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Fashion Forward

Don't Call it 'Project Runway, the Art Exhibit'

A Soho gallery turns fashion studio, for one week

by Corina Zappia
September 27th, 2005 4:05 PM

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It's difficult not to reference *Project Runway*, when discussing "Open Stitch," **Location One's** latest performance/exhibit. After all, the basic concept is similar: Take 15 designers and artists, put them in a room for seven days with a set amount of materials and, meanwhile, let the public watch the process unfold. Then, move the artists out, leave the workspace intact for two weeks, and follow it up with a runway show of the final creations.



Karaca's red silk dress, at Location One
photo: Courtesy of Location One

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Yet to deem it the art-exhibit version of the Bravo hit show is misleading, if only because the 15 here aren't exactly dreaming of the grand Dior or Gucci courtship in the sky. Some, like Aya Bdeir, a research assistant from MIT's Media Lab, have never sewn before; others are still in school, like 20-year-old FIT student Ryan Kennedy. Then there are participants like Barry Doss, an

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accomplished costume designer whose work includes *Phantom of the Opera*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and now *Wicked*.

"This was an experiment, in a sense," says Flavia Destefanis of Location One. "What we were trying to do was create a space and a place where the artists, from different walks of life, would have the freedom of creating anything they wanted."

Sebastien Sanz de Santamaria, the artist who conceived of the project, explains, "The show itself is the whole process of doing the work. A lot of people were like, 'So how was the opening?' Well, there wasn't really an opening. It was more like, we started working. The opening is the closing, which is the fashion show."

Sanz de Santamaria partnered with two of his fellow artists (Jean Barberis and Aya Kakeda) from Long Island collective Flux Factory to form WikiWikiCorp, which produced big mascot-like suits of polyester-covered foam for a father, child, and two children (the father suit was labeled "size: huge"). Turkish dressmaker Selma Karaca turned out three glamorous gowns in seven days: one in red silk, another in green silk micromesh, and a striking black-and-beige number in merino wool and polyester, adorned with buttons running up the side. Stefany Anne Goldberg, a recent Bard M.F.A. grad in music and sound, sewed a dress that held pieces of paper with the lyrics for Pink Floyd's "Wish You Were Here." And Bdeir, the engineer with no previous sewing experience whatsoever, made a burka that opened and closed on a motorized contraption, to expose a belly dancing ensemble underneath ("The two extremes the Western world has of Arab women," says Destefanis.)

For George Hudacko, a costume designer with more than 100 dance



performances to his credit, this was an opportunity to implement his own personal challenge: constructing all garments using only one or two seams. "Two of the pieces he did, he made two seams, then cut strips and wove a basket in the top part; his interpretation was to

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create some constraints on a technical level," says Destefanis. "It was a creative vacation from what he normally does."

Location One will host a performance of the Glen Rumsey Dance Project's "ignored in my heaven," followed by a runway show of "Open Stitch" designs and an after party. The event is open to the public, with tickets \$7 (price includes one drink). Please call 212-334-3347 to make a reservation.

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