

ELIZABETH FRENCHMAN
Fichu Bedwear

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I am an apparel designer who adheres to the “less is more” philosophy as well as G-d being in the details. I was born and raised in Ohio but escaped to earn a BA in printmaking from Rutgers in New Jersey. This led to a long varied graphic design career in Boston and New York. An MLS from Pratt facilitated a switch to architectural materials librarianship. Many courses at both FIT and Central Saint Martins (London) prepared me for launching a sleepwear line, Fichu Bedwear.

In architecture, in fashion, in graphics, the designer must listen to her materials. Design serves a purpose: to shelter, to clothe, to mediate harmoniously with nature yet it harness nature for knowledge, beauty and utility.

For this year’s GOS I’m veering away from design into a celebration of Willi Smith who did his share of veering. It took two years but the Cooper Hewitt finally opened its exhibit Willi Smith: Street Couture.

The early 80s were a hinge between hippie days and the re-establishment of the fashion establishment and I remember and wore it well. Smith wasn’t sequestered in his bubble and the exhibit brings his exuberance in stylish street culture to life. He took every advantage of art and architecture as well as of course fashion. It’s NOT couture and much more interesting for that. The vast archive of youthful ready-to-wear from that era has been reopened due to Willi Smith. The exhibit doesn’t close until October 24th so go see/experience it.

I don’t fully understand the conceit of Smith’s 1982 installation at PS1 “Art as Damaged Goods” (an art/design mashup highlight of the Cooper-Hewitt exhibit) but I took it as inspiration for my own 18 “wardrobe of basics”. There’s not much written about it but that gave me license to dream. My material is scavenged packing tissue stitched in the coral pink thread we used on the Fichu Bedwear sleeping gowns. It’s flat, it’s stitched, it has no purpose except I hope delight.

www.fichu-bedwear.com
www.instagram.com/fichu-bedwear/