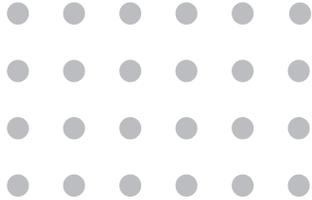


# Fashion Forward

November 26 - January 25, 2009

Curated by Karen Shaw

Islip Art Museum



## **Fashion Forward**

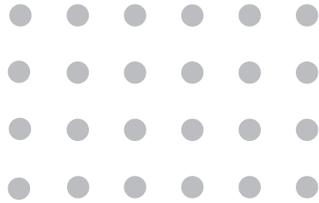
November 26 - January 25, 2009

**Susan Breen**  
**Nick Cave**  
**Vince Gargiulo**  
**Mara Held**  
**Michelle Jaffe**  
**Carter Kustera**  
**Meridith McNeal**  
**Jackie Nickerson**  
**Jen Scott**  
**Tait**  
**Vadis Turner**  
**Cristina Vergano**  
**Andy Warhol**  
**Jil Weinstock**



Curated by **Karen Shaw**

# Fashion Forward



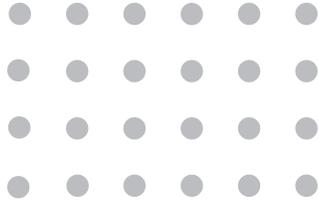
Art and fashion, design and advertising are so tightly intertwined in our consumer culture that it is natural many artists choose to explore these themes. The 14 artists participating in *Fashion Forward* at the Islip Art Museum look forward, as well as back and side-ways, to fashion in order to create imaginative, thoughtful and often humorous work on this subject.

**Andy Warhol**, the most well known artist in this show, worked for many years in the fashion industry before his 15 minutes of fame that has lasted over 40 years. His silkscreen portrait of Diana Vreeland as the Emperor Napoleon is an apt work to start the exhibition. Diana Vreeland, the legendary editor of *Vogue* magazine, was the Empress of high fashion in the 60's and 70's. It was she who dictated what was chic and elegant to millions of men and women who would, in turn, become the standard bearers of that distinction.

**Mara Held's** paintings reference the way garments are made or manufactured. She draws the patterns for sleeves and bodices—the architectural substructure of fashionable garments—on linen which she then overlays with egg tempera. Her works are sometimes colorful and at other times subtle, just like fashion where change is seasonal.

The artist who goes by the single name **Tait** also uses patterns. In *Jack-It*, his single work in this exhibition, the artist has cut out patterns from his own painting, and then sewn the excised canvas into a fine, painted jacket. He manages to fuse art and fashion in a literal way.

**Susan Breen's** small works are also an amalgam of art and fashion. She slices the unused paint left on her pallet into sweet, tiny dresses. Her work is a form of recycling—a bit like going to a consignment shop rather than Bendel's.



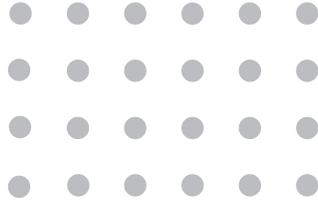
Three of the artists in the exhibition—**Vadis Turner**, **Cristina Vergano** and **Michelle Jaffe**—explore intimate apparel that is not meant to be seen in public. Cristina Vergano’s carefully rendered paintings both provoke and answer the question: what is under that burkha? With a nod to early, somewhat racy, advertisements from the Maidenform Bra Company and today’s overtly sexual Victoria’s Secret campaigns, Vergano not so secretly depicts beautiful ethnic women brazenly showing their most daring underwear. Vadis Turner plays on the delicacy of lacy undergarments by making them of waxed paper and dental floss. Michelle Jaffe, on the other hand, creates similar undergarments but hers are of metal, erotic and forbidding at the same time.

**Carter Kustera** spoofs the glamorous advertisements of clothing that appear in high-end magazines and newspapers. His beautifully painted works on paper and canvas are funny parodies of the many improbable narratives that are created to sell clothes and make them more desirable.

