

Gears in Vogue

As much as we all live, breathe and sleep gears, there aren't too many of us who actually wear gears. You might be asking yourself what gear-inspired clothing could possibly look like. The answer is embedded in the inventive fashion designs of the Junior Fashion Design class at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC). Thirteen teams of two or three students each were challenged to incorporate plastic gears into a garment or accessory as a class project.

After touring Winzeler Gear, the aspiring fashion designers were invited to take as many gears in any variety with them for inspiration. John Winzeler, president of the plastic gear manufacturing company, also donated to the school \$2,000 that was awarded to students in three prizes. The projects were evaluated by a panel of nine judges with expertise in fashion, art and design. Winzeler describes the project as "an opportunity to engage friends in the art community with what we do here with design and the manufacture of gears."

How do gears translate to fashion? The level of creativity the students engaged was impressive and unbounded. Some projects featured gear designs stitched or printed onto textiles while other students painted plastic gears with nail polish, in order to make the gears shimmer and demand excitement, before fixing them to clothing. Along with the explosive, creative displays, the SAIC students spoke eloquently about how they considered gears in their aesthetic and functional values.

"We realized gears were everywhere," said Seul Ki Uhem, who, along with partner Hae Jin Jeong, designed a loose-flowing white dress adorned with gears



printed throughout the fabric.

One group used gears to make impressions into felt material, and the impressions were stitched onto a white dress. The presentation stated, "This piece was inspired by the impression of gears on the world, the transition from manual powered labor to a more delicate, technologically driven world."

The most suggestive display was a white dress with a silk-screened fabric strip that scrolled several images representing the early stages of life, up to the embryo. The fabric pictures were displayed through a cutout in the dress, positioned over the abdomen, and connected to a gear printed on the fabric. The design, created by Kaitlyn

Aylward and Summer Romero, suggested that gears provide a life-pumping energy to the world.

Another project focused on environmental issues that manufacturers face today using a green, nature-themed dress with gear shapes positioned like blooming flowers. "We need a balance between industrialism and nature. What we need is a balance between

luxuries and conveniences with nature," says Joanna Gettelfinger and Jennifer Moy.

The designs displayed for two months at Gallery 43, an art atrium within Winzeler Gear, before they moved to the School of the Art Institute Gallery for Fashion Week. Winzeler Gear invites queries from artists looking for unusual venues to display their work, and groups seeking a new location to hold art showings and receptions. For more information, visit www.winzelergear.com.