

The Amazing Chang: The magic of Whittington-Wickes

Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum wins 'Best Exhibition' Award

EXTRACTS FROM THE LEAMINGTON SPA ART GALLERY & MUSEUM'S PRESS RELEASE:

Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum have been presented with a prestigious award for their recent exhibition, *The Amazing Chang: The magic of Whittington-Wickes* (17 October 2009 - 10 January 2010).

Exhibition Curators Nicky McIntosh and Vicki Slade were presented with the 'Best Exhibition on a Small Budget' Award at the Renaissance West Midlands 'Best of the West Awards' 2010 which took place on 26 February at the Barber Institute of Fine Arts, University of Birmingham. The ceremony was hosted by journalist and broadcaster Nina Nannar. Winners were selected in 11 award categories from over 80 nominations.

Renaissance is the Museums, Libraries and Archives £150 million programme to transform England's regional museums. The 'Best of the West Awards' recognise and celebrate excellence in museums and galleries in the West Midlands.

The Amazing Chang was an exhibition about a famous 20th century stage illusionist from Leamington Spa. Born in 1893 in Leamington Spa, the young Samuel Whittington-Wickes ran away from home at the age of 12 to pursue a career in magic. Using the stage name 'The Amazing Chang' (which he adopted in 1934) he performed in New York and Paris and toured the UK many times, including performing for his home town audience several times, in Leamington's Jephson Gardens Pavilion.

Senior Curatorial Officer Nicky McIntosh said, 'We were very excited to stage this exhibition about such a remarkable local man and his influence on the world of magic. It is thanks to the hard work of all the team here at the Art Gallery & Museum and the support of a number of people from the local and magic community that we were able to win this award. We are particularly grateful to Sandra Evans, Lynsey Cleaver and Mr Budd for working closely with us on the exhibition, to Davenport's magic for lending so many of the exhibits and to Chang's son, Golden Globe Award nominated film director David Wickes'.

The exhibition generated interest from illusionists and magicians worldwide. It was equally popular with visitors and was accompanied by a series of events for all ages including a talk by the biographer of Amazing Chang, Sandra Evans, a magic show by Roy Davenport and a stunning opening ceremony which included a Chinese Lion Dance and an opening speech by David Wickes, Chang's Son.

Councillor Susan Gallagher, Portfolio Holder for Culture at Warwick District Council said, 'I am so pleased with this award. A lot of hard work went into the exhibition, it was a most interesting and unique display with a local theme which was very popular.'



The Amazing Chang



Reproduction of a Chang lobby cut-out



General view of the exhibition