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Museums

In the galleries: Where nature and art come together

BY MARK JENKINS June 20

Women Sculptors

A black marble bustier, a platform shoe hewn from limestone, and a dress made of wired-together stones are among the one-of-a-kind merchandise in “What Not to Wear: Women Sculptors,” at George Washington University’s Luther W. Brady Gallery. The playful contrasts are both verbal and visual. Michelle Jaffé’s aluminum breastplate resembles part of an airplane fuselage, while Diane Simpson’s fiberboard “Box Pleats” stands upright — part dress, part teepee. When clothing verges on the architectural, the term “foundation garment” takes on a new meaning.

Not all the items are unwearable. There’s a video of a performance by a woman in Susie B. Woods’s stone dress, and Isabelle de Borchgrave’s paper caftan probably could be worn, although it’s a showcase for painting, not textiles. Mandy Cano Villalobos’s “Undone” is the formerly wearable: sweaters she has unraveled and wound into balls of yarn.

Many of these artists riff on such oppositions as soft and hard or making and unmaking, and link the physicality of sculpture with that of the body. Wood’s contributions include a hanging stone sarcophagus, which is starkly beautiful. This is a show about clothing, though, so there’s always an element of dress-up fun. Joyce Zipperer’s green copper “Nike’s Slipper” might be just as unfeasible as her limestone shoe, but with its rear wheel and feathery streamlining, it elegantly feigns being light on its foot.

What Not to Wear: Women Sculptors. On view through Friday at George Washington University Luther W. Brady Gallery, 805 21st St. N.W., 2nd floor; 202-994-1525; www.gwu.edu/~bradyart