



EXHIBITION FACT SHEET

Overview

The Jim Henson Exhibition explores Henson's groundbreaking work for film and television and his transformative impact on popular culture. It reveals how Henson and his team of builders, performers, and writers brought to life the enduringly popular worlds of *The Muppet Show*, *Sesame Street*, *Fraggle Rock*, *The Dark Crystal*, and *Labyrinth*. It also includes material from Henson's lesser known and experimental film projects, presenting Henson as a restlessly creative performer, filmmaker, and technical innovator.

The exhibition features more than 300 artifacts related to Henson's unparalleled career, including 47 puppets, character sketches, storyboards, scripts, photographs, and iconic costumes. Film and television clips and behind-the-scenes footage are presented on 23 monitors and 3 large-scale projections throughout, plus 2 video installations at entry and exit. Two interactive experiences allow visitors to try their hand at puppeteering on screen and designing a puppet character. The exhibition is meant to be enjoyed by audiences of all ages, and is not oriented specifically for children.

The Jim Henson Exhibition is organized by Barbara Miller, Curator of the Collection and Exhibitions. Wendell Walker is the Director of Production and Design. Creative Direction & Exhibition Design by COLLINS | NY & SF.

Museum of the Moving Image organized *The Jim Henson Exhibition* in close collaboration with the Henson family, The Jim Henson Legacy, and The Jim Henson Company, and in cooperation with Sesame Workshop and The Muppets Studio.

Exhibition Dates (ongoing)

The Jim Henson Exhibition opened Saturday, July 22, 2017 and will be on permanent view at Museum of the Moving Image. Objects will change over time, but the story of the exhibition will remain the same.

Admission

\$15 adults, \$11 seniors (ages 65+) and students (ages 18+), \$9 youth (ages 3–17)
Free for Museum members and children under 3. Admission to *The Jim Henson Exhibition* is included with general Museum admission. **Free admission every Friday, 4:00–8:00 p.m.**

Museum Hours

Wednesday–Thursday: 10:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m.
Friday: 10:30 a.m.–8:00 p.m. (free admission: 4:00 p.m.–8:00 p.m.)
Saturdays–Sundays: 10:30 a.m.–6:00 p.m.
Closed: Mondays (except for select holiday openings)

Exhibition Sections and Highlights

The Jim Henson Exhibition is organized into the following sections:

Threshold immerses visitors in a flood of images from Jim Henson's diverse body of work as they enter the exhibition. On a set of monitors that forms a large, seamless canvas, brief clips featuring iconic puppet characters and moments from Henson's lesser-known works signal that the exhibition will offer familiar favorites and surprising revelations. Another aspect of the entry experience is a "wall" of twelve puppets just past the wall of screens.

Introducing Jim Henson is a short section that offers biographical background about Henson, and looks at his influences and development as a visual artist and performer. Highlights include:

- Comics created by Henson as a young teenager
- Kermit the Frog puppet and the microphone headband that Henson used when he puppeteered
- 1940s television showing clips of comedian Ernie Kovacs and *Kukla, Fran and Ollie*

Early Works looks at Henson's first productions for television and film in the 1950s and 60s, in which his unbridled imagination, wit, and capacity for creative innovation were established. Highlights include:

- The "Perform a Puppet on Screen" interactive, which gives visitors an opportunity to watch themselves perform a puppet on a television monitor
- Yorick puppet from Henson's first television series, *Sam and Friends* (1955-1961)
- Clips and puppets from Henson's television commercials in the 1950s and 1960s
- Design sketches, scripts, clips, and a puppet for Rowlf, the first Muppet "star"

Experiments considers the film, TV commercial, and other projects that Henson worked on in the mid- to late-1960s, a period when he considered himself more of an experimental filmmaker than a puppeteer. Highlights include:

- Material related to *Cyclia*, an unrealized immersive nightclub, including film clips projected onto a faceted surface, suggesting the effect Henson intended for the club
- Notes, storyboard, and clip from *Time Piece* (1965)
- Annotated editing script for the documentary *Youth 68* (1968)

Sesame Street explores Henson's work on the groundbreaking educational series, including the development of new puppet characters, short live-action and animated films, and the explosion of related licensed merchandise. Highlights include:

- The "Design an Anything Muppet Character" interactive experience, which begins with a short video featuring Henson puppet-builder Rollie Krewson demonstrating how she designs "Anything Muppet" characters for Sesame Street. Visitors select facial features and accessories for an "Anything Muppet" form, and can see what their character looks like on screen
- Big Bird, Cookie Monster, Elmo, and Prairie Dawn puppets, along with specialized equipment used by puppeteers to perform these characters

- Storyboard for “counting film” created by Henson for the first season of the series

