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ERTE WITH PAUL B.

ONLY IN AMERICA THE DREAM OF REALITY

by Aline Franzen

As we all know, Erté the one and only is known for his 2,500 designs and 240 covers, for his theatrical sets, costumes for opera and ballet companies all

over the world, sculptures, jewelry and who brought a unique contribution to Art Deco.

At age 93 Erté with the help of the well-known international designer Paul B. Magit has launched an edition of Collectible art knitwear inspired by signature Erté designs of the past 7 decades.

Paul B. was born in Chicago where his family emigrated from Poland and where his father became a renowned furrier.

After finishing the University of Illinois where he studied business administration and fine art, Paul opened in 1965 his very first shop in Chicago located in the heart of the Rush-Oak Street, with restaurants, clubs, single bars.

It is in this transient neighborhood that Paul survived and prospered by having sales up to \$1,250,000 yearly, which was astronomical at that time.

Paul was one of the first in the country to import ready to wear fashions for women, and in very short time his shop became one of the most fashionable in the world, similar to those on Rodeo Drive in Los Angeles and the impressive Madison Avenue in New York.

In short time he had five shops all over the city and also opened two night clubs to bring to Chicago the latest in rock and jazz music which took off like a flash, becoming one of the most in places.

As in 1975 Paul became disenchanted with the fashion world, he wanted to go to more exciting and more enjoyable things, so he sold his shops for a tremendous amount of money, and began to travel to see what was going on in the rest of the world and what to do next.

When he was in Guatemala he fell in love with the Indians of Mayan descent and their incredible weavings, which inspired him to create his very own knitwear translating their folkloric colors and styles of the Mayan heritage into an exciting and revolutionary collection of wool knits, which set him apart from all other knitwear designers.

He called his collection Nahuala (after the Guatemalan village) and he produced all his knitwear in Como (Italy).

Next he opened a boutique in Paris also called Nahuala, where he was selling only his own designs, and had numerous showings of his collections at Paris, Porte de Versailles.

Paul's new brainstorm was to develop a new technique in knitting which combines art with fashion, and as he was always fascinated by Erté, it was only natural for Paul to ask Erté if he can collaborate with him, and to produce a kind of Erté design included in Paul's textiles, which he achieved in full, producing the most extravagant and unusual masterpieces of clothing.

The unusual part is that in the Erté tradition every dress is numbered and is a limited edition which comes with his own certificate of authenticity, and after each edition is sold they will not be reproduced.

At this moment there are 33 editions of the Erté works which have been translated into collector's items by Paul B. (ladies acquire quickly one of these rare masterpieces as they will be priceless one day).

The latest Paul B. venture was to create his magnificent jersey collection for cruises, travel and vacations, which are produced in Bali with the famous Erté alphabet, and each piece is hand embroidered and will be numbered.

Paul finds that naturalism and realism are the key of today's life style.

One of his latest experience was to be caught up in an impromptu student riot in Paris and be tear-gassed by the police.

At this moment Paul is working full speed in his Magifrance atelier to fulfill all his orders all over the world and also preparing for the big event as Erté is expected to come to New York for his 95th birthday and Paul is looking forward to honor his big famous Russian-born maestro.

Paul is happy that he could contribute to continue his idol's dream which was always directed as dressing and beautifying the Erté woman.