

Beth Redmond-Jones is President of Redmond-Jones & Associates. She may be contacted at beth@redmond-jones.com.

If you would like to comment on this article or others in this issue, please log on to the NAME listserv at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NAME-AAM/>.

As rain descends and the thermometer reaches 59 degrees on this January day in Pennsylvania (and some people say that we are not experiencing global climate change!) I am grateful to my colleagues who continue to find noteworthy exhibitions and experiences to share with me and with readers of the *Exhibitionist*.

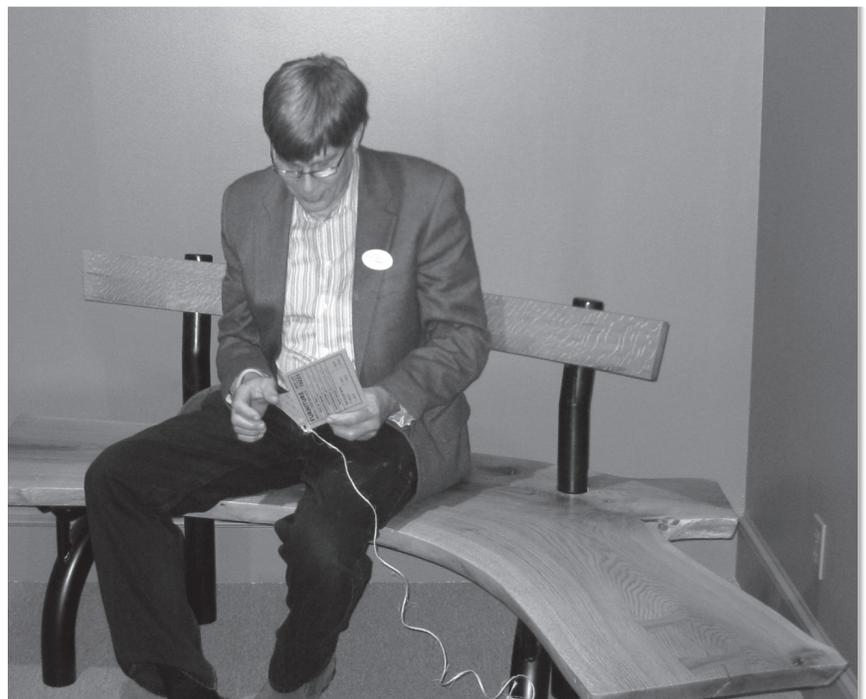
Paul Orselli sent me this. *Did you ever come across a gigantic tree being cut down in your neighborhood? Besides being fed into a growling wood chipper, could these stately old trees be put to different uses? New Life for Connecticut*

trees from small towns and big cities to create beautiful objects with meaning. In New Life for Connecticut Trees each piece is displayed with the tree's "family history" (on simple unbleached card stock labels held together with twine) including its birthplace, significance, and life story.

I really enjoyed how the simple elements of this "urban recycling" story were displayed with both elegance and humor: signs encouraging you to "Please Sit on the Furniture!" as well as simple graphics and interactives that helped museum visitors appreciate all the steps from cutting down a tree to turning it into furniture.



Friendly graphic encouraging visitors to try out the exhibit furniture. Courtesy of Paul Orselli Workshop.



Clifford Wagner sitting (and learning!) in the exhibition. Courtesy of Paul Orselli Workshop.

Trees is an exhibition about woodworking, the urban tree canopy, and a history of big, old trees. All the furniture and household objects in this exhibition were made from Connecticut trees once destined for landfills.

This exhibition shows the work of a group called City Bench, which reclaims

Steve Brosnahan shared this experience with me. You may have found yourself in this situation: a grandparent has moved to a retirement home or passed away, and you're in charge of resolving a lifetime collection of treasures, mementos, collectables, and junk. You may save the stuff with sentimental value, sell some on eBay or in yard sales, then give away the



A visitor adds his response to the first floor "confess-a-torium". Courtesy of Steve Brosnahan.



Shoes, shoes, and more shoes attached to the second floor ceiling. Courtesy of Steve Brosnahan.

rest on Freecycle, to the Salvation Army, Goodwill, or you may just send it all to the dump.