The Muppets features material from *The Muppet Show* (1976-1981) and Muppet feature films. Highlights include:

- Puppets created for two pilots for *The Muppet Show* on ABC in 1974 and 1975, including The Swedish Chef, Statler, Waldorf, and Zoot
- Set design material for *The Muppets Take Manhattan* (1984)
- Projection of all 120 episodes of *The Muppet Show* playing simultaneously
- Miss Piggy puppet, with costume sketches and development art for her character

Immersive Worlds explores the creative and technical innovations that Henson and his collaborators pioneered during production of the imaginary worlds of *Fraggle Rock* (1983-1986), *The Dark Crystal* (1982), and *Labyrinth* (1986). Highlights include:

- “Ritual Master” Skeksis puppet from *The Dark Crystal*
- Costumes for Jareth and Sarah from *Labyrinth*
- Uncle Travelling Matt, Cantus, and Gobo puppets from *Fraggle Rock*
- Concept art and development notes for *Fraggle Rock*

Looking Ahead is a small section that looks at the television and film projects Henson worked on between 1985 and his death in 1990, including the development of the first digital puppet character. Highlights include:

- “Waldo” - a radio-controlled remote puppeteering device
- Henson’s shooting script for “The Heartless Giant,” an episode of *The Storyteller*

Legacy is a video installation at the end of *The Jim Henson Exhibition*. The installation comprises twelve monitors of various sizes showing images and clips of Henson’s characters and collaborators.

Sources of Exhibition Content

The puppets, licensed merchandise, and some 2-D material in the exhibition are drawn from a collection of nearly 500 objects donated to the Museum by Jim Henson’s family in 2013. The sketches, photographs, scripts, and other 2-D artifacts are on loan to the Museum from The Jim Henson Company Archive. Archival video and photographic material was provided by The Jim Henson Company, Sesame Workshop, and The Muppets Studio. A smaller number of objects are on loan to the Museum from private collectors.

Puppets in *The Jim Henson Exhibition*

Puppet Wall (at entrance to the exhibition)

Pod (*Dark Crystal*)

Vazh (*Saturday Night Live*)

Convincing John (*Fraggle Rock*)

Homer Honker (*Sesame Street*)

Pink Stalk (Muppets)

Miss Mousey (Muppets)
Happy Yellow (Muppets)
Mean Floyd (*Muppet Musicians of Bremen*)
Miss Belle (*Dog City*)
Wendell Porcupine (*Emmett Otter's Jug-Band Christmas*)
Ditz (*The Christmas Toy*)
Frackle (*Great Santa Claus Switch*)

Early Works

Kermit the Frog
Yorick (*Sam and Friends*)
Southern Colonel (commercials, guest appearances)
LaChoy Dragon (commercials)
Rowlf (commercials, *The Muppet Show*)
Java puppets (*Ed Sullivan Show*)
Prime Minister (*Tales of the Tinkerdee*)
Taminella Grinderfall (*Tales of the Tinkerdee*, *The Frog Prince*)

Sesame Street

Big Bird
Elmo
Cookie Monster
Prairie Dawn
Fat Blue Anything Muppet

The Muppets

Statler
Waldorf
Nigel
The Swedish Chef
Koozebanians (parents and four "pups")
Zoot
Costumes for Animal and Janice
Miss Piggy

Immersive Worlds

Cantus (*Fraggle Rock*)
Gobo (*Fraggle Rock*)
Uncle Traveling Matt (*Fraggle Rock*)
Doozers (4) (*Fraggle Rock*)
Skeksis ("ritual master") (*The Dark Crystal*)
Prototype heads for Jen and Kira (*The Dark Crystal*)
Prototype hands for Mystics (*The Dark Crystal*)
Mechanical Cannonball (*Labyrinth*)

Support

The Jim Henson Exhibition is made possible by major support from Brian Henson, Cheryl Henson, Heather Henson, Lisa Henson, Joan Ganz Cooney and Peter G. Peterson, Bill Prady, Booth Ferris Foundation, The Jane Henson Foundation, George S. Kaufman, Institute of Museum and Library Services, George Lucas Family Foundation, Stavros Niarchos Foundation, and Herbert S. Schlosser. In addition, a Kickstarter campaign resulted in more than 2,000 individuals helping to fund the exhibition.

Capital funding for construction of the new gallery space to house *The Jim Henson Exhibition* was provided through the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs by The City of New York: Mayor Bill de Blasio; City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito; Queens Borough President Melinda Katz; City Council Majority Leader and Cultural Affairs Committee Chair Jimmy Van Bramer; and the Queens Delegation of the City Council. Construction was managed by the New York City Economic Development Corporation.

Press Contact

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