**Meridith McNeal** looks back to the Victorian era for her mini-installation. Initially created for an exhibition in a Victorian House, her work echoes the clothing of the period. But instead of creating her elaborate dresses of antique fabric, McNeal uses subway diagrams that refer to the present and to her interest in maps.

**Jil Weinstock** imbeds fabric and clothes in rubber, an approximation of flesh. The upper half of her work is encased in latex while the bottom half floats free. Several works are installed next to one another, creating a group portrait of fabric from the past.

**Jen Scott’s** skirts, dresses and blouses are made from tea-dyed paper. She opens used tea bags, empties and irons them, then carefully sews them together. The color



of her garments comes from the tea itself. Most of her creations are wearable—the perfect “tea” dress for teatime.

**Jackie Nickerson’s** large scale photographs are from her *Farm* series, which the artist shot in Africa while documenting tea plantations. The three photographs in this exhibition capture the way farm workers create stylish work clothes from cast-offs. They wear their creations with remarkable dignity and pride, and with more flair than those with access to the most expensive couture.

**Nick Cave** also evokes African creativity and influence. He creates fanciful costumes from thrift store finds that he embellishes with knitted and crocheted additions. *Sockman* is adorned with a myriad of socks hanging by hooks onto chain mail and thick felt. The elaborately decorated creature looks as if it came from some mysterious, ancient ceremony, a shaman in the midst of the 21<sup>st</sup> century art world.

**Vince Gargiulo’s** large scale sculpture is also made of socks, very many socks, perhaps all the lost socks in the New York area. *Where Socks Go* is a huge outcropping of varied colored balls about to overtake the gallery. This witty installation is surrounded by beautifully cobbled, surrealistic shoes that humorously touch on the goofiness of designer footwear.

**Karen Shaw**, September, 2008

## **Artists' Statements**

## **Susan Breen**

With this series of dresses, I have integrated my artistic practice with a playful return to childhood fantasy and fashion. Utilizing materials that are normally discarded but often quite beautiful, literally swatches from my mixing palette, I have cut these modernist surfaces created by chance and accident into a series of tiny dresses. They are testaments to a personal, innovative interest in creative recycling.

These works retain their spirit of chance and whimsy. Each is abstract by nature and formally and carefully designed into individual fashion statements. The colorful exhibition as a whole transcends the fashion runway of custom wear to a fantastically unique, abstracted art form. Viewers can imagine these sculptural “dresses” as a contemporary clothing line that will never go out of style.



**Susan Breen**  
*Dress* 2007  
Mixed media  
7" x 5 1/2" (installation component)  
Courtesy of the Woodward Gallery, NYC

## Nick Cave

Nick Cave has made a selection of works titled Soundsuits, named for the sounds made when the sculptures are worn. Constructed from found and recycled objects, thrift-store purchase and hand-fabricated elements and comprised of materials such as vintage masks, beads, plastic flowers, cloth and sticks that are intuitively combined to form complex and highly seductive visual surfaces.

Reminiscent of African ceremonial costumes, yet similarly connected to haute couture, Cave's Soundsuits are physical manifestations of his energy. He has said, "I believe that the familiar must move towards the fantastic. I want to evoke feelings that are unnamed, that aren't realized except in dreams." Thus, through the acts of collecting and reconfiguring, his focus on the connotations of materials as a way to construct narratives, coupled with the fact that the wearer is at times completely concealed, allows the work to transcend preconceived notions of class, race and sexuality.



**Nick Cave**  
*Soundsuit (Sockman)* 2005  
Mixed media  
Lifesize  
Courtesy of Jack Shainman Gallery

## **Vince Garguglio**

I combine items used and worn by people to create situation narratives. Humor and irony play an important part in this work. Simple iconic forms draw attention to the particular objects to stress the idea.

