

Textiles, Technology, Technique

APR 25 • ART, ARTSY SMARTSY • NO COMMENTS ON TEXTILES, TECHNOLOGY, TECHNIQUE

Two new exhibit openings at CAM: “Out of Fashion” and “Julie VonDerVellen”

4/27, 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

3201 S. 17th St. • \$5-\$8

www.cameronartmuseum.com



ARTFUL STYLE: ASDR (Attack Decay Sustain Release)” by R. Brooke Priddy. Courtesy photo from Cameron Art Museum.

Recycled paper is no new invention. Recycled clothing might be a little less common of a practice, but it is not unheard of. Combining the two processes in honor of making extraordinary

art is off the beaten path, and can be followed to the Cameron Art Museum (CAM) on Saturday as part of the opening of their two new exhibits.

The first is a show created by Julie VonDerVellen, a recent MFA graduate from the University of Wisconsin at Madison, who is “just as sweet as she is talented,” according to CAM’s executive director, Anne Brennan. Two years ago, one of the museum’s benefactors discovered VonDerVellen as she was presenting her graduate thesis and insisted her talent be brought to CAM.

Former director Deborah Velders began the process, which Brennan then continued. Brennan had so much faith in VonDerVellen’s pieces—made obvious by her extreme enthusiasm while showing me around the in-progress exhibit last week—that she ensured the young talent’s work would be a focal point in Wilmington, NC. VonDerVellen has created an exhibit, of which words cannot really do any justice.

She started with cotton clothing, which she then turned into paper. On the paper she printed stories told to her by family and friends and then formed it into what looks like a wearable garment, representative of that story.

“I also discovered that weaving the printed strips together provided durability and also symbolized how ephemeral moments and memories can embed and weave themselves into personal possessions,” VonDerVellen says.

Her focus piece is a gorgeous wedding dress and matching shoes. Written on the wall next to the garment is a line, leading viewers into its creative genesis: “I found the dress after only trying on three.” The entire dress and shoes are covered in words that give meaning and life to them. “He was so patient and proud” is written on the strap of one shoe, for example.

VonDerVellen’s work is put together so flawlessly that, at first glance, one cannot tell whether the garments are comprised of paper. “She is combining tradition and innovation,” Brennan says. And she does so delicately and transformatively, something which has to be seen in person to fully comprehend its magnificence.

In addition to VonDerVellen's artwork, CAM will host a powerful group exhibit on the same day. "Out of Fashion" is coming to Wilmington from the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art (SECCA) in Winston-Salem, NC. The exhibit was on display from November until March, and most—though, unfortunately, not all—of its pieces will be residing at CAM through August 19th.

"Out of Fashion" was curated by Steven Matijcio of SECCA, a native of Canada who has done extensive research in order to "get to know his home," as Brennan explains. The exhibit will feature artists from all over North Carolina: Lauren F. Adams, Precious Lovell, Stephanie Liner, Katie Martin, Libby O'Bryan, R. Brooke Priddy, Mary Tuma, Jessie Vogel, Jan-Ru Wan, and the Common Seam Collective (Gabrielle Duggan, Meghan Holliday, Cayce Lee, Amy Quinn, and Shelly Smith).

"Out of Fashion" highlights the potential opportunity for a change in our current textile processes—something which used to be one of NC's primary industry sources. Still, today, we can construct the raw products here and then send them overseas to be finished, allowing for more jobs and for North Carolinians to continue taking pride in what was once their booming textile industry.

One standout feature of the exhibit is the work of Precious Lovell. Three separate mannequins are dressed in Lovell's art, labeled "Blood," "Sweat" and "Tears." Accompanied with the mannequins is a slave narrative, put together by Lovell to illustrate the three pieces with quotes from those whom were once North Carolina slaves. "Precious is interested in making sure that these stories are not lost, particularly the slave narrative tradition," Brennan explains.

All three garments began with the same basic bodice shape. "Blood" is stained with red dye, and cascading from its back are beaded chains, reminiscent of arteries. "Sweat" appears to be damaged with water, as cotton balls dot the back, representative of the immense amounts of cotton slaves were forced to pick each day. Lastly, "Tears" has what looks like giant teardrops coming down from all sides, indicative of the struggles explained in the narrative.

All other pieces are equally intriguing and better seen than read about. “They do fabulous work,” Brennan notes of SECCA.

“Out of Fashion” and “Julie VonDerVellen” will be on display at the Cameron Art Museum from April 28th until August 19th.

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