council today. They are among those who are responsible for organizing the Costume Council's 20th anniversary benefit *Fabulous Fashions: San Diego Style*. Many loaned dresses for the Society's benefit gala on September 17 that helped support the exhibit and are also members of the Costume Council's current Steering Committee. These include: Tommi Adelizzi, Claudia Allen, Chris Andrews, Elizabeth Bergen, Linda Canada, Fran Golden, Ann Jones, Bess Lambron, Yvonne Larsen, Lynn Mooney, Pat O'Connor, Kay Porter, Mary Sadler, Judy Smith, Linda Spuck, Janet Sutter, Joy Urich, Carolyn Waggoner, and Nell Waltz.

Over the years the Costume Council has raised funds to help preserve the collection and support major exhibitions such as *Bustles to Bikinis*, *Zandra Rhodes*, *Scaasi*, and *Arlene Fisch*. In celebration of the Costume Council's 20th anniversary we would like to pay special tribute to those pioneers who included:

Alice Almeraz, Betty Bass, Mary Fair Berglund, Jeanne Brace, Kathleen Buoy-master, Coolley Carley, Kathryn Colachis, Alice Cramer, Ruth Crawford, Martha Culbertson, Bea Epsten, Annette Ford, Martha Gafford, Anne Gilchrist, Ann Gotfredson, Dottie Mae Haggerty, Jody Honnen, Dorothy Johnston, Anne Jones, Pattie Ladner, Yvonne Larsen, Jeanne K. Lawrence, Karon Luce, Betty Mabee, Barbara McColl, Virginia Monday, Suzzi Moore, Beverley Muchnic, Kathryn Murphy, Neiman Marcus, Marie Olesen, Marilyn Pavel, Kay Porter, Lois Roon, Margaret Sell, Marsha Sewell, Maggie Silverman, Judith Smith, Mary Smyk, Jean Stern, Janet Sutter, Sally B. Thornton, Dixie Unruh, Barbara Walbridge, Dorene Whitney, D'Neane Wilkinson, Carolyn Yorston, Diana Young and Marilyn Young.



Costume Council Committee Members L to R (Back) Virginia Monday, Barbara ZoBell, Jeff Dunigan, Kate Adams. L to R (Front) Judy Smith, Katy Dessent. Photo by J. Dhein.