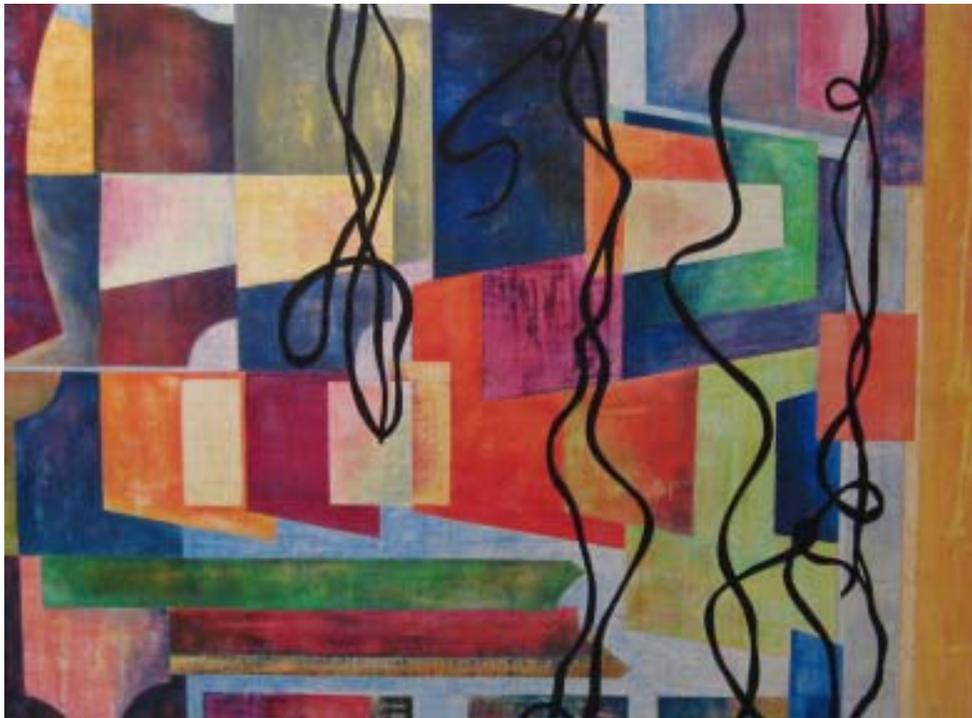
My sculptures relate to fashion in its most general sense. By definition that is: any way of dressing, behaving, writing or performing that is favored at any time or place. I will include making of art, sculpture and particularly this work as fashion—and so saying, I will “Fashion Forward.”



**Vince Gargiulo**  
*Where Socks Go* 1991  
Metal armature, socks  
80" x 65" x 18"

## **Mara Held**

These works, painted in egg tempera on linen glued panel, refer to painting's ability to be both paint and image. I have focused primarily on deciphering the ways pattern invents and builds itself through an intricate composite of layers and spatial relationships. My works investigate ways line and surface construct animated spatial relationships through transparency and light. Form is constructed through implication to weave an image of loosely reminiscent fragments locked together. The painting surface is fractured, peeled away and shed, disrupting a continuous surface to construct a skin that simultaneously conjures the physical and the imaginative.



**Mara Held**  
*Tower II* 2004  
Egg tempera on linen glued panel  
32" x 48"

## Michelle Jaffe

I mine clothing as a means to probe the body, (albeit absent) and the mind. Possessing its own grammar and syntax, the idea of clothing is explored as shelter, both psychic and architectural space. The *Vestn Vestment* series examines the way we transmit both consciously and subconsciously. How we display and mask the body and ourselves is investigated.

Planes of aluminum, steel, vinyl and plastic intersect to become volume and form, creating graphic images of reduced and abstracted male and female outer and undergarments. Iconic images reveal primal emotions of seduction, fear, power, beauty and sexuality. Unconscious personal and cultural states of mind are revealed. The sculptures are psychological containers that reach deep into the collective memory, while referencing design, fashion and cultural clues.



