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Second Skin: new knitting/Creative Work

30

January to 3 February 2008

(250 words in total)

Background

Current publications and research have focused on knitting within a mostly traditional context, and address how designers have explored techniques of knitting, but not necessarily how they have pushed the boundaries regarding contemporary knitted outcomes and applications. This body of work explores how contemporary designers, artists and knitters can, and have push the traditional boundaries of knitting to create outcomes that explore new ideas, techniques and mixed media applications.

Contribution

This research and body of work, demonstrates how current perceptions of knitting, as viewed by the general public, has been challenged by contemporary designers and artists, through incorporating new materials and techniques of making. The work produced was designed to confront the viewer and allow them question the position of the work as fashion or art, and challenge the perception of social constructs regarding knittings' identity and historical positioning.

Significance

The significance of this work is that it demonstrates how knitting can be deconstructed, but through still utilisng traditional techniques and combining them with new materials. The research and creative design work component has been essential insofar as the insight it has provided and the new knowledge it has created such as establishing the perception of how knitting in a traditional and contemporary framework is perceived. The use of the knowledge gained through researching traditional knitting styles, such as Aran knitting became an essential technique to explore, with the textural and symbolic qualities providing an exceptional background that could be adapted in relation to the design concept, scarification.

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

(Press, invitations, reviews, photographs of exhibitions /installations/artworks etc. Evidence of public exposure of work.)

Press: Sydney Morning Herald (2 February, 2008)

upfront THINGS TO DO

COMPILED BY DEBORAH COOKE

Submissions to upfront@fairfax.com.au

see



A Secret History of Blue and White
Australian ceramic artists Stephen Benwell, Robin Best, Bronwyn Kemp, Vipoo Srivilasa and Gerry Wedd put their own innovative twist on the classic blue and white willow pattern with this collection of objets d'art, ranging from Wedd's look-but-don't-wear thongs to Best's exquisite set of snuff bottles (two of which are pictured). Tuesday to Sunday, 11am to 6pm; until March 23. Object Gallery, 417 Bourke Street, Surry Hills; 9361 4511.

hear

Twilight at Taronga
There's nothing quite like kicking back and listening to some fab music knowing a killer lemur is only metres away. Abba tribute band Björn Again kicks off this series of concerts this weekend. Over the coming weeks you can hear opera hunk David Hobson, Christine Anu (below) channelling jazz divas like Billie Holiday and Sarah Vaughan, and James Morrison playing Motown. \$43-\$63 concert only; \$53-\$73 with a zoo pass (entry from 2pm). Program, www.ticketek.com.au.



do



Chinese New Year
Ring in the Year of the Rat this weekend at the Chinatown Markets in Belmore Park opposite Central (11am to 10pm both days) – there'll be more than 60 stalls, a third of them hawking food. Chinese-Australian women share their life stories at the Sydney Mechanics' School of Art today (\$26; 2pm to 4pm) and there's a kids' activity afternoon at the Uni of Sydney's Macleay Museum tomorrow (noon to 4pm). Program, www.sydneychinesenewyear.com.au.

shop

Hope Street Markets
These markets made their debut last year and return this weekend with clothes, jewellery and accessories by more than 40 indie designers. Look out for Asian-inspired mugs, notebooks and cards by Temptation, Bronzen Temple's one-off T-shirts for men and women, and Shelbyville's books, badges and bric-a-brac (like these brooches made from 1960s Scrabble tiles, below). Today, noon to 9pm; tomorrow, noon to 5pm. 182 Campbell Street, Surry Hills; www.hopetreetmarkets.com.



view



COFA's Postgrad Program
Over the next month, artists completing their masters and PhDs at the College of Fine Arts show off their work in a series of three-day exhibitions. Today's line-up includes Second Skin, Alana Clifton-Cunningham's knitted body adornments (including Arm Sling, pictured), and Alyson Johnson's baroque-inspired installation. 10am to 5pm. Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Selwyn Street, Paddington; 9385 0726. Exhibition program, www.cofa.unsw.edu.au/galleries/idg.