In 2003, when George Scheer and friends stood peering at the stacks of stuff amassed by his grandmother in his grandparents' former surplus business on Elm Street in Greensboro, NC, they saw three floors full of valuable resources for creating art. They posted a sign: **Nothing for Sale!** and named the place ELSEWHERE. Then they started excavating and organizing mountains of objects. A year into the excavation, Elsewhere became a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. A few years after that, Elsewhere Collaborative launched an artist-in-residency program to create new works, using the collection. Thanks to grants, movie shoots, commissions, an active crew of volunteers, and the inspiration of artists, Elsewhere is alive and growing.

On my visit, nothing on the façade of this 19th century building prepared me for the experience inside. The floor-to-ceiling,

and ceiling-to-ceiling artists' installations are delightful, moving, scary—a planet made of satin high heels, a room-sized baby doll tornado, an elegant screen of broken glass and bed springs, a trompe l'oeil painted staircase, walls of plastic toys organized by color, a cracked plaster wall turned into a fantastic map.

Artists build the installations during their residencies and fellowships. They can add to or change existing installations, create new works, stage events, programs, and excursions into the community and elsewhere, while drawing on the seemingly endless supply of stuff from the collection. Elsewhere has the feeling of being continually under construction, liquid, experimental. I would love to return this summer to new installations, programs and new ideas.

Elsewhere is closed in the deep of winter as the building is unheated. You can also check them out online at <http://elsewhereelsewhere.org/>.



Dresses and shoes from the ARMOR section of the exhibition *Daphne Guinness* at The Museum at FIT. Courtesy of The Museum at FIT.

(continued from page 5)

This past December, the family and I made our annual pilgrimage to New York City to see the holiday decorations and to explore a new museum we hadn't seen before. This year, we visited The Museum at FIT (Fashion Institute of Technology), a specialized fashion museum. Their permanent collection contains more than 50,000 garments and accessories dating from the 18th century to the present, and includes important designers such as Chanel, Dior, and Westwood.

We saw two exhibitions at FIT. The first, *Fashion, A-Z: Highlights from*

the Collection of The Museum at FIT-Part One (November 2011-May 2012), exhibited 50 fashion masterpieces including a Coco Chanel classic tweed suit, a Valentino Couture evening dress, and an Alexander McQueen for Givenchy evening coatdress. The garments selected were extremely varied, but each had its own unique quality that easily defined it as a masterpiece. The installation was simple and elegant: steel gray background and low dramatic lighting. Each masterpiece was displayed on its own manikin with enough room around it to get a variety of views. The only frustration with the exhibition design was the interpretation. The labels for the garments were in very small type (not ADA compliant) and almost blended in with the background color; they were positioned at shin height; and the light source was barely ten inches above them. The lighting was so harsh and overly bright that it made the labels even more difficult to read and distracted from the elegance of the rest of the installation. *The Great Designers, Part Two* will be on display from May-November 2012, which I've already promised my kids (especially my 8 year old who is obsessed with *Project Runway* and fashion) we would go see.

The second exhibition, *Daphne Guinness*, was about a current fashion icon who collects amazing and outrageous couture clothing from some of the greatest designers of the 20th century, as well as garments from new and upcoming designers. Visitors began the experience by viewing Guinness's incredible shoe collection, each shoe having a vertical height of at least 6 inches or more. Incredible heel designs, intense and rich color, sparkles by the millions—it was a jaw-dropping experience to just look at them. Each one was more amazing than the one before, and how she can wear them I will never know.

Visitors then entered a larger gallery that was divided into six thematic areas, each one devoted to Guinness's unique style—Dandyism, Armor, Chic, Evening Chic, Exoticism, and Sparkle. As visitors moved from one area to the next, the clothing became increasingly amazing. Incredible designers and brilliant couture—it was breathtaking. And what was so amazing was to see some Guinness's films including *Mnemosyne* (which was inspired by her perfume), *The Phenomenology of the Body* (which explored the politics of clothing), and *Tribute to Alexander McQueen*, and how she uses fashion to transform herself into a creative masterpiece.

As I was leaving the exhibition, I felt as though something was above me, watching. I then realized it was a hologram of Daphne in one of her garments. It gave an eerie feeling to the space—she was with you and watching over her beautiful couture. ✨



Boudicca (Zowie Broach and Brian Kirkby), ensemble, white cotton, black polyester net, black rayon stretch knit, black leather, Fall 2006, England, museum purchase. Courtesy of The Museum at FIT.



Alexander McQueen ensemble featured in the exhibition *Daphne Guinness* at The Museum at FIT. Courtesy of The Museum at FIT.