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MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

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FANS OF THE TELEVISION SERIES 'BABYLON 5' POOL THEIR MONEY TO DONATE A SPECIAL-EFFECTS MASK TO MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

New York, NY, June 20, 2008—Eleven fans of the epic science-fiction television series *Babylon 5* (1994-98)—all previously unknown to one another, and living in places from Washington State to England—have bought a pristine prosthetic mask used on the show and donated it to Museum of the Moving Image. Worn by actor Andreas Katsulas in his role as the exiled alien ambassador G'Kar, the mask had been put up for auction on eBay. The donors pooled their resources to purchase it and then gave it as a gift to the Museum, so that the mask would be accessible to fans and to the general public.

Rochelle Slovin, Director of the Museum, said, "This is a wonderful story of how members of a fan community gathered online from around the world to preserve an artifact that otherwise would have gone into a private collection. The mask itself is a beautiful example of special-effects makeup, used in the creation of a principal character on the show. We are honored that these donors chose the Museum as the home for this mask."



The only museum dedicated to the art and industry of all of screen culture, from the earliest silent films to today's video games, Museum of the Moving Image includes a collection of more than 130,000 artifacts from motion pictures, television, and digital media. The Museum provides access to the collection through its website, exhibitions, and education programs.

The G'Kar mask was created by Optic Nerve Studios, an Emmy Award-winning company that also created special effects make up for Spike Jonze's *Being John Malkovich* (1999) and the television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *CSI: NY*. Much of the work on the mask was done by Lance Reyes, under the direction of Optic Nerve principal John Vulich. This hand-painted latex-foam mask rests on a vacuform lifemask of Andreas Katsulas. The lifemask, something generally seen only by the effects house, is used to help create the prosthetic so that it fits properly to the actor's face. The mask can be viewed in the Museum's online Collection Catalog at <http://collection.movingimage.us>.

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The eleven donors of the G'Kar mask are Amy Guskin (Pennsylvania), George Brickner (Illinois), Neil Burton (England), Caryn Dunkel (New Jersey), Iva Ferris (Pennsylvania), Blair Leatherwood & Judith Emick-Leatherwood (California), Jan Schroeder (Florida), Janna Silverstein (Washington), Dennis Weldy (Alabama), and Hilary Weston (England).

In December 2006, Amy Guskin discovered the G'Kar mask up for auction on eBay, and saw it as an opportunity to save a piece of *Babylon 5*'s legacy. Motivated by the recent death of Katsulas and also by the desire to keep the mask in public view, she spread word online through a longstanding *Babylon 5* Usenet newsgroup, asking for donations to purchase the mask. Ten fans responded to her plea with donations of hundreds of dollars each. Their bid was accepted, and they purchased the mask from Marc Zicree, a well-known science-fiction writer in the television industry who wrote the first-season *Babylon 5* episode, "Survivors." Zicree had obtained the prosthetic directly from John Vulich of Optic Nerve. One of the donors, Blair Leatherwood, suggested the donation of the mask to Museum of the Moving Image, after visiting the Museum during a trip to New York.

Ms. Guskin said, "To say that I am humbled by my fellow *Babylon 5* fans' ability to trust, and willingness to donate money for something like this, would be correct; however, it's not all that surprising, considering how much *Babylon 5* means to so many serious science-fiction fans all around the world. It's a deep, meaningful, incredible show that engenders deep, meaningful, incredible feelings in those who watch it. By donating the mask to Museum of the Moving Image, we wanted to carry on the show's legacy. The Museum was the obvious choice for this, since it has a wonderful exhibition with a section devoted to special effects makeup. We could be sure that all fans of the show, as well as the wider public, would be able to appreciate the craft that went into creating *Babylon 5*."

Created by J. Michael Straczynski, *Babylon 5* was unique among television series for having been conceived with a pre-planned story arc that would run for five seasons, from 1994 through 1998. In addition to the 110 episodes, the show generated six television movies. *Babylon 5* won two Emmy Awards, both for makeup and visual effects. The series' novel-like storyline, in which a space station called Babylon 5 was the focal point for intergalactic politics, allowed for great depth in character development. The character of G'Kar, in particular, was considered a favorite among many fans. Much like the *Star Trek* phenomenon, *Babylon 5*'s loyal fan base continues to flourish at conventions and in online communities long after the series ended.

About Museum of the Moving Image

Museum of the Moving Image advances the public understanding and appreciation of the art, history, technique, and technology of film, television, and digital media. It does so by collecting, preserving, and providing access to moving-image related artifacts; screening significant films and other moving-image works; presenting exhibitions of artifacts, artworks, and interactive experiences; and offering educational and interpretive programs to students, teachers, and the general public. Construction is currently underway on a major expansion of the Museum, designed by architect Thomas Leeser. The project entails a complete renovation of the existing first floor and construction of a three-story addition housing a new theater, screening room, galleries, and a multi-classroom education center. The Grand Opening of the expanded Museum is scheduled for winter 2009-10. For more information, visit movingimage.us

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