**Michelle Jaffe**  
*Large Cruciform* 2002  
Aluminium, plexiglass  
50" x 30"

## **Carter Kustera**

Carter Kustera is a Canadian born New York-based artist who has shown nationally and internationally including two Venice Biennales, in 1993 and 1997. His career has spanned 20 years. Kustera makes work in a range of mediums and materials from works on paper, paintings, handmade magazines, sculpture, ceramics, installation, performance and video to illustration and consumer products.



**Carter Kustera**

*Tsunami Sunset* 2007

Watercolor, gouache, glitter

40" x 60"

Courtesy of Lyons Wier-Ortt Gallery

## Meridith McNeal

My work is about memory and the cultural, physical and social history of a place or individuals. The ideas I set out to convey compel me to manifest work to best tell a story. My materials are selected for the purpose of deepening the story and for the evocative quality of the medium. I aim to create works that embody a layering of time—the old and new in any one particular piece.

The sculptures and cut paper pieces included in *Fashion Forward* were created for my spring 2007 exhibition *Keeping Room*, a full gallery, site-specific installation at Figureworks Gallery, which occupies an entire floor of a late 19th Century brick row-house in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. The rooms of the gallery were transformed back in time into a small Victorian parlor, a room which was sometimes referred to as a keeping room.

I am interested in the layering of time that is very much part of our New York City. The ghosts that make up daily life are main characters in this work.

Meridith McNeal is a Brooklyn-based artists, educator, curator and arts administrator. She has had recent exhibitions at Glyndor Gallery at Wave Hill in the Bronx, and the Nathan Cummings Foundation in Manhattan. Her work is represented by Figureworks in Brooklyn, Amy Simon Fine Arts in Westport, Ct., and H.A.C. Gallery in Kobe City, Japan

She also works as Director of Rush East NY art center and as Director of Education for the Rush Philanthropic Arts Foundation, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to providing disadvantaged urban youth with significant exposure and access to the arts, as well as providing exhibition opportunities to under-represented artists and artists of color. McNeal has curated over 70 exhibitions and is on the artists advisory board of Kentier International Drawing Space, Coney Island Museum and the Horticultural Society of New York.



**Meridith McNeal**  
*Tiny Girl's Dress* 2007  
NYC transit map under bell jar  
7" x 5"

## Jackie Nickerson

Jackie Nickerson took the photographs in the series *Farm* during three years she spent traveling in South Africa, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi. Highlighting moments of individual identity in the lives of migrant workers and plantation workers throughout South Africa, *Farm* presents images of workers' hands and clothing, as well as portraits of both men and women.

In 1998, Nickerson bought a flatbed truck to continue her travels through Zimbabwe, which allowed her access to remote farms and an opportunity to provide transport for many traveling workers. She learned of their lives, families, tribes and hardships. In Malawi, Nickerson visited internationally owned tea and coffee plantations, one with a population of over 50,000 people. On the tea plantations, she photographed the toll of the harsh and sharp tea plants on workers' hands and the unique adaptation they made in their clothing in order to work in the fields.

Nickerson says the inspiration for her book, *Farm*, came directly from the people she photographed. "I was impressed with their work ethic and their positive attitude and pride. This naturally followed on in every aspect of their life, including how they dressed. They made a huge effort to add creativity and elegance to their appearance. Their approach to dressing was unlike any I had encountered before and was highly refreshing. They are completely free in their approach to mixing patterns, texture and style without reference to the media. They adapted their outfits to suit the job they had to do so there was a close connection between the practical and the aesthetic. Added to this was some tribal influence and tradition. I am very grateful for the good natured way in which I was invited into their lives."



