

BEYOND GARMENT

Curator: Anne Farren
West Australian Museum, Fremantle
3 Sept to 28 Nov 2010

Occasionally I experience an exhibition where the presentation of the work and the work itself are so seamlessly integrated that I am transported by the objects and the relationships between them. Happily this is the case in this ambitious 'textile' exhibition that was curated as part of the Perth Fashion Festival by artist, educator (and curator) Anne Farren. Both Anne and most of the twenty artist/designers on show have links to Curtin University of Technology's Schools of Art, Design and Fashion.

There is very little fashion on display – it is more of a sculpture exhibition really. Trish Little has used sewing pins to restrain silver tarpaulins into the crushed and creased forms that they often assume when stashed away. They hang flattened on the wall, suggesting compressed metal, synthetic forms rendered useless and immobile. The pins create a sort of straitjacket, still possibly wearable, given contemporary fashion's embrace of distressed fabrics.

Works by other textile artists Louise Snook, Maggie Baxter and Moira Doroplous are easily recognised in the context of previous creations. Baxter uses the soaring ceiling of the gallery to drape a weaving that is of an unprecedented scale. Doroplous wraps her precious and mysterious offerings and places them quietly on a shelf. Elizabeth Delfs' suspended forms are seductive clusters of richly coloured gauze (tulle and flywire) that bob around in space casting shadows on the floor and evoking feminine spaces and illusion. Her use of colour is clever, as when combined with the textures and ruffles, the gentle movement, shadows and gallery lights, the viewer cannot easily discern whether the textiles are dyed in variegations or merely reflecting light.

Kirsten Hudson's sickly marzipan chandelier looms overhead. Her suspended work utilises movement and shadows to transcend its humble



Trish Little *Tarp Triumvirate* 2010, polyethylene tarps, pins, 210 x 450 cm. Photo: Greg Woodward.

materials. Bracelet-like curls made of eucalyptus bark by Vashti Innes-Brown cast stark shadow arcs on the wall, evoking a sense of the forest.

Jeweller Leah Tarlo uses conventional museum display boxes to delight with her collection of engaging memorabilia, retro-tat and bric-a-brac *Curiouser & Curiouser*, which includes some fairly ordinary knitted puppets, lots of kids games, tin toys, antique beauty kits, piles of round things – false eyeballs, globes, balls, dollheads. In her jewellery practice, the artist casts these little dollies' arms and legs in materials such as porcelain to create beautiful body ornamentations. Some of these are glimpsed in the mass of tat crammed into the museum case but many a viewer would be scratching their head as to how this exhibit fits an exhibition related to textiles, fashion and jewellery design. However it wouldn't stop anyone from loving this work and happily spending ages trying to decipher what they are seeing in the overloaded containers, while reminiscing on the lost innocence of childhood.

Alister Yiap's jewellery utilises acrylic while Nalda Searles' bushstring hats and neckpieces are right at home in the museum. Unlike the works in the rest of the show her works are from 1987 and show why she is considered a legend in the West. Lavish neckpieces by Sophie Kyron send you off into a fantasy of

crochet, lurex, lace and snakeskin with recycled chandelier crystals, dreaming of an appropriate occasion when you might assume one of the seven personalities Kyron has created.

There is millinery by Kathryn Bell, shoes and bags by Marie Mazzurra and Topouzian Brothers designed for Zomp (an iconic WA shoe store), bags by Martini + Coz and an installation of strange and original garments, bags and books using a minimal palette of materials including leather and plywood by Jocelyn Tan. The sublime torsos of Eunjeong Jeon take wool felting to new levels.

Indigenous artist Janine McAullay Bott shows dilly bags and hats sculpted from palm tree fronds and seed skins while The Antipodium label's collaboration with Indigenous artists Roy and Barbara Merritt and Ruby McIntosh has resulted in some textile jewels of great promise.

Artist interviews are accessible by using your phone to scan the labels as well as a catalogue and website: www.museum.wa.gov.au/beyond-garment/. This show or some incarnation of it is set to tour parts of WA and inspire regional audiences to get some fabric and some pins and run up a fashion statement. Or maybe just torture a tarp!

THELMA JOHN