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TOURING *WORLD OF WEARABLEART (W.O.W)*  
JUNE 22 2018 – SEPTEMBER 22, 2019

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This touring packet emphasizes experiential inquiry-based learning by asking questions to help visitors think about the exhibition.

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WITH VISITORS

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**INFORM:**

General information:

- The World of Wearable Art (W.O.W.) Awards Competition is an internationally renowned design competition in New Zealand that attracts entries from over 40 countries each year.
- Anything that is **wearable** art can find a place on the stage, as long as it is original, innovative and well executed.
- Anyone can submit a piece to the competition—it doesn't matter who the maker is (e.g., many artists who succeed in the competition are primarily craftspeople like carpenters, blacksmiths, or boat repairers).
- Unlike designers in the fashion industry, the artists who create works for the W.O.W. Awards Competition are not limited by commercial reality or other usual restrictions of fashion, allowing them to create completely unique and outrageous works.

About the W.O.W. performance:

- For three weeks every year, W.O.W. showcases the best of these creations in a spectacular show that takes over New Zealand's vibrant capital city of Wellington.
- The wearable art pieces are worn by models and are brought to life in elaborately choreographed performances.

While this traveling exhibition does not display current entries, it showcases 32 award-winning garments from previous competitions that are now held in the permanent W.O.W. collection.

**DIRECT:**

Audience to explore the exhibition while thinking about the personalities (human or non-human) that are evoked by the artworks.

**ASK:**

- **If you had the opportunity to model one of these pieces, which would you choose to wear? What about that piece makes you want to model it?**  
[Allow visitors to share their thoughts.]
- **How do our personal choices in what we wear in our daily life reflect our self-expression, and what do these choices communicate to others?**

## INFORM:

When the founder of W.O.W. Dame Suzie Moncrieff created the competition in 1987, her goal was “to take art off the wall and exhibit it as a live theatrical show.” W.O.W. challenges assumptions about the line between fine art, craftsmanship, and fashion and allows us to think more expansively about art and the human form.

Because these pieces were created with the intention of being worn by people and not mannequins and used for a one-time performance, there are some issues with exhibiting them in a museum.

- For example, *Loops* by Yogesh Chaudhary and Manas Barve is made entirely from looped and knotted wool felt, bypassing traditional stitching. (Could be helpful to point out the piece.) Because it’s always displayed with its arms held out, the knots have gotten stretched and damaged over time.
- Another example—*Gothic Habit* by Lynn Christiansen (again, could be helpful to point out the piece) is made of laser cut and etched felt that looks more like aged brick the more it is touched. The action of wearing the work enhances it; thus, not wearing it prevents it from reaching the artist’s aesthetic goal.

## ASK:

- **Given this greater context of the work functioning within a performance, what might be some advantages/disadvantages of displaying this type of object in a museum?**

(purpose is to think through traditional approaches of museums) See if visitors can answer; add in some of these possible explorations if needed:

- Advantages -
  - We can examine the works very closely and appreciate their fine level of detail and craftsmanship.
  - This is the only way that we can see these works in person without going to New Zealand—the traveling exhibition allows people from all over the world to see the works.
  - The pieces continue to be seen long after the event rather than simply being put into storage
- Disadvantages -
  - Performance (dancing, music, a bit of acting) is a huge part of the W.O.W festival. It’s impossible to fully translate the performance in a museum setting.
  - Looking at a Wearable Art piece on a motionless mannequin doesn’t have the same effect as watching a person dance while wearing it. The pieces were intended to be viewed in motion.
  - Pieces in this exhibition tend to get damaged because they weren’t necessarily created to withstand being transported. (For example, *Lady of*

*the Wood* needed repairs after its arrival to the FAC.)

**DIRECT:**

- Audience to reexamine the works and imagine what they could be like if they weren't molded to the human form, i.e. - look at them as a work of art.
- Conversely, direct audience to envision the experience of seeing the pieces in motion, worn by a moving, dancing person

**ASK:**

- **How does looking at this artwork (meant to be worn and touched) change how you think about what art can be?**

□ Possible explorations:

- Fine / high art doesn't have to be confined to traditional mediums; breaking from traditional mediums can result in innovative and beautiful work (challenge assumptions about "Fine Art")
- Thinking of art as something that can be integrated with the human body could allow us to view and appreciate differences and uniqueness in others
- Art objects don't need to be made by traditional "artists" to be valid; many of the works in this show were made by artisans who primarily work with worn material like leather and jewelry
- The pieces in this show represent an intersection of creative forms and encourage us to think of other ways that creative fields can overlap and mix

**Direct** visitors to spend time watching the videos of the WOW competition in the northern most gallery and notice how performance and art on humans in motion change their perceptions of the exhibition.

