

CLOCK FROCK ROCKS

There were exciting changes afoot in the *Eternity* gallery in March this year. Friends will be familiar with the fabulous Mardi Gras frock 'Lucille Balls' that has graced the 'Thrill' display at the back of the gallery since opening day. 'Lucille Balls' has been a popular attraction within the gallery and the creator of the frock, Ron Muncaster, a popular story with the public.

Ron has played a significant part in the history of Sydney's Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. Ron is known as 'The Queen of Mardi Gras' and his costumes are a highly anticipated part of each parade. They have won more awards than those of any other entrant. Ron's costumes often take over four months to create. As soon as the glitter settles from one parade, planning for the next year begins. Ron says 'I get terrible nightmares sometimes that it's already Mardi Gras and my costume's not ready. I dream that. I couldn't think of anything worse!'

In March, 'Lucille Balls' had reached the end of its safe display period. The Museum approached Ron to see if one of his other costumes might be available. Ron agreed to lend one of his best known creations, 'Old Mother Time'.

'Old Mother Time' was installed the week before Mardi Gras. Ron travelled down to Canberra for the event and was thrilled to see one of his favourite costumes in the spotlight. This glistening creation won Best Costume in the 1995 Mardi Gras parade. The costume transforms the wearer into a huge moving clock. Each of the three levels of skirt revolves in opposite directions, imitating the movement of giant cogs. As the wearer walks, the sequined wand on display is swung as if it is a giant pendulum. The costume was conceived as a moving, sculptural allegory of the significance of time in the age of HIV/AIDS.

The de-installation of 'Lucille Balls' and installation of 'Old Mother Time' was a full day's work as Ron and our Registration and Conservation teams fine-tuned the display. As you walk into the gallery your eye is now drawn to this remarkable creation. Ron's costumes and story provide the Museum with a wonderful window into one of Australia's most significant and colourful cultural festivals. 🕒

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Photo: Dragi Markovic