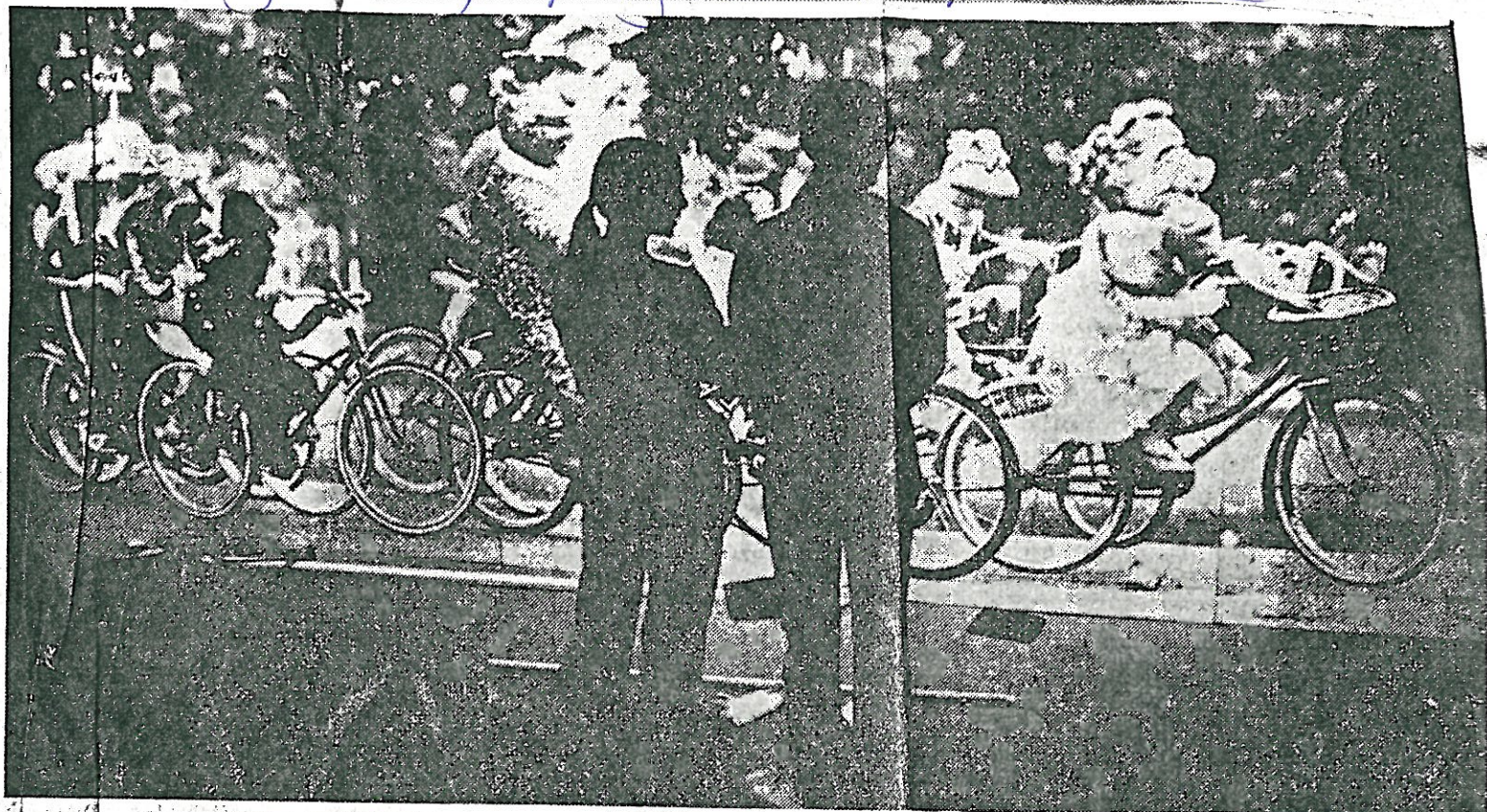


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to: Anne Tribble; Elaine Gurian

Morning Union, Springfield May 21, 1982



Union Photos by John Suchock

Miss Piggy leads a procession of bicycling Muppets on a mural at the current Muppet exhibit in Boston.

Muppet clan hoofs it to Boston

By MARSHA TZOUMAS
Union Staff

No one ever expected Miss Piggy to be a star. She was just another chorus pig, one of many that debuted in "Planet of the Pigs."

The problem was, she simply refused to stay in the background. "She pushed her way to front stage, sang a solo, attacked Kermit, and has never been the same since," said Leslee Asch, Muppet-maker and designer of a Muppet exhibit that opens today in Boston.

That, of course, was but one of many Muppet success stories, as Jim Henson's bizarre society of monsters, frogs and whatnots grew bigger than life and took on international stardom.

Today, even as we speak, Miss Piggy holds court beneath a cherry tree matched to her

gown at the Children's Museum on the Wharf in Boston, in a traveling exhibit that has drawn more than one million adults and children to museums in other cities.

