

All that glitters: New exhibit puts Jazz Age style front and center

BY ALEXANDRA VILLARREAL
Spectator Staff Writer

A uniquely American look imbued the '20s with glitz and glamour: Dresses roared with shorter hems and shimmering beads, and flappers graced speak-easies with their carpe diem attitudes and dynamic dance moves. Their appearance reflected a new sensibility of youthful patriotism encompassed in their liberated actions. America's principle of freedom was channeled through vibrant fabrics, adorable bobs, and occasional feathers that added whimsy to the aesthetic. But what inspired the novel design template that was so radically divergent from the established norm? In "An American Style: Global Sources for New York Textile and Fashion Design, 1915-1928," curator Ann Marguerite Tartsinis delves into America's odyssey for a national identity that led to innovation within the world of fashion.

The exhibit is housed in an intimate room on the fourth floor of the Bard Graduate Center on the Upper West Side, and Tartsinis plays with the dimensions of her space to include as much information as possible. Though the presentation is considerable, "unfortunately, this project is very much shaped by what doesn't survive," Tartsinis said at the exhibit's press opening. Because few outfits from the United States in the '20s still exist, she had to compensate for the lack of tangible evidence through the use

of technology. Photographs provide a context for her audience, and viewers can flip through sketches from the American Museum Journal or enter the virtual universe of the Exhibition of Industrial Art in Textiles and Costumes in 1919 by tapping on touchscreens. Through this expert employment of 21st-century machinery, connections are drawn between Native American styles and the emergence of U.S. couture.

During World War I, the United States was forced to find its own niche within the garment industry as it was unable to perpetuate its role as Europe's most noticeable copycat. This necessity presented itself as an opportunity for anthropologists at the American Museum of Natural History, who decided to capitalize on the dearth of fashion material to promote a new kind of design that was indisputably American.

Exhilarated and impassioned by the prospect of clothing that transcended mere adaptation of European raiment, prominent figures at the American Museum of Natural History like Charles Mead and Clark Wissler held instructional courses for aspiring designers and gave them unprecedented access to historical artifacts from indigenous culture. Tartsinis' exhibit especially highlights the ability of New Yorkers in the early 20th century to interact with the garbs of Peruvian, Andean, Navajo, and other Native American civilizations.

Projections on the main wall of Bard's Focus Gallery form negatives of women sporting dresses from the natural history museum's collection. By being physically involved with these pieces of art, designers developed a consciousness of American dress that has not been afforded them since.

Though photos are a major component of the exhibit, its most stunning display is an aboriginal cat-fan crafted from salmon skin and painted with pigment. The room also boasts beautiful textiles that reflect the motifs and construction of pre-Columbian society, visible in roller stamps and carvings. The juxtaposition of genuine Native American work and 20th-century interpretations reveals the evolution of the themes embodied in the new American fashion scene, which capitalized on both contemporary and historical features of the New World.

An impressive statement of history through design, "An American Style" provides insight into the foundations of the look that delineated the "New Woman" of the 20th century. Tartsinis shows how elegant and "primitive" aspects combined to reflect America's rugged individuality through a newly refined and luxurious lens.

"An American Style: Global Sources for New York Textile and Fashion Design, 1915-1928" runs through Feb. 2 at the Bard Graduate Center, at 18 W. 86th St. Admission is \$5.

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COURTESY OF BARD GRADUATE CENTER

ALL JAZZED UP | Photographs feature prominently in "An American Style: Global Sources for New York Textile and Fashion Design, 1915-1928."

Down by the waterfront: DUMBO art fest hits Brooklyn this weekend

BY ERICA CHAN
Columbia Daily Spectator

Armed with a cookie in one hand (preferably from DUMBO's One Girl Cookies) and a cup of fair trade Sumatran coffee in the other, art enthusiasts can witness choreographed processions of bubble bodies, 14-foot-tall inflatable sculptures of a human heart, and extravagant street murals while sauntering under the Manhattan Bridge this weekend.

This weekend, the DUMBO Arts Festival will celebrate its annual free exposition of art, dance, and music exhibitions throughout the Brooklyn neighborhood. As a place where hipsters gather and pizza lovers congregate, this festival is seeking to inspire audiences of all ages.

"Our audience is a full range from young to old, art novice to art pro," organizer Lisa Kim, BC '06, said. Kim is managing the synthesis of over 400 projects for the festival, which combines exceptional pieces from participants in DUMBO's art community.

The pieces on display range from Leslie Lyon's "Hurry Up, My Husband Wants To Spank Me!", an

improvisational exercise that welcomes contributions of poetic verse from its audience, to Galapagos Art Space's "Floating Kabarette," a trapeze performance. For many of the pieces on display, audience participation is key.

"We have many projects that invite participation—something as simple as borrowing a 'picnic blanket' for your use in the park, an augmented reality monster battle that's only visible and activated by you on your smartphone, to a range of projects that require your input, either in gesture and motion or data to trigger the artwork," Kim said.

All the pieces passed through a selection process as well as a procedure for allotting enough space for each piece in order to maintain its integrity. Each artist—whether they have been in the festival before or are new participants—must work with organizers to enhance their own installations. For organizers, the commitment to the neighborhood is what sets it apart from other art festivals in the city.

"DUMBO differs in its unique urban setting and its rich history of art and innovation that has been a part of this neighborhood since the turn of the last century," Kim said. "We have an extraordinary waterfront park—amazing views of the Manhattan

skyline and two bridges that the artists have to contend with as well as historic buildings, cobblestone streets, and the BQE."

One example of these installations is Heather Hart's "Bartertown." Set in a familiar street fair scenario, the piece requires visitors to haggle in exchange for an item they want. However, instead of haggling with money, visitors must barter with either an item that they already own or a skill that they excel at.