Catalogue cover & pages 2, 3 & 4:

Second skin: new knitting (exhibition and published catalogue) Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Paddington, ISBN: 978-0-646-48541-6



Second skin: new knitting
Alana Clifton-Cunningham

30 January - 2 February 2008

Cover



Knitting is a form of constructed textiles that has the ability to be manipulated and moulded into two and three dimensional forms. It can be patterned and manipulated through the knitting/making process and has versatility that makes it highly unique. This body of work primarily uses knitting as a medium to create knitted forms that wrap, cocoon and in some circumstances distort the body.



This research has explored and questioned the concept of contemporary knitting as fashion or art, and interrogates the notion of 'deconstruction' by looking past the traditional knitted coverings for the body. Using knitting as the main medium to create this series of 'body pieces', each piece incorporates elements of mixed media that explores materials and design principles that are juxtapositions to one another, such as hard and soft, rough and smooth, mass and gradation. Additional materials and process of construction include laser cutting and etching of Tasmanian oak veneer and leather, silk organza and semi precious stones. The pieces created are concerned with interaction between traditional and contemporary knitting techniques, and questions the relationship of the knitting to the human body as a form of second skin.

As design inspiration this work focuses on body adornment and patterning, literally and as a metaphor. Body scarification is a language that is inscribed into the surface of the skin on the body, with 'tribal marks' having a diversity of cultural and symbolic significance such as; beauty, pain, identity, sorrow, gender and status. Scarring in some cultural tribes signifies



a 'rite of passage' such as sexual expression or a passage from childhood to adulthood and social acceptance, which is eminently symbolic. Other forms of scarification are created to serve the purpose of tribal identification, some formetamorphic allegory and supernatural reasons such as protection and comfort, and others for pure aesthetic intention.

Within this work, I am attracted to the idea of celebrating something that is generally misunderstood because of popular western misconceptions and negative connotations. Primitive body scarring has often been described or thought of as crude and grotesque, but these body manipulations have significant meanings that range beyond aesthetics. In contrast to these negative images shaped by common perceptions, I find the practice of body scarification with the layers of meaning attached to be particularly intriguing and beautiful, with the delicate nature of the skin, the scars formed create a juxtaposition in that they are hard and protuberance. Against the backdrop, being the skin, which shows signs of who we are, weathering and aging through folds and creases on the surface, the scars are relatively prominent in contrast. This reflectivity is the foremost motivation for the fabrication preference and also the form and silhouette the pieces have taken.

Left top, bottom, right top: 'Hand muff' (detail)*, 'Arm sling', 'Collar', 'Stomach wrap' (detail)*, 'Leg wrap'*, 'Shoulder shield' (detail)*, 'Shroud' (detail)*, 'Body wrap' (detail)*, 'Neck pods*', 'Gloves' (detail)*.

* machine knitted
* hand knitted

Knitted 'body pieces' and photography Alana Clifton-Cunningham
Model Emma Dunston



Acknowledgements

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IVAN DOUGHERTY GALLERY
Postgraduate Summer Program

Alana Clifton-Cunningham

Alana is a fulltime Lecturer at the University of Technology, Sydney, Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building in Fashion and Textiles.

Recent research papers and exhibitions include;

2007 International Hand and Lock Embroidery Competition (finalist)

2006 'The Sock: an investigation of the sock in society', conference paper, York University, Toronto, Canada

2004 'Tromp l'oeil: an investigation of traditional and digital textile applications in the creation of Illusion', published conference paper at 'The space between: art, fashion, textiles and design', Curtin University, Perth, Western Australia

2006 Sydney Esquisse: Customs House, Sydney (media exhibition of knitted work)

2006 Blurring the boundaries: fashion design innovation in contemporary knitting, International knitting exhibition, Fairfield Gallery, Sydney

2005 Valency (group exhibition), Kudos Gallery, Paddington

Forthcoming - Fragments: methodologies of making (April 2008 - co curator/maker Alison Gwilt) DAB LAB Gallery, University of Technology, Sydney

IMAGES OF EXHIBITION / WORK

Ivan Dougherty Gallery installation shot

Work presented in the exhibition at the Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Paddington: A Clifton Cunningham(2008)



Work presented in the exhibition at the Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Paddington: A Clifton Cunningham(2008)

