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The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	MoMA PS1	II. A.283

Tissue Paper Fashion: Is It an Art?

By ANNE-MARIE SCHIRO

An exhibition of fashion in an art gallery always seems to bring up the question whether fashion is really art. Often, the question is irrelevant—as it is in the Julio show now at the Institute for Art and Urban Resources.

The Institute offers studio and exhibition space to some artists who are so avant-garde even the critics can't always agree on whether their work is really art. If a few strings pinned to a wall can be put on display, why quibble about fashion?

Hence the current exhibition of tissue paper clothes at P.S. 1, the institute's huge alternative art space in Long Island City.

Alanna Heiss, founder and executive director, believes her curators should give the artists they select carte blanche. And that's just what her fashion curator, Hollywood Di Russo, did with the two designers she's worked with since starting at the institute last September. Ronald Kolodzie, the first designer she exhibited, chose Memory Lane as his theme and included some of his childhood drawings along with clothing and theatrical costumes of recent years.

"When I asked Julio what he would do," Miss Di Russo said in her soft Texas drawl, "he said, 'I will be doing three rooms of dresses.' I said, 'Can I see the sketches?' He said, 'No.' Then I said, 'Well, can I see the clothes?' He said, 'Not until the day we put up the exhibition.' So I didn't know what to expect."

"When he walked in with a little box, I nearly died. I thought he couldn't possibly have enough clothes in there to fill three rooms. Then he took out this colored tissue paper and started wrapping it around the mannequins. It's like a dream sequence. He wasn't limited by patterns or pattern makers or what fabric can do. The person wearing the dress could put in her own ideas. They're one-of-a-kind, one-time-only clothes to wear once and throw away. Of course, you'd have to be careful not to smoke or get near any candles."

Julio creased the tissue paper into crystal pleats and accordion pleats or crumpled it to resemble ruching. As a result, the paper might be mistaken for fabric at first glance. A couple of the designs are fanciful extravaganzas but others look like real clothes: a ruffly empire dress with puff sleeves, a strapless tunic over what appears to be pants. The designer says that the show is more than simply an exercise. He would be happy to wrap a customer

with tissue paper for a special occasion. "They'd be custom-made clothes for under \$100," he said.

The show's blank-faced mannequins are placed among rolls of photographers' seamless paper and sculptural geometric-shaped boxes, which impart a mysterious air. The air of mystery actually follows the viewer from the preceding room, where Christo covered windows with paper and wrapped the floor with painters' dropcloths.

The Julio show runs through Feb. 6. It will be followed on Feb. 15 by video fashions, which will include interviews with various designers.

What Miss Heiss intended when she initiated the fashion program, she said, was to confront the art world with the fashion world.

"When people in the art world see fashion," she said, "they're either flip-pant or scared. But minimal art taught us art could be problem-solving. People who design clothes are also dealing with problem-solving."

When she met Miss Di Russo last year, she said, she knew that she'd found the right person to develop the fashion program—someone who understood the difference between style and fashion, someone who believed every opportunity should be explored to the fullest.

Miss Di Russo's background is as colorful as her name. "My parents were with the circus," she said. "They were married in Hollywood, Fla. I was born in Newton, Mass., and raised in Texas. I was a schoolteacher down there and on the side I was designing hats. Little pillboxes with veils. The people in Texas didn't really understand those hats, so I came to New York about seven years ago. I worked as a waitress in a gay bar for a while and as a salesperson in a boutique on Madison Avenue. And I was training director for Mary Quant cosmetics."

"One day," she continued, "someone I knew at a pattern company asked me if I would do the hairdos and makeup for a photography session for them. They offered me \$300 for the day, so I decided to become a freelance hair and makeup artist. But since I'm at the institute, when I meet people I can tell them I'm a curator, and boy are they impressed!"

P.S. 1, an abandoned public school building that the institute rents from the city, is at 46-01 21st Street in Long Island City. It is three blocks from either the Hunters Point station on the Flushing line or the 23d Street-Ely Avenue station on the IND. Exhibitions are open to the public Thursday through Sunday from 1 to 6 P.M.



The New York Times / Dith Pran

Hollywood Di Russo, fashion curator, adjusts mannequin.

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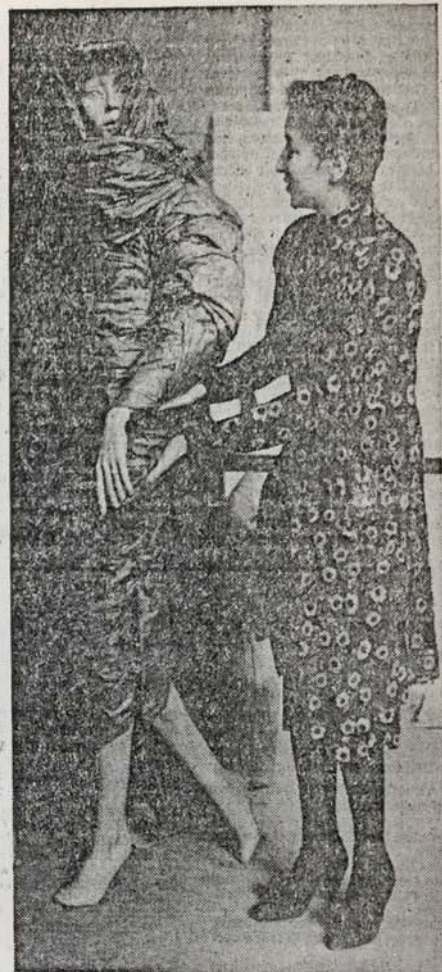
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