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RECOMMENDED FOR VTS

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The easiest objects to VTS should be selected for dense or narrative content. Avoid potentially triggering content that tour leaders may feel uncomfortable facilitating.

A few pieces that could work well:  
for younger audiences:

- *Inkling* by Gillian Saunders
- *Hermecea* by Jan Kerr

for more mature audiences:

- *The Exchange* by Tatyanna and Natasha Meharry
- *Beast in the Beauty* by David Walker

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## EXHIBITION TEXT

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### **The magical World of WearableArt™**

For over 30 years, the World of WearableArt® Awards has captivated audiences in New Zealand with its magic and ingenuity. What began as a small but wildly wonderful design competition has become a theatrical spectacle and a magnet for attracting creative talent from around the world.

#### WELCOME TO OUR WORLD

At the heart of World of WearableArt is an annual **International Design Competition** that each year accepts entries from more than 40 countries. The rules are simple: anything that is wearable can find a place on stage, as long as it is original, innovative and well-made. This means World of WearableArt attracts some of the most creative people in the world.

World of WearableArt is a licence to play, explore and experiment with design concepts, resources and processes, with entrants ranging from backyard welders to high-end fashion designers and artisans using unexpected materials to create highly sophisticated garments.

Every year, World of WearableArt showcases the best of the Competition through the **World of WearableArt Awards Show**, which takes over New Zealand's vibrant capital city of Wellington in an explosion of creativity and fun. The worlds of fashion and art collide and intersect in this theatrical extravaganza showcasing incredible works of wearable art to an audience of over 60,000, over three weeks.

Welcome to this exhibition as it celebrates the extraordinary creativity and ingenuity that puts art onto the human body and then brings it to life. Prepare to be wowed!

*This exhibition was made possible by the generous assistance of the New Zealand Government.*

#### **A wilder kind of wardrobe**

In 1987, World of WearableArt founder Dame Suzie Moncrieff had an idea - she would take art off the walls and onto the body. For 30 years, thousands of artists, designers and creators have translated her vision into their own unique pieces of wearable art.

The spectacular creations from the World of WearableArt archives prove that the only limit to wearable art is an artist's imagination. Some come for the technical challenge. Some show everyday materials transformed into something extraordinary. Some aim to simply delight and amuse.

The World of WearableArt judges look for originality, creativity and skill in construction. Get up close to these exquisitely detailed artworks and you'll see why they're show-stoppers.

### **Bizarre Bras**

World of WearableArt has been taking bras from the underwear drawer and putting them centre stage since 1995, when artists were first invited to create a Bizarre Bra.

The six Bizarre Bras on display here were all made for this popular section of World of WearableArt's competition. Forget lace, silk and beige polyester - these fun creations are assembled from an extraordinary range of materials, from taxidermy to kitchen tools. They showcase the imagination, wit and skill that transforms underwear into *outrageous*-wear.

Fittingly, for a competition that celebrates the female form, New Zealand Breast Cancer Research Trust is one of the charities supported by World of WearableArt.

### **Theatrical spectacular**

Every September, the World of WearableArt creative team assembles one of the greatest shows on earth - a dazzling stage spectacle that blurs the lines between art and fashion, theatre and dance. Each piece chosen for the awards is individually choreographed in a dreamlike flow of movement and music that portrays the garment at its best.

Think of it as a kaleidoscope of colour, a sensory explosion, or an exuberant rebellion against the everyday.

Come inside and experience a little World of WearableArt magic for yourself.

*Runs for 8 minutes. Screens continuously.*

### **WELCOME TO OUR WORLD. Come and be a part of it.**

World of WearableArt is an internationally renowned design competition that attracts entries from over 40 countries. Anything that is wearable art can find a place on the stage, as long as it is original, innovative and well-executed.

For three weeks every year, World of WearableArt showcases the best of these creations in a spectacular show, attended by over 60,000 visitors, that takes over New Zealand's capital city of Wellington in an explosion of creativity.

