OKLAHOMA CONTEMPORARY

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CODED_COUTURE exhibition, programming combine
emerging technologies with pioneering fashion design

Customization has always been at the heart of couture, but what happens when a designer integrates the digital age into fashion design? Rooted in technology and code, Oklahoma Contemporary's current exhibition examines the intersection of traditional fashion design and tomorrow's tech.

Visitors to CODED_COUTURE, an exhibition that imagines a future of fashion design with emerging technology at its core, can interact with its garments in a variety of ways — from tweeting to a skirt and listening to a trench coat to creating a could-be-3-D-printed dress or building an outfit using their own social media. The exhibition, powered by Google, will run until Aug. 14.

By definition, couture clothes are customized to fit a customer's specific needs and create a special relationship with their owner. CODED_COUTURE offers a new take on couture, incorporating many technologies of the digital age with custom designs. Using computer coding as a tool for customizing clothing and accessories, the pieces in this exhibition can act as a lie detector, shift according to the viewer's gaze and react to a wearer's heart rate.

"Technology is so embedded in our lives today — from social media and the Internet to the complex systems that run our machines, our homes and our cities," said Jennifer Scanlan, curatorial and exhibitions director for

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Oklahoma Contemporary. "This exhibition takes the next step and imagines the ways in which technology becomes a part of what we wear. While the clothes in the exhibition use innovative technology of the future, I think they also connect very much to fashion today. Fashion of any time is about individual expression and making a statement about who you are based on the clothes you chose to wear."

In conjunction with CODED_COUTURE, Oklahoma Contemporary has planned a full schedule of programming for both adults and children, based on themes of design innovation and personal expression through fashion.

Oklahoma Contemporary's Learning Gallery offers hands-on opportunities for all ages, from a "smart home" and a pop-up library to robots and tablets designed to teach and inspire creativity using code.

"Through the Google Learning Gallery, we aim to teach kids that coding can bring their ideas to life in bigger, brighter and more creative ways," said Andrew Silvestri, head of community affairs for Google in Oklahoma. "We designed the gallery to inspire kids to pursue careers in STEM as well as challenge the preconceptions of what STEM careers look like. The Coded_Couture exhibition at Oklahoma Contemporary celebrates the relationship between art and tech innovation, showing what's possible when creativity and computational thinking collide."

In addition to a smart-home lounge, a robotics area features a variety of robots, games and toys that teach kids of all ages and skill levels the basics concepts of coding. The gallery will help demonstrate how code pairs with fashion through problem-solving and creative design activities. For instance, kids can use their imaginations to design a shirt that grows with you or shoes that stay dry in the rain. Kids can also play with and try on smart accessories like LED and Bluetooth glasses.

"The Learning Gallery provides a dynamic opportunity where visitors of all ages can experience and explore our exhibitions in a rich and educational environment," said Erin Oldfield, director of education. "Through the interactivity of coding and hands-on play, children will have the ability to navigate their own learning and develop and explore their own curiosities. This unique exposure provides the foundation for creativity, critical thinking and a way to better connect to the world around them."

In addition, one-day classes on fashion design and beginning coding will give youth and adults an even more immersive experience. (Learn more about the classes, scheduled for July 29 and Aug. 5, here.)

On the evening of Aug. 5, Oklahoma Contemporary will host FutureFashion, a show inspired by ways fashion might evolve as the future does. It will feature original pieces designed and created in collaboration with fashion designer Lori Bacigalupi (Kiss of the Wolf), whose work has been in the Smithsonian and New York Fashion Week. The show features a full theatrical production, incorporating original set pieces and projection mapping designed by Rose Swift Baez and Dylan Mackey as well as original choreography by internationally recognized choreographer and dancer Rachel Hendricks.

More about the exhibition

CODED_COUTURE features the work of 10 international artist-designers whose inventive techniques are rooted in new technology. These practitioners each use coding as a key element, as part of the manufacturing process or as an interactive element while the garment is worn. They pioneer ways to communicate and connect with the wearer, gathering information that transforms the aesthetics of the work in substantial ways. The unique results, created in partnership with each individual wearer, go far beyond the mass-market approach of companies like Nike and Levi's who typically offer customers the option to select from a limited palette of colors or patterns from a drop-down menu.

