Phoenix Art Museum

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PHOENIX ART MUSEUM PRESENTS GIORGIO DI SANT' ANGELO

First Ever Museum Exhibition Showcases Designer's Innovation and Influence

PHOENIX (May 31, 2011) – Phoenix Art Museum's Fashion Design Department is pleased to present *Giorgio di Sant' Angelo*, the first ever retrospective to highlight the extraordinary ingenuity of American designer Giorgio di Sant' Angelo. The winner of two Coty Awards and two Council of Fashion Designers of America honors, Sant' Angelo's notable three-decade career generated a wide array of collections, including *Gypsy* (1969) and *Natives of the Americas* (1970), all of which were innovative for their pioneering use of stretch fabrics and powerful expression of the era. Featuring more than 40 ensembles and accessories, the exhibition spans the late 1960s through the early 1990s and provides a stunning overview of Sant' Angelo's influence and legacy. *Giorgio di Sant' Angelo* opens on September 17, 2011 and runs through February 12, 2012.

"Sant' Angelo was an artist with the exceptional ability to see beyond the established fashion norms, creating designs that were revolutionary in every sense – from the fabric, to the cut, to his interpretation of cultural influences. His dynamic creativity defined him as a designer and his ingenious use of stretch fabrics went beyond high fashion to influence the look of mainstream clothing," commented exhibition curator, Dennita Sewell. "This exhibition brings to new light the magnitude of Sant' Angelo's influence and his continued impact on fashion designers and stylists working today."

Giorgio di Sant' Angelo is drawn from Phoenix Art Museum's extensive fashion design archive, the Texas Fashion Collection, UCLA archives and private collections. In addition, the exhibition will feature never-released, original footage of runway shows and interviews, photographs and sketch books.

Exhibition Overview

Giorgio di Sant' Angelo (1933-1989) rose to prominence during the late 1960s with his exuberant and colorful accessories and collections. With an eye for fantasy, Sant' Angelo created expressive collections that merged his own Latin upbringing with gypsy, Aztec, American Indian and Asian influences among others. Eclectic mixes of vibrant fabrics with rich ornamentation were combined in free-body designs to reflect his ideas of modern sensuality. By reversing the role of stretch fabrics from innerwear to outerwear, he revealed the shape of the natural body as a modern fashion fundamental. "Silhouette as we've known it, as something imposed by fashion is finished. The only silhouette for 1971 is the body," he proclaimed.

Throughout the 1970s, Sant' Angelo's designs became more streamlined to reflect the changing times and the active lifestyle of the modern woman. Easy to pack, easy to fit, easy to wear his clothes were both contemporary and practical. Always a step ahead of the fashion industry, Sant' Angelo's very feminine collections of the 1980s had a soft—edge, mixing gossamer weight stretch fabrics with lace and chiffon in

layered body-aware designs that transformed with the movement and individuality of the wearer. The body suit was the foundation upon which he built layers such as the sarong skirt in a vibrant rainbow of colors.

Born Count Jorge Alberto Imperatrice di Sant' Angelo e Ratti di Desio in Florence, Italy, he was raised in Argentina and Brazil and trained as an architect and industrial designer in Italy. He studied art, ceramics and sculpture in Spain and France, under Pablo Picasso among others. In 1962, he was awarded an animation fellowship at Walt Disney Studios in California but soon relocated to New York City and began freelancing in a wide range of design areas including industrial, textile, interiors and jewelry. His experimental Lucite jewelry and accessories caught the attention of *Vogue* editor Diana Vreeland who commissioned him to style and create works for fashion editorials. In 1967, Sant' Angelo collaborated with photographer Richard Avedon to create the now iconic image of Twiggy with a flower drawn on her eye that ran on the cover of the July issue of *Vogue*. His fashion career came to the fore with the July 1968 issue of *Vogue* which featured an eight page editorial of model Veruschka, his lifelong muse, photographed by Franco Rubartelli in the Arizona desert. Sant' Angelo clothed her by wrapping yards of colorful fabrics, fur and ropes in looks that defined the color and texture of the nomadic hippy look in high fashion. Reacting against the boxy shapes of established fashion, Sant' Angelo's clothes presented a new fluidity and flattering sensuality in fashion. His private clients included celebrities such as Lena Horne, Mick Jagger and Diana Ross who were attracted to Sant' Angelo's exaggerated, glamorous and highly original designs and his youthful passion for life.

Sant' Angelo was known to say, "I am not a fashion designer but an artist who works in fashion—an engineer of color and form." His wide reach across design areas reflected his myriad of talents and viewpoint of fashion as a total lifestyle. He was among the first designers to encompass elements in home furnishings and environmental fragrances which are now industry standards.

"Phoenix Art Museum has a long tradition of celebrating designers who have made significant contributions to the history of fashion," commented Sewell. "It is a privilege for the Museum to be the first to showcase Sant' Angelo's substantial career and I believe also fitting, particularly because this region deeply captivated the designer and the photo shoot in the Arizona desert is synonymous with his revolutionary design aesthetic."

Exhibition Details

This exhibition is organized by Phoenix Art Museum and is presented in the Kelly Ellman Fashion Design Gallery September 17, 2011 through February 12, 2012.

Admission to the exhibition is included in general museum admission, which is \$10 for adults, \$8 for senior citizens (65+), \$8 for full-time college students with ID, \$4 for children ages 6-17 and free for children under 6 and for museum members.

Phoenix Art Museum is located in downtown Phoenix at the corner of Central and McDowell Road. Museum Hours are Wednesday, 10:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m., Thursday thru Saturday, 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. and Sunday, Noon - 5:00 p.m. The museum will be closed on Mondays, Tuesdays and major holidays. Admission is free on Wednesdays from 3:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. and for everyone on First Fridays, 6:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.

About the Fashion Design Collection

Founded in 1966, Phoenix Art Museum's fashion design collection is notable for its quality and comprehensiveness and is comprised of more than 5,000 objects of American and European men's, women's and children's dress and accessories dating from the late 17th century to the present. The Museum organizes three exhibitions a year in the Kelly Ellman Fashion Design Gallery featuring objects from the permanent

collection as well as international fashion houses, collectors and museums. Phoenix Art Museum is one of only a handful of art museums in the country with a long and continuous active fashion program.

About Phoenix Art Museum

Phoenix Art Museum is the Southwest's premier destination for world-class visual arts. Popular international exhibitions are shown along side the Museum's outstanding collection of more than 18,000 works of American, Asian, European, Latin American, Western American, modern and contemporary art, and fashion design. A community epicenter for fifty years, Phoenix Art Museum presents festivals, live performances, independent art films and educational programs that enlighten, entertain and stimulate. Visitors also enjoy PhxArtKids an interactive space for children, vibrant photography exhibitions through the Museum's landmark partnership with the Center for Creative Photography, the lushly landscaped Sculpture Garden, dining at Arcadia Farms at Phoenix Art Museum, and shopping at The Museum Store.

To learn more about Phoenix Art Museum, visit <u>PhxArt.org</u>, or call the 24-hour recorded information line at (602) 257-1222.

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