



1008 Wall Street  
La Jolla, California 92037  
Phone (858) 454-5872  
Fax (858) 454-5835

## News Release

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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#### PRESS CONTACT:

Jennifer Pyun, Public Relations Manager  
[jpyun@lathenaeum.org](mailto:jpyun@lathenaeum.org)  
858.454.5872

## **VERDI'S AIDA THROUGH THE EYES OF ZANDRA RHODES**

**On view in the Athenaeum's Main & Rotunda Galleries  
APRIL 10 - MAY 15, 2010**

Opera and fashion aficionados turned out in droves as hundreds of adoring fans brought the Athenaeum Music & Arts Library's latest exhibition, ***Verdi's Aida Through the Eyes of Zandra Rhodes***, to life at the opening artist reception with Zandra on the evening of Friday, April 9. The opening was replete with glamour and excitement. Gleaming gold mannequins draped in rich, hand-painted textiles, crowned with weighty bejeweled headdresses towered over the crowd. Guests were treated to an exclusive behind-the-scenes look at sketchbooks, costume drawings, and outfits designed by the renowned fashion designer in a onetime exhibition, on view in the Main and Rotunda Galleries through May 15.

Several of Zandra's sketches, dresses, scarves, and hand-stitched leather purses sold within the first hour of their public unveiling at the reception. Many more uniquely signature Zandra designs, specially priced, will be available for purchase throughout the duration of the exhibition at the Athenaeum.

In her latest forte as costume and set designer for Giuseppe Verdi's grand opera *Aida*, the internationally acclaimed fashion extraordinaire shares her bold, technicolor vision of Egyptian-inspired designs. In a most exciting development, San Diego Opera has announced plans to present the very costumes currently on view in the Athenaeum's exhibition, in a full scale production of *Aida* in April 2013. Originally produced by the Houston Grand Opera, *Aida* opened to critical acclaim at the English National Opera in 2007, with an encore production in 2008. The San Francisco Opera recently announced a gala opening performance of *Aida*, featuring Zandra's designs, in September 2010. This sneak preview highlights a portion of the more than 150 costumes that took Zandra over two and a half years to complete. Costumes, banners, and headdresses in the Athenaeum's exhibition have been kindly provided by the San Francisco Opera, on loan until they make their debut again to opera audiences later this year.

Zandra's concept originated from a trip she made to Egypt in 1986. She became fascinated with Egypt's color palette of turquoise, gold, orange and ultramarine; the spectacular jewelry and the pleated figure hugging dresses of the pharaohs. Her travel sketches became the basis for a collection of fabric prints in her 1987 Spring/Summer show. Zandra drew on this work as well as trips to the British, Victoria and Albert and Metropolitan Museums, and the sketches of Egypt commissioned by Napoleon to design the sets and costumes for *Aida*.

In conjunction with the exhibition, the Athenaeum is proud to present a **special lecture** titled, ***Egyptian Fantasy World of Aida***, led by Zandra in the Athenaeum's Joan & Irwin Jacobs Music

Room on **Tuesday, April 20 at 7:30 p.m.** Always entertaining and candid, Zandra will discuss her fascinating journey to Egypt and her creative process in the design of the costumes and set for *Aida*. Admission to the lecture is \$10 for Athenaeum members and \$15 for the public.

The following week on **Thursday, April 29 at 7:30 p.m.**, Zandra will host the ***A List: Dreamz and Seams***, the Athenaeum's young professionals group. A special live musical performance with rising San Diego band Dreamtiger will provide the visceral soundscapes for the dreamy affair. Admission is free for A List members, \$10 in advance, \$12 at the door, and includes food and drink, courtesy of the La Jolla Brew House.

Recognized as one of the new wave of British designers who put London at the forefront of the international fashion scene in the 1970s, Zandra's designs have always been clear, creative statements, dramatic but graceful, bold but feminine. Zandra has designed for the late Diana, Princess of Wales, and continues to design for the royal family and celebrities around the world. A longtime friend of the Athenaeum, Zandra features limited edition sketches of her designs as part of the library's permanent collection.

The Athenaeum Music & Arts Library is open Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., and Wednesday 10 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. For further information, please call 858.454.5872 or email [jpyun@ljathenaeum.org](mailto:jpyun@ljathenaeum.org). Visit our website at [www.ljathenaeum.org](http://www.ljathenaeum.org).

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