



An Urban Fairytale Flavor: A DIALOGUE WITH JOSCELYN HIMES

Showcasing 29 individual artists and 75 garments, the Surface Design Association's Fashion Show is performing this year at the historic Folly Theater under the coordination of Joscelyn Himes and Chadwick Brooks. Announced to present an urban fairytale flavor, this runway show aspires to present a range of elegant, chaotic, rough and serene traditional garments and garment sculpture.

Amelia Ishmael: How did your involvement in the SDA fashion shows begin?

Joscelyn Himes: I had been a member of SDA for a couple years and had helped with the Trunk Shows. Carolyn Kallenborn, the conference coordinator, asked me to attend a meeting after the 2003 conference as part of a brainstorming committee. I had been thinking about how to involve the public more into SDA events and how to gain more support for the galleries and artists in general. The fashion show was proposed as a way to offer the members a way to show their wearables in motion and as a way to have the Kansas City community attend an event that would help achieve a better understanding and appreciation of what SDA stands for.

AI: How does your experience as a fiber artist inform how you create and view fashion shows?

JH: I think understanding art in general, both in concept and creation, helps me to visualize the way through the process to the final product. I have collaborated many times as an artist, and I love that way of working, which is vital to pulling a piece like this fashion performance together.

AI: At the Kansas City Art Institute, one can get a sense that many students of the fiber department were also interested in fashion design. This seems true for other art institutes and schools as well. How does the interest for building clothing sprout from the creative textile and surface design?

JH: It is natural to think about a final product when creating yardage. When I design fabric to show to fashion designers, I constantly think about how they can use it. I think about placement, line, pattern, color ... all of those things that would affect the person wearing the final garment. It ultimately has to be wearable so therein lies a natural set of boundaries that are fun to push and pull.



Joscelyn Himes, *Gold Dupioni Tutu with Umbrella*, modeled by Destiny Dixon for the 2005 fashion show *Taking Flight*. Photo courtesy Matt Collins.



Carolyn Kallenborn, *Weighting*.



Joscelyn Himes, *Tourquoise Fiddle Dress in Charmeuse*, modeled by Ashley Thursby for the 2005 fashion show *Taking Flight*. Photo courtesy Matt Collins.

This is not to say that all surface design should be made into clothing; this is how I use most of my design, but obviously, there are multitudes of applications in many different industries.

AI: The last conference included a presentation by Yoshiko Iwamoto Wada who described high-tech natural and synthetic fiber blends that are being used by contemporary artists. At the same time, digital printing on textiles has become easier to access for artists and students. Have you seen any interesting runoffs of these modern applications in fashion design? How are they integrated with more traditional techniques?

JH: We have two artists in particular in the June 2nd fashion show that fit into this category. Jorie Johnson of JoiRae Textiles in Kyoto, Japan, has presented us with her felted, light-reactive clothing. These pieces incorporate wool with day-glow polyester fibers and other materials to create garments that are interesting in every light.

Eundeok Kim from Tallahassee, Florida, has created garments that exhibit a joyful balance of technology and nature. We will present three of these in our show. Look for images of trees and flowers digitally printed in the form of lovely, flowing dresses.

AI: *Transgression and Transformation* is the title of this year's show. Could you describe this title and how its concept guided your selection of artists?

JH: We wanted a theme that would be a natural link to the theme of the conference, *Mind + Body*. The idea of transformation seemed an obvious choice, but we wanted to incorporate the idea of something that would represent the opposite ... like the yin-and-yang balance of this theme. Transformation can be a positive or a negative, depending on the circumstances of the process, and transgression is an equal duality that is usually thought of as a negative, but to transgress against something can also be very positive depending on the circumstances of that transgression.

AI: What are some of the difficulties you confront when organizing a show of this scale?

JH: The biggest challenge is creating a show that looks cohesive. We have so many artists that we have to be very inventive about how we present the work. We do not want it to feel like 29 mini-shows; we look for similarities in the submitted garments and start grouping them together. We can also use props, hair and makeup to create a thread of consistency within the show. Fortunately, I have Chadwick Brooks as my co-director (he will be focusing on the performance part of the show, while I will focus on the runway portion), and I have Arlen Wickstrum as a creative partner, as well as amazing musical and dance professionals. I feel so fortunate to have such a talented and dedicated group to help make this show a reality!

AI: One of the artists on view will be the San Francisco designer Colleen Quen, whose couture designs have been worn on the red carpet by celebrities such as Tyra Banks, Paris Hilton, and Geena Davis. Can you tell us a little about what she will be presenting?

JH: At the time of this interview, we have not nailed down the exact garments; plus, we don't want to give away the brilliant surprise! But Colleen Quen is such an amazing designer and artist that to miss seeing her garments at this show would be a real shame. I have seen garments that she has created that have the most intricate inner structure imaginable. Some have tiny bits of boning that create small pyramids built into the fabric of the garment. This construction ensures the integrity of the garment regardless of wear. Bold strokes of color and pattern are also signatures of her work. She is really quite fearless with her garments. Her website is www.colleenquencouture.com.

AI: The 2005 SDA runway performance included an amazing kite show; can you provide any hints as to what we will be in store for this year?

JH: This year we are bringing in the talent of Mark Southerland, musician extraordinaire (Mark plays in several bands including the Malachy Papers and TJ Dovebelly). He will present one of his wearable instrument performances in conjunction with dancers from various dance genres. •