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Show to feature wearable art

By Elizabeth Murray
Posted: 04/15/2009 02:36:17 AM EDT

Transcript Intern

ADAMS -- Who knew art could be a fashion statement?

Greylock Arts' new exhibition, "Wearable Expressions," will open on Friday at the 93 Summer St. art gallery and will run through May 30.

Petit said the idea for the exhibition was inspired by a work called "Butterfly Dress" by New York City artist Alexander Reeder, which she and Belanger saw last year.

"The way the Butterfly Dress works is that it is attached to a heart-rate monitor, so when your heart beats faster as someone approaches, the butterfly wings start to flap," she said.

She said further inspiration came from a class she and Belanger took with Lynda Meyer through Northern Berkshire Creative Arts called "The Real History of Fashion."

"We just wanted to bring all these ideas in," Petit said

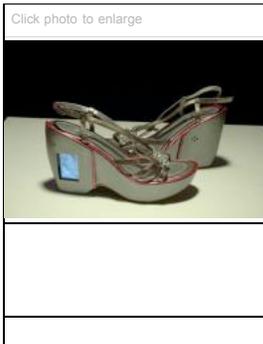
In the resulting exhibition of wearable art, accessories and "technology apparel," fashion is explored as a means for individuals to express themselves dynamically.

"I think people think of fashion as not necessarily being tied to what is happening in society," Petit said. "But it is a reflection of history, and technology has always been pervasive in it."

Reeder's "Butterfly Dress" is one

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of the pieces that will be featured in the exhibition. Petit said about half the artists who will be featured are local and half are from out of town.

"They are all works that we've seen or artists whose works we've seen in other contexts," she said. "We just contacted them. What Matt and I tend to do is we have running lists of pieces we think are really interesting or artists we find very interesting, and we try to come up with the themes we find interesting to work with."

Among the featured works will be "Aphrodite Project" by New York City artists Norene Leddy, Andrew Milmo, Ed Bringas and Melissa Gira. It's a pair of platform shoes that includes a global positioning system, an alarm system and the capability for video monitoring.

"They are connected to the Internet and social networks, so that if you're in danger, your location is found," Petit said. "She [Leddy] was inspired because in Greek days, prostitutes would put tacks to the bottom of their shoes to indicate where they were located so they could be followed or found. So it's

really just about the issue of women and vulnerability and safety."

Also part of the exhibition are hand-sewn leather works by Alicia Zaludova and Martin Zalud of Prague that show specific technique that does not require technology.

"They make really beautiful handbags and wristbands for adults," Petit said. "None of it is machine-crafted. It's all done by hand, which is, for this age, almost the exact opposite of technology."

North Adams artist Rich Rembsberg's Hawaiian guitar-instruction-manual T-shirts are based on graphics from 1920s Hawaiian guitar instruction manuals. The manuals stemmed from the Hawaiian guitar craze that started on the mainland in 1915 and lasted until the 1950s, Petit said.

"They are really about the time period and how cool it is to play the Hawaiian guitar and how it can raise your social status," she said. "He's just taken pictures of them and transferred them onto T-shirts. These pages were very earnest at the time, and it's really just about what is cool at any particular moment."

Kate Hartman's works, such as her "Muttering Hat," play off moments in life that are often deeply personal or even awkward. The "muttering hat" is a cloth hat that has "muttering balls" hanging off that a person can put over his or her ears to block out sounds.

"She makes them into these fashion pieces that are really sort of charming because they're not like scary technical,"

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Petit said. "They are soft and floppy and made of felt. They sort of express the vulnerability of emotions."

The exhibition will play host to a live show by Andrew Schneider on May 23 called "Experimental Devices for Performance." In his performance, Schneider will use wearable and handheld devices used for media interaction. The show will be a collaboration with the Storefront Artist Project of Pittsfield.

"He has these shoes that, depending on how high his heel is off the ground, the music goes faster or slower," Petit said. "He also has this thing called the 'Blink Cam,' where he attaches little switches to his eyes, so every time he blinks, it takes a picture."

She said she hopes people will find the exhibition fun and the work "beautiful -- and some of it whimsical and expressive."

"I'd like for them to walk away with a different sense of what clothing, fashion and apparel can do and can be," she said. "I think we have these very specific notions that fashion is based upon what we see in magazines and stores, and then we have a sense of history that is out of books. Clothing, technology and how we express ourselves are just a constant thing."

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