"The point is to communicate and to re-invent an economy that is based on a value system we determine ourselves and that anyone can participate in, despite their financial position," Hart said. "I encourage people to think creatively. Don't only look in your backpack for a forgotten pen that someone might need, but think about what you are good at. Teach someone a language, write an IOU for services, give someone a hug."

That is the inspiration that each artist is looking to reward his audience. With nearly 500 different performances, visitors might just find one that they can connect with—even if they were just strolling through the neighborhood.

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The data are one? Is one? Are? Is?

Let me ask you an important question: How do you feel when you see "the data are" or "the data show" in print? Do you accept it as correct usage? Or do you notice that no matter how many times you hear that the plural usage of "data" is correct, somehow it always looks wrong?



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Any grammar Nazi will bleat about "the data is..." or "the data shows..." But given what the word "data" actually means today, the plural usage no longer makes any sense. In fact, we ought to complain whenever anybody does use "data" as a plural; it only shows they care more for propriety than logic. The argument behind the plural usage is an etymological one: In Latin, "data" literally means "things given," and nobody would ever write "the things given is..." Thus, "the data is..." must be incorrect.

But the Romans did not use "data" the same way we do. What we call "data" today is usually produced by computers or scientific machinery, things I understand the average Roman did not have. Now, we use "data" to mean something like "a heap of results or figures produced by some mechanical process," and that is a concept for which there was never a Latin word. So while "data" may have Latin origins, it only exists within the English language. It is our word to use as we please.

And how do we use it? Even the grammar Nazi who insists on saying "the data are..." would never ask a lab partner, "How many data did we collect?" or expect the answer to be something like "1,476 data." Nor would anybody ever say, "We have too many data, and we need fewer." Like "sand" or "wheat" or "water," we use "data" as a singular mass noun, except when we are able to catch ourselves doing it. We always talk about data in units, but if "data" really meant "many data," why would we say things like "a gigabyte of data" or "two days' worth of data"?

We have allowed other Latinate words that were originally plurals to become singular. You would never ask at a club meeting, "Are there any agenda left?" Likewise, you would never boast that you won a quiz bowl because you "know many trivia," or tell a running buddy that "stamina are needed" for your favorite run. There is no reason why "data" can't go the same way.

And it really should, if only because every time you read "the data are" you have to stop and think about it for a while. If you want to write well—or even if you just want to convey something important in writing—you want your reader to be paying attention to what you are saying and not to how you are saying it. "The data are..." is awkward and forced, but worst of all, it is a distraction.

Until that happens, though, perhaps the best advice is just not to use the word—or, if you have to, use it only where you can leave its number ambiguous. Garner's Modern American Usage lists "data" as a "skunked term," meaning that no matter how you use it, you are bound to upset somebody. Yet the entry suggests that things might soon change in favor of "the data is." Spectator style prefers the plural construction, as far as I can tell—but maybe you should send our copy staff a letter?

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On Sunday, historic Atlantic Antic street fair brings community, businesses, leaders together

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despite the fact that street festivals tend to draw business away from local vendors.

"I do well," Bi Li, owner of One Thirty Nine Art and Design Coop, said. "I do much better that day." During the festival, many people stop to look at her organic hemp clothing, terrariums, and terrarium jewelry, which she and her partner Al Atara make and display both in the store and at their festival booth.

Antonio Paz, manager of the Botanica Garden Center, agrees that the festival has a positive effect on local business.

"I think it's been very good for business because they bring a lot of people," Paz said.

"Any time people are exposed to the store, it helps," Marty Lake, a store employee, added.

"We did it last year, and it's insane," Jacqui Daniels, manager of the Herb Shoppe, said. The Herb Shoppe has been open for two years. "The Antic is good, but it's crazy."

All business matters aside, store owners themselves enjoy the day and the sense of community it creates.

"It's a great place to hear music, see vendors," Li said. "It's a great day for gathering friends together too. I get all my girlfriends to help me watch the store."

Li said she always takes a break from the store to take in the festival.

Politicians have also become heavily involved in the historic event, adding to the commercial promotion a strong sense of local celebration for local residents and Brooklynites as a whole.

"Since 1974, Brooklynites have eagerly waited all year for the 'Mother of All Street Fairs' and the most exciting street festival in all of New York City—the annual Atlantic Antic," Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz said in a statement, calling the antic a "Moveable Feast" for gourmands."



COURTESY OF ATLANTIC AVENUE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

AVENUE OF ESCAPE | On Sunday, Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn will play host to the Atlantic Antic street festival, first organized in 1974.

"I definitely think that the day of the Antic there is a sense of community," Ben-Eliezer-Baxter said, noting that Markowitz will be crowned "King of Brooklyn" this year, in honor of his last year in office and all of the work he has done for the borough.

Despite the festival's continued growth—it attracts more than a million people—some community members are nostalgic for the early years of the Antic.

Gary Mustapha, owner of Oriental Pastry and

Grocery, was a member of the group of business owners who first banded together to host the street festival in 1974. To him, these were the golden years of the festival as it would stretch into the night.

"There used to be camel rides, parades... You could see the Middle East, you could see the atmosphere of the market everywhere," Mustafa said.

Ben-Eliezer-Baxter acknowledged this shift.

"It has changed over the years somewhat," she said. "It used to have parade components and

marathon components. With the marathon, to set up that again would require merchants less time to set up their booths."

Marathon or no, the Atlantic Antic is well worth the ride down on the 2 or 3 train this Sunday, and if you can't visit then, there is still a thriving, growing neighborhood to be explored all year round.

The Atlantic Antic festival will occur on Sunday from 12-6 p.m.

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