On view today through July 5, "The Art of the Muppets" captures whatever it is about this immense puppet clan that once touched the imagination of 235 million weekly viewers of "The Muppet Show."

Only Statler and Waldorf — the testy old stuffed shirts who grumped their way through other Muppets' TV performances from a balcony theater box — could roll their eyes and heckle through this exhibit.

From Sleazys and Slinkies, Wacky Stacks and pink polyurethane, turquoise boas and foam have come hundreds of outrageous Muppet characters over 25 years. And they're all present, from the early Big Bird, created for

Sesame Street, to the toothy, pink, warted Queen Peuta of the stinking world of Gorch (which extended, as you may know, "from the rotting forest to the stagnant mud flat.")

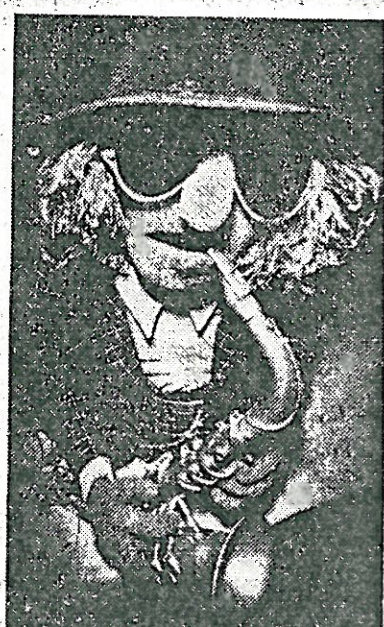
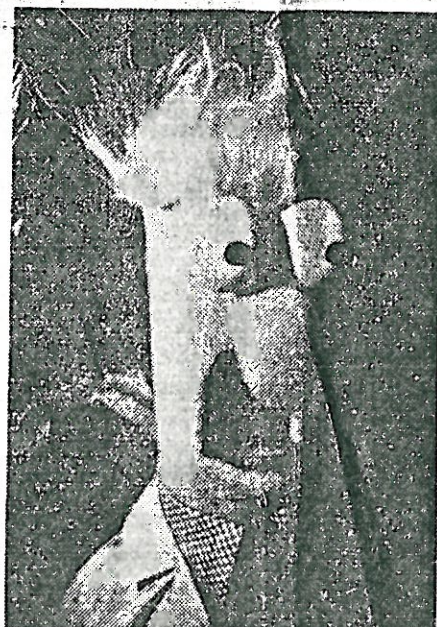
Kermit's laid-back "Hi-oh," comes up in the background, as a tape of Henson's favorite Muppet scenes rolls on television monitors in a side room of the exhibit.

"The question is," says Kermit — who's good-natured style approximates Henson's own — "Can the frog dance?" And he proceeds with an incredibly perfect tap dance performance viewed from the waist up, which convinces you that yeah, this tuxedoed frog can hoof it.

Off-camera, as on, the Muppets have that same charm that somehow seduces you into

See **MUPPETS**
Page 32

Animal (chained, with drumsticks), the perpetually perturbed Beaker and Zoot (on the sack) make their appearance at a traveling Muppets exhibit.



MUPPETS

Continued from Page 27

believing they're quite alive. Even without the tricks of the television trade that allow hand-manipulated Muppets to fly through the air and ride bicycles, such intricate detail as the "scrimshaw" on Ploobis' tusks and the spectacles on a space-age pig animates these characters.

"Real" eyes, ordered from a taxidermist for the befuddled creatures of Gorch (stars of "NBC Saturday Night Live"), look eerily real, set as they



Most of the Muppets, even today, are intentionally abstract, unidentifiable by race or species.



are into pink or yellow wrinkled "skin" that's topped with feathered hair and rankled lace clothing.

Along one wall is a collage of cartoon eyes, plus green fingers, rear-view frogs and fur fabric labelled "Dawg dormant." And somehow, the simple addition of sunglasses to a nose-like lump

of burlap brings the merest beginnings of a Muppet nearly to life.

Large photographs interspersed with snap-on paws and plastic chickens illustrate the workings of the workshop, from the drawing of a cartoonish character to the dressing of the *cochon fatale*, Miss Piggy. ("Kissy, Kissy, Love, Miss Piggy," she has signed it.

The Muppet story began in 1954, when Henson his and wife, Jane, were at the University of Maryland. Their first Muppets, called "Sam and Friends," made it to late-night television, and that's also where the exhibit begins — with the cast of a five-minute, offbeat puppet show for adults aired on a Washington, D.C., television station.

Most of those original characters are unknown today, except for Kermit. Formerly a green spring coat belonging to Henson's mother, Kermit has survived to the age of 27, and has evolved into his present-day, fine-flipperd self.

Like most Muppets, Kermit was not identifiable by species when first born. He was simply Kermit Frane, a lizard-like character. Only later, during a production called "The Frog Prince," did Kermit grow flippers and profess his "latent froghood."

But most of the Muppets, even today, are intentionally abstract, unidentifiable by race or species. Though there are now voyeuristic rats and even "representational humans" (Statler and Waldorf), most of the long line of "monstrous Muppet things" remain "in simple and pure form.

