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Fashion meets art, art meets fashion, at BU's 808 Gallery

By **Cate McQuaid** GLOBE CORRESPONDENT FEBRUARY 14, 2018

I'm conservative in style. What I wear may express something original, but within safe parameters. For those who breach such parameters, clothing is a personal declaration that can have political wattage.

"I think of fashion as literally representing externally what's going on internally," says Dev, a member of the fashion collective QWEAR, in a livestream of the group's fashion show at the opening of "Forms & Alterations." Dev wears heels, patterned pants, a headscarf, a red stole, and a mandarin-style bolero jacket.

The exhibition at Boston University's 808 Gallery plunges into juicy interstices between masculine and feminine, black and white, and art and fashion.

Biracial artist Genevieve Gaignard uses costume to play out racial tropes in photos. In "Supreme," she wears braids, bling, talon-like nails, and a shirt reading "Hoodrat Thangs," while in "Watermelon," she's a bland blonde in a button-down shirt, holding her groceries. Gaignard fits herself into either slot.

There's nothing bland about queer artist K8 Hardy's outrageous garments made from thrift-store finds installed on silvery mannequins. "Look 29" is made mostly of bras, some damaged, some colorful and satiny. The piece both sends up and celebrates a garment steeped in the contradictions of women's roles.

Beverly Semmes makes sculptures that look like dresses. "Olga" and "Ophelia" drop to the floor in puddles of vibrant velvet swirling around ceramic vessels. Prints of Semmes's paintings and drawings, which obscure pornographic source images, adorn designer Jennifer Minniti's outfits (together, the two are the CarWash Collective). In photographs here, models wear those outfits in a dizzying conceptual volley between attracting the gaze and repudiating it.

Claire Fleury and Alesia Exum base the outrageous designs in their "Future Memory" video and clothing installation on glam, punk, drag, and rock performers. Gender is irrelevant: It's all about pattern, cut, and catching the eye. Will a day come when we all feel free to wear our insides on the outside, as Fleury and Exum's models declaratively do? Probably not. But they break ground for the rest of us.

FORMS & ALTERATIONS

At 808 Gallery, Boston University, 808 Commonwealth Ave., through March 25. 617-353-3329. www.bu.edu/art/