**Jackie Nickerson**  
*Erina* 2000  
Lambda photograph  
48" x 36"  
Courtesy of Jack Shainman Gallery

## Jen Scott

I have always been attracted to clothes as a form of self-expression. However, it is never been about the latest trends or designer labels for me; it has been about the color, the texture, and the shape of clothing. This fascination and attraction has led me to explore these aspects in my artwork. I wanted to create clothing using alternative materials through which I could delve into color and texture. Using tea bags happened by accident. I was in my studio working on a project, drinking Celestial Red Zinger. Over the week, I had accumulated many tea bags in various cups and saucers. Most of them had dried out. The tea stained the bags a beautiful soft red. I carefully opened each bag, discarding the leaves. The actual dried tea paper reminded me of dried flower petals. Soon I had about 20 delicate little squares. I glued them together, forming a large sheet. It reminded me of a quilt or patchwork. I began piecing them into dress patterns and paying more attention to the dyeing process. I love how the tea bag holds color. Staining the bags is much like dyeing cloth; the color becomes absorbed into the material unlike a coat of paint on the surface. The color appears faded, which gives the clothing an antique look. Its antique appearance has a fragile nature, reminding me of how we present ourselves in clothes. Our fashions are just thin little disguises that transform us, protecting us from our environment of both the elements and people.

I like that these clothes truly are not made to be worn, although I usually start by fitting them onto myself. I then distort them, elongating and shrinking sections. I don't want them to be worn because they do not need to be embodied to tell a story. In fashion, the clothes need to be worn to make a statement. My clothes are little stories within themselves. They are pieced together to convey feelings rather than an entire statement. I am not interested in making statements; I'd rather let the many squares of opened tea bags reveal something more introverted.



**Jen Scott**  
*Clothing Line* 2008  
Tea bags, mixed media  
48" x 28"

## **Tait**

Tait Roelof's recent work offers a fascinating look into commodification and production of artwork in contemporary society. Firing at and commenting on the art world's shifting notion of fine art and fashion, Tait's installations are created when the artist cuts patterns from his pop-culture canvasses, then tailors the cut pieces into hats, high-top sneakers and coats. Conceptually, the work is not complete until the canvasses are deconstructed and recombined as fashion objects. Tait's work comments on the consumption of luxury goods by a global economy obsessed with designer names and labels.



**Tait**  
*Jack It* 2006-2008  
Oil on canvas  
Dimensions variable  
Courtesy of Lyons Wier-Ortt Gallery

## **Vadis Turner**

Creating desirable objects and objects of beauty has long been the work of women. Her craft, like her image, is a measure of a woman's worth and tangible evidence of her time(s). Handicrafts become precious because ritual and shared time(s) are integral to their creation. As they are passed down through generations, they increase in value. They become heirlooms and ultimately historical artifacts.

Advancements in entertainment and technology have replaced many cultural traditions and diluted traditional gender roles. Synthesizing current cultural issues with materials that are representative of women's work illustrates how we spend our time and define our values. Transforming domestic materials into contemporary art objects bonds with ancestral forms of craft that determine a woman's value worth and cultural identity.



**Vadis Turner**  
*Wax Paper Lingerie With Ruffles* 2006  
Wax paper  
26" x 20" framed  
Courtesy of Lyons Wier-Ortt Gallery

## **Cristina Vergano**

It is a complex relationship women have with the finery they choose, and with the clothing society chooses for them. In this series of paintings I explore that concept, and play with our perceptions and assumptions. Is the African woman objectified by wearing the lacy, sexy attire she reveals under her traditional clothes? Or is it her choice to be perceived as desirable while her societal role, embodied by the Masai clothing, stifles her? Is the coy Muslim girl revealing or hiding her corset-clad body under a Burkha? Is she a righteous wife or whore? Is she in charge or a victim? In my mind, there is no clear answer to this conundrum, because women's self image and roles continually shift.

I am also considering the interplay between traditional cultural attires and the spoils of consumerism, which wash up in the most forsaken corners of the world. Containers of youth clothing from the USA are regularly shipped to developing nations. We are all familiar with the images of geographically remote people wearing t-shirts with incongruous logos or the images of pop stars. Are these coveted as symbols of progress, or considered a practical, necessary evil? Again, the answer is probably shifting and ambivalent as reality has many faces.

My playful sculptural assemblages make light of a certain ridiculousness which can be exposed in all fashions. Attire is supposed to make us appear as proud members of the "in" tribe, while it often turns the table on us and emphasizes our less becoming aspects.

