



Wearable art

Graphic artist turns skills to creating collectable clothing



Clothing and accessories hand-created every step of the way by Cynthia Wayne-Gaffield in her Farmington studio, Artspace, depart

for showings in the most-prestigious shows and galleries in southern Michigan.

By Loraine McClellan
staff writer

Cynthia Wayne-Gaffield spent most of her adult career as a graphic artist but all the while kept experiencing what she termed "weird fantasies" as to what could be done with the interactions of fabrics, dyes and paints with texture.

The move from commercial artist to areas of fabric exploration has taken her to her Artspace studio in a few short years, and she is now one of the front runners in the field of wearable art.

"I thought I was going to take July off for a vacation, but that didn't happen," Gaffield said from her studio in Farmington's old winery on Grand River. "As soon as I finish one piece, I've got a list of people to call. Everything is custom made, and I do some variations on a basic pattern I like, but because it is all handmade, hand-dyed, no two pieces are ever the same."

Currently Gaffield is showing with the "All Girl Art Review" in Ann Arbor. She's been invited back to show in

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— Cynthia Wayne-Gaffield

Art at Meadow Brook Aug. 17-18. There is Carol Hooberman Gallery's show "Collectable Coverings" to get ready for in the early fall, then Washenaw Community College's "Wearables '85" in November.

She describes wearable art as "an added dimension to your wardrobe, something to provide interest to your everyday life."

She describes the clothes she creates as "comfortable. All of my clothes feel good. They all have deep pockets. Most of them are cocoon drapery, classics really, but with much more style, more dimension than the basic kimono."

THE LIVONIA resident is basically

self-taught for her career of designing and creating contemporary collectable clothing and accessories.

The graduate of Farmington High School studied graphic design at Oakland Community College for her career in advertising art. Then "picked up the basics," she said, in a few fiber artistry workshops.

Starting with a bolt of natural raw silk and winding up with the last garment sewn, Gaffield does every step by hand: designing, dyeing, stretching, cutting, hand painting. Along the way she may use a wax resist technique for crisp geometric shapes. Or knit long strips of silk into sleeves. Or add a cord. Or add bead trim. Or hand applique with gold metallic thread.

"When I say self-taught, look at this contraption," she said pointing to her self-devised washing machine, steamer and boiler which sets the dye in silk noil, her favorite material.

"Noil feels like silk and looks like suede," she said. "It's tough stuff. I like what it does with natural dye. I can knit it, quilt it, turn it into sculptural forms. I can add just about anything to it. It makes beautiful loose unconstructed garments. And because I'm so concerned with texture I use it most because it can do so many different things for me."

GAFFIELD SAID she "grew up sewing because I always seemed to be drawn to the most expensive dress or outfit in Saks."

Today she says she suspects she was her first best advertisement because she has always worn her own designs for work, street or dress.

But clients started coming in numbers when she joined Ann Arbor Wearable Art Association, which led to the formation of the All Girl Art Review.

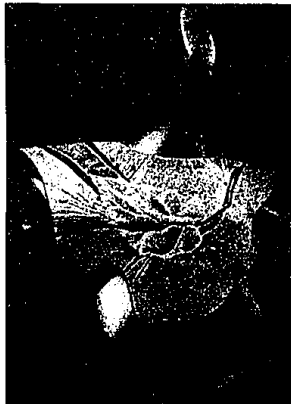
"We're a 15 member, loosely organized group. None of us knew too many people in the fine arts world, and we didn't have too many resources. Now we support one another, and we're all benefiting now from our second show in Ann Arbor," she said.

The All Girl Art Review will remain in Polletier Gallery, 213 South Main Street through Aug. 10.

Another facet of Gaffield's work, decorator pillows, commissioned by Association of Interior Design, can be seen in the West Bloomfield home that has just been opened to benefit the Multiple Sclerosis Foundation. A town and country decor has been used throughout the house located in that city's Chestnut Run subdivision.

"I never did street fairs. I think they are fun, but I don't have the stamina to stick to a booth all day when I'm chomping at the bit to start shopping and see what the other artists are offering," Gaffield said. "I'm doing just exactly what I want to be doing, pulling those weird fantasies into shape and seeing other women enjoy them."

Clients are seen by appointment only in Artspace, 31505 Grand River. The telephone number at home in Livonia is 478-5652.



The pink and gray silk noil collar was designed for bridesmaids to be worn over a simply designed, solid colored, street dress.

Staff photos by Dan Dean



The self-taught designer and fiber artist shows her steamer that sets the dye in the bolts of natural silk she uses for her creations of wearable art.



The combination of hand-painted silk and sleeves made of knitted silk was used for this dress, ready to leave Wayne-Gaffield's studio.



Wayne-Gaffield shows how she constructs a garment, working from the pattern she has pinned to the wall in Artspace.