World of WearableArt invites you to enter our 2019 International Design Competition

<https://www.worldofwearableart.com/competition/how-to-enter/>

Come and be WOWed and witness the remarkable World of WearableArt show for yourself:  
2019 show season

26 September-13 October 2019

<https://www.worldofwearableart.com/tickets-2019/>

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## ABOUT THE ARTIST

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There are too many artists to give each one a proper summary but this video gives a helpful introduction to the competition and organization:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wqp3LgZTHqI>

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## RELATED EVENTS

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### **SASHAY**

June 22, 2019, 7-11 p.m.

Join us for an evening of exceptional design, cocktails, appetizers, music, and entertainment!

Launched in 2015 with a runway show of garments in the style of artwork by Georgia O’Keeffe, Sashay is back, this time featuring unique wearable art pieces inspired by World of WearableArt™. The traveling exhibition that will grace the galleries of the Fine Arts Center this summer draws from World of WearableArt New Zealand museum, boasting a permanent collection of the international competition’s winners and finalists over the last 30 years. Join us for an evening of exceptional design and dress to impress in your most outrageous and creative attire!

Performances by: The Luddites, hip hop performer and Alasyn Stowers and ballet dancer Kira Walton of the Colorado Ballet Society, Elizabeth Fluharty, Dave Hale, Grace Ramsay Telas, Joe Lobeck, and Ballet Folklórico de la Raza.

### **LIBATION LECTURE (A Member-Only Lecture Series)**

August 22, 2019, 5:15-6:30pm (lecture begins at 5:30)  
\$10 per lecture and includes your drink

An educational twist to the traditional happy hour with themes pulled from various FAC exhibitions, each lecture will explore an aspect of the amazing art and featured artists. Enjoy a themed drink for each lecture to help you really dive deep into the topic. Inspired by the amusingly bizarre and innovative award-winning garments on view in the World of WearableArt™ exhibition, this lecture will explore the history of costume.

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## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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**About the competition and submitting to it:**

Entrants who hope to participate in the World of WearableArt competition are given 6 categories to guide their creations. 3 are new each year and 3 are the same:

**Aotearoa:** Aotearoa (pronounced ow-tay-ah-roh-ah) is the Maori (pronounced M-ow-ree) name for the country of New Zealand. – this thematic category is guided by the “sense of place” of New Zealand.

**Avant-garde:** In art it means experimental or cutting edge – this category challenges entrants to be trailblazers. Originally, in French: vanguard or advance guard (the part of an army that goes forward ahead of the rest)

**Open:** This is what it sounds like – an open-ended category.

When submitting to W.O.W, designers must supply judges with the following:

- After creating an account on W.O.W’s website, you upload photographs of your completed garment. You must include photos of the front, side, and back of the piece and may also include close-up photos of specific details. You can submit a maximum of ten photos.
- Instructions for how to put the garment on
- A title
- A list of the main materials included in the garment
- Both a short and an extended description of the inspiration for the garment and the process of creating it

W.O.W also requires garments to meet a series of safety concerns. Artworks must also be made to fit specific sizes and dimensions. Finalists are selected through three rounds of closed judging.

### **About the performance:**

The annual performance in Wellington, New Zealand that showcases W.O.W works is incredibly elaborate and is difficult to briefly explain. It’s also integral to the works, as they’re all made with the hope and intention of being worn in this performance. To get a better idea of what the performances look like, visitors should check out the projections in the North gallery. You can also visit World of WearableArt’s YouTube channel for even more videos: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCtl6YmyDQXwohhXUsQWHfxg>

Also, here are some quotes from the exhibition catalog that describe the performance:

- "WOW is best described as a glorious rebellion against the mundane, a choreographed collision where fantasy meets reality and dreams merge with nightmares. For the audience, it is a sensory saturation, with the bodies on stage forming a moving canvas in a seamless, fluid exhibition that is enhanced by soundscapes, lighting, dance, drama, and comedy. There is no narration and no language barriers."
- "Over 50,000 people attend the annual WOW Awards Show in Wellington, New Zealand - a two-hour spectacular of dance, theatre, music, and art. ... The simple, but challenging brief is put to designers - to take 'art off the wall and adorn onto the human form'."

- "There is nothing else in the world that offers the opportunity to showcase wearable art and to interact with other wearable art creators." (from Lynn Christiansen, creator of *Gothic Habit* and *Horridus*)
- "WOW is more than a wearable art show to me. It is a special place where an incredible collection of artistic people gather together to show their work, mingle and encourage each other ... you feel more like a part of a family than a contestant in a competition." (from David Walker, creator of *Lady of the Wood* and *Beast in the Beauty*)