

Wearable Art Show walks new runway at McCurdy

By Robin Dudley of the Leader | Posted: Wednesday, April 29, 2015 3:00 am

Celebrating its fifth year, the 2015 Port Townsend Wearable Art Show features 25 designers and showcases 36 unique pieces during two performances at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. on Saturday, May 9, at McCurdy Pavilion at Fort Worden. A live video projection offers audience members an up-close-and-personal look at the art on the runway, making every seat the 'best seat in the house.'

The fashionable fete is a fundraiser for Jefferson County Community Foundation's Fund for Women and Girls.

Selected artists range from age 12 to age 79 and, for the first time in the show's history, four men will present their designs on the catwalk.

The juror is Jean Cacicedo, an innovator in the Wearable Art Movement of the 1970s.

"In fashion, the body is the armature," she said. "In Art Wear, however, the garment becomes united with the body in theme and attitude that is beyond what's considered fashionable or stylish. It is the act of wearing, both physically and metaphorically, that transforms body and object. It's sculpture in motion."

Designers compete for Best in Show, the People's Choice Award, Best Student Work, and, new this year, Art You Can Really Wear.

"Artwear is complex. You're dealing with arms and legs and function. There is a real wow factor in those who can design a piece that truly fits the person and retains that element of surprise," Cacicedo said.

About 12 artists present their artwear in a grouped vignette during the first half of the performance. Afterwards the pieces are moved to a boutique setting along with other "Art to Wear" pieces available



2015 Wearable Art juror Jean Cacicedo

Jean Cacicedo is the juror of the 2015 Wearable Art Show. A teacher and artist based in Berkeley, California, Cacicedo's pieced and sewn, slashed, felted and dyed constructions have been published and displayed around the world. In 2000, a 30-year retrospective of her work was featured at the Museum of Craft and Folk Art in San Francisco. Submitted photo

for sale. Sixty percent of the proceeds benefit the Fund for Women and Girls and the artist collects the remaining 40 percent.

“So often over the years, people have approached the artists about purchasing their designs and we wanted to give both the community and the designers another way to connect through fashion and through supporting this great cause,” said event co-coordinator Judith Bird.

Admission starts at \$30. Purchase tickets online at brownpapertickets.com or by calling 800-838-3006. For more information visit ptwearableart.com.

At 9 a.m., Monday, May 4, Jonathan Ward interviews co-coordinators Judith Bird, Margie McDonald and Debbi Steele on KPTZ 91.9 FM radio about the behind-the-scenes work that goes into pulling off this event.

Twelve of the 25 designers are new to the Port Townsend exhibition, while 13 are returning presenters. Here are the stories of three quite different entries from Port Townsend.

KELLY MATLOCK

This is the third time Kelly Matlock’s designs have been in PT’s Wearable Art Show. Her pieces are beautifully tailored, striking designs that wouldn’t look too out of place at a gala, except that they’re made of Ace bandages. The works are called “Homage to the things that hold me together.”

During hard times in her life, she said, “the only thing holding me together was Ace bandages and safety pins.”

Matlock has experience with staging wearable art shows. In the 1980s and 90s, she owned a shop in La Conner called Chez la Zoom that sold “bizarre kinds of outfits” and wearable art by local designers, sewn by local women. She’s been around wearable art since the 70s, when she was a “fringey” for a Seattle group called “Friends of the Rag” that staged “happenings.” Matlock recalls the great auteur Andy Warhol attending one. “He came outside and said ‘Did you make those?’”

So she has some cred. And she thinks PT’s Wearable Art Show is outstanding.

“What has been put together here in PT is way cooler,” she said. “PT is a party town ... This is a town that loves costumes.”

Also, “the organizers are really focused, there is a good division of labor [and] ... a real attention to detail.” Port Townsend’s culture of acceptance, she said, also “makes this really a very vibrant, exciting place” for wearable art.

Matlock’s pieces, modeled by Katherine Macomber-Millman and Catherine Herrick, are both made of Ace bandages and safety pins.

She has been working with 500 Ace bandages – she washes, dries, irons, stretches, paints, washes,

dries, irons and stretches them again, then sews them into tags. On a recent day, she had bandages thumb-tacked to a large sheet of foam, drying in the sun, stiff with paint. "House paint is less expensive," she said. "If it's good enough for Robert Rauschenberg, it's good enough for me."

The thick warrior's jacket, with expertly sewn reddish piping, laces up the sides with brown ribbon zig-zagging through safety pins. Several of Matlock's Wearable Art pieces fit a "warrior" theme.

