
Entertainment
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'Dress Envy' is about what women wear, and what it means

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"Dress Envy" is a delicious look at how clothing is something we use to express ourselves – and also something we hide behind.

By [Nancy Worssam](#)

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The runway shows in Paris and New York may be over, but interest in fashion is hot in Seattle. In addition to the shoe show at Bellevue Arts Museum and clothing exhibit at Gallery 110, there's the delicious "Dress Envy" at Winston Wächter Fine Arts.

"Dress Envy" explores the idea of how we cover and present ourselves. Clothing announces who we are. Yet what we wear can also provide a facade to hide behind. Those ideas are exemplified through shimmering glass little-girl dresses, stunning photography, sculpted images of historical outfits and crackling paper dresses.

Internationally acclaimed photographer Jessica Craig-Martin offers superb evidence of clothing as camouflage. She focuses on women at chic parties, women dressed in satins and furs, adorned with jewels. Although she doesn't always show their faces, she reveals their flaws. There's the aging hand clutching the beaded red satin bag, the sun-damaged skin next to the elegant, low-necked gown.

Compare her women to those of Georges Dambier, the 1950s ELLE photographer. Exquisite beauties like Suzy Parker wear haute couture outfits against backgrounds that include the Houses of Parliament or the Musee Orangerie. The sites have gravitas, and so do the clothes.

Margeaux Walter explores the boundaries between reality and fantasy. The complicated techniques she employs to create her lenticular photographs force your brain to play

tricks on you. In her crowd scenes, people change position and alter facial expressions as you change your viewing angle.

Remarkable, aside from the photos' ability to shift before our eyes, is the fact that every person in these shots is the artist. This young, Seattle-born photographer who worked for Jeff Koons, uses wigs, clothing, false mustaches, etc. to play every part. She, especially, encourages us to consider how we create our own individuality through the manner in which we present ourselves.

Seattle artists Mielle Riggie and Tori Ellison offer us dresses without their wearers.

Glass artist Riggie wants her gossamer child's dresses to evoke tender memories. "Art inspires emotion, and emotion inspires people to care about the beings and places around them," she says.

Ellison's ultrafeminine paper-and-rosin empty dresses are feminist symbols. To her, dress shapes speak of self, the body, containment, dissolution and change.

James Allen, another Seattleite, "excavates" books. By cutting through the pages, he exposes periods and people, creating intimate sculptures between the book covers.

Fine art is "a beautiful combination of concept, thoughtfulness, technical ability, use of materials — an equation in which all elements fit together," says Dena Rigby, curator of this stunning exhibition.

The equations that make up this show are refined, sophisticated and beautifully rendered.

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