In CODED_COUTURE, design overlaps with art as an innovative form of creative expression. The garments displayed are proposals for a future way of designing clothing, to fit the body and mind. The exhibition will include prototypes, drawings, sketchbooks and video projections and allow visitors to engage in the design process, using technology and their own data to develop new items of clothing. While futuristic in conception, CODED_COUTURE touches on many themes relevant to all fashion design today: identity, representation and how we relate to others through highly personalized fashion designs.

"At Oklahoma Contemporary, we like to feature many forms of artistic expression," Scanlan said. "CODED_COUTURE shows the ways in which fashion design is an art form, involving the skills of crafting a garment, the knowledge of materials and how they interact with the body and environment and the imagination to create something that no one has dreamed up yet."

Featured projects include:

- A series of prototype dresses by Chinese designer Ying Gao use the latest in fabric technology. Works in the exhibition glow to track the viewer's gaze or shift according to surrounding sounds.

- The iMiniSkirt by British fashion brand CuteCircuit (Francesca Rosella and Ryan Genz) displays live tweets across its fabric surface. The iMiniSkirt also changes color and animation based on real-time audience input, creating a constantly evolving dynamic display. Visitors will be encouraged to interact with the piece using a specially created hashtag and app on the nearby tablet.

- Otherworldly shoes by Dutch designer Marloes ten Bhömer use advanced technologies and materials to re-think the structure of the high heel, offering alternative styles in clean lines and construction techniques drawn from other disciplines, such as architecture.

Featured designers include: the collaborative team of Melissa Coleman, Leonie Smelt and Joachim Rotteveel (the Netherlands); Amy Congdon (UK); Cedric Flazinski (Paris, France); Mary Huang (China/New York); the collaborative N O R M A L S (France); Rebeccah Pailes-Friedman (New York); Simon Thorogood (Edinburgh, UK); and Alison Tsai (Taiwan/New York).

CODED_COUTURE is organized by the Department of Exhibitions, Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, New York, and is curated by Ginger Gregg Duggan and Judith Hoos Fox of c2 curatorsquared. The exhibition is powered by Google. Other sponsors include the Kirkpatrick Family Fund, Oklahoma Arts Council, Allied Arts, ArtDesk, Adventure Road, Innov8tive and Interior Gilt.

For more information, visit oklahomacontemporary.org.

Images: Ellie Dunn and Cyrus Steppe send Twitter feeds to iMiniSkirt *by CuteCircuit. An attendee learns more about* Charlie Coat *during the CODED_COUTURE opening.*

A media kit, including this press release and high-resolution images of CODED_COUTURE works, is at http://bit.ly/CodedCouturekit. Past press releases and additional information are archived at oklahomacontemporary.org/about/media. Interviews with and exhibitions staff can be organized through Director of Communications Lori Brooks (lbrooks@okcontemp.org).

About Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center

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Currently located at State Fair Park, Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center aims to encourage artistic expression in all its forms through education and exhibitions. We endeavor to instill in the public a lifetime appreciation of the arts and enthusiasm for creative practice through a broad range of educational programs, exhibitions and cultural offerings, including:

• Youth art camps that help students begin a lifetime relationship with art and creativity.
• Art classes and workshops where students of all ages find the chance to learn and grow.
• Exhibitions that feature the work of emerging and mid-career artists.
• Free public lectures, artist talks and events that enrich Oklahoma City's cultural offerings.

Oklahoma Contemporary is in the midst of a capital campaign to create a spectacular new arts education and cultural resource on a 4.6-acre site at NW 11th and Broadway in Oklahoma City. The arts education campus will include:

A four-story, 50,000-square-foot building with classrooms, galleries, a dance studio and a flexible theater space to promote learning about the artists of our time and educating those to come. Expanded classes in ceramics, fiber, painting, sculpture, drawing and dance, plus a new media curriculum with programs in filmmaking, animation, photography, web design and 3-D printing. A remodeled 10,000-square-foot building will house an Industrial Arts program, focusing on wood, ceramics, metal and jewelry. Grounds with space for outdoor sculpture exhibits, children's art education activities and outdoor music, movie and drama productions.

Oklahoma Contemporary is a regional 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization founded in 1989 by businessman and philanthropist Christian Keesee and Kirkpatrick Foundation Director Marilyn Myers.