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5-6-2009

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#### Recommended Citation

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**"Allure" of Jess Larson's work captures magazine's attention**

*Summary: The "allure" of Jess Larson's body of creative work may be what prompted *Allure* magazine to invite Larson to submit an image of one of her girdle sculptures that is published in the magazine's May 2009 edition.*

(May 6, 2009)—"I like the distinctive look of something made by hand in this age of commercialization and use of mass-made items in contemporary art-making," said Jess Larson in an Artist Statement she wrote in 2007. The "allure" of Larson's body of creative work may be what prompted *Allure* magazine to invite Larson to submit an image of one of her girdle sculptures that is published in the magazine's May 2009 edition.

"I was contacted via e-mail—they had found my [Web site](#)," said Larson, "and were interested in publishing the image of 'Debut/Taunt.' I made this work in 1997, a poke at prom rituals, debutantes, etc. The piece has embroidered ribbons that say "will you or won't you?"—hence the "taunt" in the piece. I also think [*Allure*] found the Chicago *Sun-Times* article [that was published] during the show ("Girdle Imagery," Maureen Jenkins, Fashion Feature, The Chicago *Sun-Times*)."

Larson applied for the Chicago show when the Arc Gallery advertised open slots for non-members. The show was in July 1997. "I had been showing a lot in co-op galleries in Denver while in grad school and showed at the other well-known co-op in Chicago (Artemesia) in 2003," said Larson.

According to the gallery's Web site: "Arc Gallery is an internationally recognized exhibition space that has been an integral part of the Chicago art scene since its inception in 1973. Founded during the women's movement as an alternative to the mainstream gallery system, ARC is one of the oldest co-ops of its kind in the country."

Larson, an associate professor of studio art at the University of Minnesota, Morris, was born and raised in west central Minnesota, and received her undergraduate degree at the University of Minnesota, Morris in 1992. She did her graduate work at the University of Colorado at Boulder, completing a master of fine arts in sculpture in 1995. Larson returned to the University of Minnesota, Morris in 1995 as a member of the studio arts faculty, and continues to work at Morris teaching foundation courses, drawing, digital imaging, sculpture and photography.

"As the product of UMM's studio arts program, and with additional schooling at U-Colorado Boulder, I am someone [students] can look to as an accomplished studio generalist who was once in their shoes," shared Larson. "I work beyond the boundaries of my degree in sculpture, incorporating digital, photographic, traditional hand-crafts and such into my field. I don't feel constrained by my area—I always seek whatever process or material I think is necessary to complete the work. I think that's crucial in a liberal arts setting: one needs to be able to look at a variety of topics to make work, and be able to draw from various processes to complete the idea."

As students learn from Larson, so, she said, she learns from her students.

"Simply put, I adore my students, they continue my own education," she said. "I am keenly aware of their

interests—cultural, technological, personal, etc.—and I am curious enough to try to learn it in my way, at my place in life. I think it makes me a better professor, and a better artist, to stay current, to push myself to keep learning. [Students] are wonderful individuals, quirky and funny, open to possibilities and willing to question the status quo. Every project brings me a new perspective that I hadn't considered, and a unique means to make it visual."

A recent project that she designed with colleague, Jenny Nellis, resulted in a runway show, Fashion Trashion, which featured outfits made by students of recycled, found and repurposed materials scavenged from the campus' own recycling building.

"I am more than pleased with the results. The students went well beyond expectations in construction and use of materials. The details in the work is phenomenal, and their modeling of the designs was profession, yet campy," said Larson.

Larson's own work has been shown nationally and internationally in various group and solo shows, including the 1999 Spoleto Piccolo Festival and the Jerome Book Arts Exhibition at the Minnesota Center for the Book Arts and the Governor's Palace in Tlaxcala, Mexico.

Photo: This girdle sculpture by Jess Larson appears in the May edition of *Allure* magazine, with the caption, "1997: Feminist artist Jess Larson exhibits seven hand-stitched girdles at a Chicago gallery, calling them a metaphor for the many unnatural things women have been expected to adopt over time."

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