

ART August 3, 2009, 2:45 PM

Now Showing | 'Dress Codes' Exhibit

By MAURA EGAN



"Thinner Than You," by Maureen Connor, at the Katonah Museum of Art in Katonah, N.Y.

In an age when there is [a push for burqa bans in France](#) and our president is [chiding boys to pull up their low-slung jeans](#) (and everyone else is roasting Obama on his own [ill-fitting mom jeans](#)), the show "Dress Codes: Clothing as Metaphor" at the [Katonah Museum of Art](#) (through October 4) seems suitable for the time. The 36 artists in this exhibition suggest that fashion is not just a means to express personal identity but also a way to convey a wide range of global ideas, from war to economics to religion.

A festive "Soundsuit" by the Chicago artist Nick Cave refers to the costumes worn to West African Jonkommu celebrations, but the triangle top that hides the wearer's face suggests the cone-shaped hoods worn by Klu Klux Klan members. Maureen Connor's "Thinner Than You" points to the media-imposed ideals of beauty with a wispy dress that features a waist that measures no more than 10 inches — one that no human could ever squeeze into. Yael Mer's "2 Evacuation Dresses" has a more relaxed fit and inflates into an emergency kayak, making it fashionable enough for the next natural disaster. There's the de rigueur camouflage, but there are also kimonos, chadors and even a teddy with a suicide belt on display, all of which reminds the viewer that style comes in all shapes and sizes.



"Soundsuit," by Nick Cave.



"2 Evacuation Dresses," by Yael Mer.



"Hater Teddy with Suicide Belt," by Cheryl Yun.