The dress made of condoms that Matlock made for last year's show, "Woman Warrior Always Prepared," is now in Bellingham, to be used in a May 1 Planned Parenthood event.

Matlock teaches local sex-ed classes as part of her job as a coalition coordinator at Public Health.

Matlock's real first name is Kathleen, but she decided in second grade to call herself Kelly. "It was prophetic," she said. "In Gaelic, 'Kelly' means 'warrior,' ... My first default strategy is to kind of be a fighter for what's right."

CHRISTINE JACOBSON

New to the show this year is Christine Jacobson, a cheerful person who often wears glasses with brightly colored frames and eclectic, colorful dresses.

"My friend Christine [Hulbert] did it last year and said it was so fun and it was so beautiful and so inspiring, so I sent in my drawing," Jacobson said.

Her piece starts with a dress she made from an old damask tablecloth that she plans to cover with metal canning-jar lids, like oversized sequins. Some people reuse the flat metal lids; others follow the Ball jar company's advice not to. The extremely spangled dress is to be worn over an enormous orange petticoat that Jacobson made with "54 yards of tulle netting" to make the full skirt so full as to stand almost straight out.

She'll model her own piece, set to Perez Prado's 1955 hit song "Cherry Pink and Apple Blossom White."

"I like the silhouettes of the '50s, and they really suit my body ... the structured top and full skirt," she said. "I like to go dancing in a full skirt."

Jacobson has been sewing since fifth grade. She wanted to learn to sew and her mother arranged sewing lessons with "a lady in her den" in her hometown of Fairwood, Washington. Among her early projects were "several pairs of culottes," including a pair that was black with rainbow toucans.

"I was a very stylish fifth-grader."

Since then, she's done a lot of alterations, modifying thrift-store clothes to fit. An aunt in Portland works in a fabric store and helped her get a bargain on a sewing machine.

Jacobson also plays bassoon in the Port Townsend Community Orchestra. With a music degree from Lewis & Clark College, she worked on a number of tall ships before attending the Northwest School of Wooden Boatbuilding in 2011; she now works at PT Rigging.

The sewing machine is at the center of Jacobson's studio, but the remaining space seems to be filled with yarn. "Knitting is my main hobby," she said. She makes socks, sweaters, hats, bowls, baskets, and toilet-paper cozies (like a tea-cozy for a roll of TP), one of which resembles the back half of an orange cat with an upraised tail.

Why would anyone need a toilet-paper cozy?

"Why wouldn't you?"

KELLEN AND NICOLE

Kellen Lynch, 25, owner of Dalla Notte baking company, and Hanna Nicole Lose-Frahn, 26, are collaborating on a delicious fabrication for their Wearable Art debut: Fleur de Farine, which Lynch translates as "flour to flower." In the piece, they will be "taking the raw ingredients and turning it into something beautiful," Lynch said. "To me, this isn't even a stretch for what bread can do."

Lynch, a 2007 graduate of PT High School, rents the Market Kitchen on Sims Way, where he turns out baked goods he sells at the PT Farmers Market on Saturdays. This is his third market season – five or six vendors use his breads in different ways, and his croissant sandwiches are a specialty, he said. "Come early" to get his goods; he's "trying to produce more, but the line keeps growing."

When Lynch told Lose-Frahn he was considering using bread ingredients in a Wearable Art Show piece, she wanted in.

"Sometimes when I'm rolling out croissant dough," Lynch said, he is struck by its potential as a material. "It has a beautiful sheen to it, a strength, a wearability. It's a gorgeous material ... Once, I put it over my shoulders. It's heavy."

Like Lynch, Lose-Frahn is also a foodie; she has a catering business called Hanna Nicole, teaches food-based healing, teaches qi gong and works at the Big Squeeze juice bar in Chimacum. Before moving to PT three years ago, she designed, made and sold her own clothing line in Charleston, South Carolina, "very artistic ... one-of-a-kind pieces for the eccentrically fashionable at heart." "Since I was a little girl, I've loved making clothes," she said, giving the world things that are "grandiose, superbly different and beautiful."

Lynch said he'll be busy the morning of the show preparing the ensemble. "The dough bit, or unbaked bit, is going to need to be chilled," he said.

The couple is working on a bread skirt, a crown, earrings, bracelet and a shawl. Some will be baked, other parts of the ensemble will be unbaked dough. And of course, there will be bread shoes. Lynch

turned on his high-wattage grin. "Loafers, perhaps."