

Reading Public Museum
500 Museum Road, Reading, PA 19611

Ronald C. Roth, Director and CEO

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****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****
MAGICAL HOLLYWOOD COSTUME COLLECTION
PREMIERES AT THE READING PUBLIC MUSEUM

Reading, Pa. – July 28, 2009 — A dazzling new exhibition, *The Magic of Hollywood: The Gene London Costume Collection*, opens at the Reading Public Museum on Saturday, October 3, 2009 and will continue through Sunday, May 30, 2010. A special “red carpet” Opening Night Reception will be held on Friday evening, October 2, with details to be announced soon.

This exhibition features over 100 costumes created by the film industry’s greatest designers. Costume wizards like Adrian at MGM gave Greta Garbo, Joan Crawford, Jean Harlow, Jeanette MacDonald, Norma Shearer, Lana Turner, Hedy Lamarr and others their “look.” Other designers represented in this exhibition include Edith Head, Elsa Schiaparelli, Walter Plunkett, Orry Kelly, Jean Louis, Helen Rose, Halston, and Bob Mackie.

Sean Connery’s warrior outfit from *Robin and Marian*, Tyrone Power’s matador costume from *Blood and Sand*, Fredric March’s jeweled tunic costume from the *Affairs of Cellini* and many other extraordinary men’s costumes will be a unique feature of this exhibition. Also on display is Michael Jackson’s fabulous prince outfit worn for a 1985 photo shoot.

This world-class collection was assembled by beloved Philadelphia-area TV personality and fashion designer Gene London. As a leading collector of vintage clothing and couture, he is a source for designers who purchase garments from his collection for inspiration. For example, Jean Paul Gautier’s current collection pays homage to old

Hollywood Glamour. Another client, Dolce and Gabbana's current line is a tribute to Marilyn Monroe.

London hosted a popular daily children's show seen on WCAU-TV from 1958 to 1977. On his award-winning *Cartoon Corners General Store*, he was producer, director, writer and star drawing upon his many talents and charismatic personality to create a magical environment where he told stories, myths, folklore, and illustrated them on his drawing board.

His Saturday-morning hour-and-a-half TV show was top-rated in its time slot, and had a continuing storyline using local actors who appeared with him in weekly dramas like *The Wizard of Oz*, *My Fair Lady*, *Planet of the Apes* and others. One of the show's highlights was the haunted house, Quigley Mansion. London's rating demographics indicated that senior citizens enjoyed the program as much as children did, and famous stars of stage and screen such as Kirk Douglas, Lucille Ball, Myrna Loy and Mary Tyler Moore would often guest on the show.

It was Joan Crawford who started Gene on his amazing collection by sending him outfits from her screen and personal wardrobes, among them her shoulder pads. Gene's good friend, Albert Boscov, introduced him to Reading and encouraged him to join the alliance to bring films and film making to the area. London said, "The city of Reading and its environs is tailor-made for films and television shows. Centre Park, for example, is like the set from *Meet Me in St. Louis* and is just one of the hundreds of locations this city boasts."

London, who serves as co-curator for the exhibition (along with Scott A. Schweigert, the Museum's Art Curator), is involved with all phases, including a related film festival, costume seminar and other programming to be announced. He has designed costumes for movies, Broadway, television and celebrity clients, and, in 1989 was chosen by the Ted Turner organization to create exact replica costumes for the fiftieth-anniversary collection of *Gone with the Wind* in Atlanta.

His fashion show production, *The Search for Scarlett*, tells the story of the leading ladies who wanted to play Scarlett. London also designed Scarlett's gown used for publicity for the Random House sequel. This gown, also worn by Alicia Silverstone, will be included in this exhibition.

Recently, London traveled the globe for Mikimoto Pearls with exhibits on Marilyn Monroe and Grace Kelly. His love of Hollywood fueled his passion for collecting costumes. He added, "The Golden Age of Hollywood touched moviegoers the world over and gave us a magic place where dreams came true. The stars were memorable, as were the beautiful costumes they wore. I am thrilled to share my collection with you to enjoy."

Throughout the extended run of this exhibition, specific display areas will be changed periodically, with each featuring a legendary star or movie as the theme. Additional programming will be scheduled at the Museum and The Planetarium, all related thematically to Hollywood and fashion. As these special events are announced, they will be posted on the Museum's Web site, www.readingpublicmuseum.org.

Ronald C. Roth, Director and CEO of the Reading Public Museum commented, "This exhibition will appeal to many people for many reasons. Not only is there a fascination for the costumes and glamour of the movie industry, but many adults grew up watching Gene's TV show, and were inspired by his creativity and enthusiasm." Roth added, "This exhibition offers many opportunities for us to partner with our community on related programming. It's one of the most entertaining exhibitions ever presented at the Museum."

This exhibition is underwritten by the Marlin and Ginger Miller Exhibition Endowment. The Reading Public Museum is supported in part by grants from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

The Reading Public Museum is located at 500 Museum Road, Reading, PA 19611. Hours are Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Friday 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.; and Sunday 12 to 5 p.m. Admission to the Museum is: \$7 adults (18-59), \$5 children/seniors/students (w/ID) and free to Members and children under four years old. Web: www.readingpublicmuseum.org.

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Images available soon – Contact michael.anderson@readingpublicmuseum.org with request and specs