In all cases, a wealth of insight and amusement is available to the viewer who puts a certain critical distance between him or herself and the world.



**Cristina Vergano**  
*Daphne (Red Beehive)* 2008  
Oil on panel  
60" x 24"  
Courtesy of the Woodward Gallery, NYC

## Andy Warhol

Following his graduation from The Carnegie Institute of Technology in 1949, Andy Warhol moved to New York where he quickly became part of the art scene of the day. He came into his own in the 1950's in what was a golden decade for New York artists, writers, directors and actors—who were seen as the heroic figures of a time marked by mass conformity.

Warhol made a living as an illustrator, accepting commercial assignments from well-known fashion magazines and designers. Because he had so many commissions, he hired assistants to complete assignments, a revolutionary concept in the design world. He took on all requests, from Christmas cards and stationery for Bergdorf's to shoe illustrations for The New York Times. His success in the design field made him a minor celebrity, and he soon began to think of celebrity itself as an art form. It seemed a natural step in his development when he named his shoe drawings and other work after socialites and celebrities. Continuing this logical trajectory, Warhol moved from commercial art into fine art, blurring the distinction between the two.

In the 1960's, Warhol worked on an advertising campaign for Campbell Soup. If you ate Campbell's Soup circa 1966-68 and sent three labels from the soup cans back to the company, Warhol would have mailed you *The Souper Dress* for one dollar. Unfortunately, the ad campaign failed because most people ate soup in the winter, while Warhol's cotton paper dress was designed for warmer climates. He had longed to see a city of *Souper Dresses*, but unfortunately the idea was short lived.

Warhol's lifelong fascination with celebrity, fashion and media was the touchstone for his iconic work—his silk screen portraits of the rich and famous; his multiples; his gripping paintings of car crashes and headline disasters. No longer a mere shoe illustrator, Warhol is now considered the defining sensibility of an era.



**Andy Warhol**  
*The Souper Dress* 1968  
Silkscreen on cotton A-line dress  
40" x 30"  
Courtesy of the Woodward Gallery, NYC

## **Jil Weinstock**

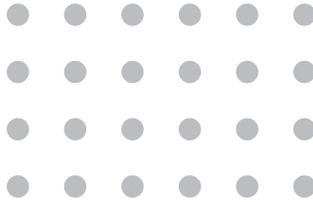
Rubber. Its uncanny approximation of flesh, its factory aesthetic, its art historical precedents have all made rubber an irresistible medium for me. I use its ambivalent appeal to beguile the viewer with questions about identity, beauty, memory and artifact.

Many of the clothing I use is inherited from my family members. These textile sculptures hang on the wall much like vanity mirrors or like portraits of groups: the cast rubber squares have a familial relationship. The fabrics become sheer and sensuously folded when suspended in the rubber. The material's fleshy surface acknowledges the body while the strict geometric shape of the pieces shows my continuing exploration of formal and photographic composition. Confined by these formal shapes, the garments have fallen into folds that enhance the intimate impression of being worn, evoking the very skin that wrinkled them. The delicate and fragile garments are placed and arranged, carefully tucked, pinched and folded. In looking at these artifacts, I want the viewer to feel like a nostalgic voyeur.

Related are the translucent rubber blocks of encased men's shirts and women's blouses, glowing atop light boxes. The men's striped shirts, lit from behind, convey a masculinity and allude to formal compositions of colorfield stripe paintings. The women's fragile lacy blouses illustrate mortality, memory and loss. The x-ray quality relates to the nation of fashion promising to reveal, but instead conceals, as well as referring to the inside and outside of the garment and the identity of the wearer.



**Jil Weinstock**  
*Group Portrait 2* 2007-2008  
Rubber, vintage clothing  
Dimensions variable  
Courtesy of the Charles Cowles Gallery



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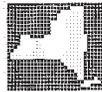
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Slate of the Arts



NYSCA

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