"We try not to copy directly from life," said Ms. Asch. "We boil it down to its essence and then expand on it."

For second-string Muppet players, there are even generic puppets called "Whatnots" and "Anything Muppets." Coded by color, basic characters like "Anything Muppet, Fat Blue," for instance, await a walk-on part.

The technical aspect of puppetry is illustrated, as well, and wall-board notes describe the finagling necessary for the man who inhabits Big Bird: one hand up to work the mouth, one hand out to flap the wings, eyes on the closed-circuit mon-

itor in Big Bird's stomach, to avoid bumping into Bert or Ernie.

Yet even when the performers are visible; even after the tricks and camera angles are explained; even after Dawg is exposed for the brown rug that he really is; even so, the draw of the Muppets is mysterious.

And, closed into a room with such fantasy characters, adults and children alike start as a three-year-old wanders past an enormous, hairy Sweetums, jumps back, and yells, "Yikes! He's gonna eat Kermit!"

□ □ □

"The Art of the Muppets, produced by Henson Associates, is open Thursdays and Fridays from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. and weekends and holidays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Children's Museum on the Wharf, Boston. Price is \$3 for children over the age of 3 and senior citizens, \$4 for adults. School groups with reservations are admitted at half-price.

EVENING GAZETTE
WORCESTER, MA
D. 92,743

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Newscl

for children

Kermit and Friends — The Children's Museum is "putting on the frog" with Jim Henson's family including Kermit, Miss Piggy, Big Bird and 100 other Muppet creations from *Sesame Street*, *the Muppet Show*, *Saturday Night Live*, *The Great Muppet Caper* and *Emmet*

Otter's Jug-Band Christmas. Opens Friday, through July 5. \$3 children, \$4 adults. 10 a.m.-9 p.m. Tuesday-Friday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday, Sunday and holidays, closed Monday except May 31 and July 5. The Children's Museum, 300 Congress St. at Museum Wharf, Boston.

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At the special preview of the "Art of the Muppets" that opens May 21st at the Children's Museum were Laura and Jeffrey Mahn. Behind them are the "Anything Muppets" with Kristin Mahn.

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It's tea time!

...y and all the Muppet characters are
at the Children's Museum, Boston
called, "Art of the Muppets." The
ts today and will run through July 5
ys through Fridays from 10 a.m. to
and on Saturdays, Sundays, and

holidays, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The museum
is closed Mondays except for May 31 and July
5. Miss Piggy's costume was made for this
Boston show. For further information,
contact the museum.

MAY 21 1982

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Newspaper

Meet muppets in Boston



Kermit

BOSTON — The Children's Museum is putting on the frog with the original Kermit, Miss Piggy and 100 other Muppets characters from "Sesame Street," "The Muppet Show," "Saturday Night Live" and "The Great Muppet Caper" in a special exhibition on view May 21 through July 5.

Only the glass will stand between visitors and some of today's most imaginative folk heroes as Ernie and Bert, Scrod, Oscar the Grouch and Emmet Otter's Jug Band.

"The Art of the Muppets" exhibit also includes life-size photomurals illustrating the techniques used to bring the

Muppets to life, and videotape excerpts highlight favorite moments from television shows and movies featuring the Muppets.

Hours are Tuesday-Friday a.m.-9 p.m.; Saturday, Sunday and holidays, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Closed Mondays except May and July 5.

Timed tickets may be purchased in advance or at door. Prices are \$3 for children ages 3-15 and senior citizens for adults. Friday evenings 5 p.m. half price for all.

For reservations only, call 7054. For information call the What's Up Line. 426-8855

DOVER-SHERBORN
SUBURBAN PRESS
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MUPPET ART — Polly Kiesel (left) and Nancy Stover, both of Sherborn, and members of the Museum Associates, are setting up the Muppets Shop for “The Art

of the Muppets” exhibit at the Children’s Museum, May 21-July 5. The Muppets Shop proceeds will go to benefit the Children’s Museum.

LEXINGTON MINUTEMAN
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An "Art of the Muppets" exhibit will be on display at the Children's Museum, 300 Congress St., Boston from May 21 through July 5. Among those setting up the Muppets shop for the event is Chandler Woodland of Carlisle, second from right.

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An "Art of the Muppets" exhibit will be on display at the Children's Museum, 300 Congress St., Boston from May 24 through July 5. Among those setting up the Muppets shop for the event is Chandler Woodland of Carlisle, second from right.

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An "Art of the Muppets" exhibit will be on display at the Children's Museum, 300 Congress St., Boston from May 21 through July 5. Among those setting up the Muppets shop for the event is Chandler Woodland of Carlisle, second from right.

CONCORD JOURNAL
LEXINGTON, MA.
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An "Art of the Muppets" exhibit will be on display at the Children's Museum, 300 Congress St., Boston from May 21 through July 5. Among those setting up the Muppets shop for the event is Chandler Woodland of Carlisle, second from right.