

BAL HARBOUR'S FASHION PROJECT UNVEILS "FP02: MORPHING"

BY NICOLE MARTINEZ MONDAY, JUNE 1, 2015 | 4 HOURS AGO



If "FP01" was about the role fashion plays in social evolution, "FP02: Morphing" was an homage to fashion as individual expression.

Perspective and personal preference can certainly influence how we view an object; consider the rise of the fashion blogger as an example of this concept. Why else would multi-million dollar fashion brands look to internet pseudo-celebrities for endorsements, sponsorships, and brand placement? The way an item is styled can alter its wear-ability or success in the market, not just because of the allegiance of a blogger's followers but because of the creativity it sparks in the viewer. The way an item is worn, and what it's worn with, is just as important as the item itself.

This is no less true of museum curation. Museum practice often demands the shift of works from the permanent collection into new and exciting exhibits – a freshening up of over-used content, set in a new context and exploring a topical theme, and suddenly what's old

is new again.

"FP02: Morphing" plays on the idea of "morphing" an item into something new, without actually altering its contents. "Morphing is about something very slight that happens, which can be a very different story. It's about taking an object, changing the backdrop, or adding a text, and thereby changing its interpretation," says Alessandra Grignaschi, a colleague of curator Judith Clark and an independent curator herself.

In "FP01," the exhibition was meant as an anthropological survey; objects that appeared to be illustrative of a time and place were in fact visual tricks constructed by Clark intentionally. *FP02* builds on that idea by reconfiguring the way the same objects are displayed – for each costume, this meant a slight alteration or addition to each display.

The adjustment in each display ranged from slight to exaggerated; the replacement of an item in the curiosity cabinet, the addition of an elaborate wig, or the remote-controlled movement of a dress. Each alteration was a reference to something broader, something previously unknown to the viewer, by the curator. The message is thus clear: our perception of an item becomes altered by the way it's presented to us.

Individual expression and fashion, then, are a perfect marriage, and "FP02" debuted with an accompanying panel that introduced fashion's ménage a trois: hair artistry and its role in fashion and individual expression.

Five New York-based artists exploring the role of hair in identity presented how their practice has been influenced by race, sex, and pop culture. "The Salon: Hair in Art and Design" delved into the role of the salon, both in its modern-day and historic meaning (think the infamous salons of a Jazz Age Gertrude Stein) and how what goes on within its walls can significantly shape individual aesthetic. And this usually goes beyond the physical: it's not just the hair, but how you think you're perceived because of it.



The panelists were diverse, ranging from three interdisciplinary artists: Kenya (Robinson), A.K. Burns and Katherine Hubbard; to Illy Lussiano, a hair artist to the stars, and Jamala Johns, the founder of natural hair blog le coil. From queer identity to the emotional connection between a hair artist and her client, each panelist sought to explore how an individual merges identity with hair.

This rang strikingly true for Burns' and Hubbard's 17-year-old cousin on the verge of coming out, who admired Burns' sexually ambiguous haircut and dress; their exhibition "The Brown Bear: Neither Particular, Nor General" was borne out of the idea of creating a social archive of queer aesthetics, and how images can be interpreted differently based on their context. Like "FP02: Morphing," Burns and Hubbard are considering the ways image and identity are intertwined, whether by hair, fashion, or skin tone, a condition that occurs, whether we realize it or not.

The Fashion Project was developed and conceived by Cathy Leff, former director of the Wolfsonian-FIU in Miami Beach. The programs and exhibitions aim to blur boundaries between fashion, design, art, consumer culture, and costume culture. On Thursday, June 11, FP will host a talk on the history of high heels. The talk begins at 7 p.m. at Books & Books in Bal Harbour. Visit fashionprojectbhs.com.