

Q and A CORRESPONDENCE  
Q by Linda Weintraub  
A by Robin Lasser and Adrienne Pao

Center for Integrated Media  
California Institute of the Arts  
Winter, 2010

Dear Robin and Adrienne: in 1797, a boy about the age of twelve was found naked in the woods around Aveyron, France. He apparently had never before been in the company of humans. The boy was captured, not once but twice, because he managed to escape the ministrations of a local abbot and biology professor who took him in as a case study. Later, Jean Marc Itard, a medical student, assumed the task of civilizing this wild child.

The story inspired a remarkable film called "Wild Child" (1976) by Francois Truffault, The terror that gripped the lad provides the film's heart-stopping drama, as well as its pervasive irony. The boy's fear was triggered by urbane comforts such as interior spaces, mandolin music, and language. A fear comparable to his often engulfs civilized people when they venture into the wilderness that provided his comfort. It seems equally incongruous that the wild boy's pleasures originated in what civilized folks avoid. Romping naked in the snow provides a vivid example. Thus the boy's joyful abandonment was pitted against the sobering restraints of civilization.

The first sign of the boy's entry into the society of people is, significantly, also the first sign of the boy's discomfort. This transformation took the form of a shiver. The wild boy felt cold. He reached for a cloth and wrapped it around his body. He sought clothing and shelter!

Clothing and shelter coalesce in your ambitious Dress/Tent projects. Please comment on the role of these objects as primal signs of the civilizing impulse as it does, or does not, relate to the focus of your art practice. Linda

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Dear Linda: thank you for this inspirational beginning to our conversations.

I write this from a well built albeit quite old house in Richmond, California. I look out the window at a sturdy chicken coop, created by my partner Nathan. I see these chickens outside, covered in their feathers, and nothing else. I know they will enter their coop the moment the sun begins to set. I look down at my own attire and see socks, jeans, two t-shirts and a ring on my left hand. I ponder our Dress Tent project and this question from you regarding clothing and shelter being one, and most importantly, these objects as signifiers of the civilizing impulse.

When I think back to the initial inspiration for this work, I remember wanting to create these clothing/shelter hybrids now known as Dress Tents, and thinking rather absurdly: "What if you could wear your own home?" As we pondered the idea further, the fantasy

embedding itself in our brains, we quickly took stock of our surroundings, and how we were going to create one of these amorphous entities that only existed as an idea. Time and necessity came crashing in as we realized that I would be in Hawai'i that summer (2005) working on another photographic series and visiting with family. Time and necessity also facilitated our initial inspiration for this body of work – the "Missionary Muumuu Dress Tent." As we pondered this new-fangled garment, and Hawaiian women, we were immediately beckoned by the muumuu, still considered one of the original "dress tents." A few Google clicks later, the history of the muumuu was revealed. It was brought into Hawai'i by missionaries as a means to cover up native Hawaiian women, to civilize the uncivilized, to lessen the "sexuality" of these typically topless women. What if we blew-up this idea, made the muumuu into a home where this woman could be entered? She could provide shelter, while simultaneously being her own provider. All she needed was this. Could this level of self-sufficiency actually exist? The Dress Tents grew out of this initial idea. Here the civilized clothed the "un-civilized," yet this new fiction we worked on creating re-appropriated the colonizer's hand. How can we mix the two, question the power of this garment, and many others to come later on down the road?

As I close, I remember my good friend, photographer Morgan Konn's Facebook posting yesterday: "Morgan Konn is thankful that June Cleaver is not my contemporary. I cannot imagine trying to keep the house spotless while wearing a dress with two boys!" I feel a Dress Tent coming on. To be continued...Adrienne

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Dear Linda: as usual, love your inquiry.

Missionary Muumuu, the very first dress tent created for our series of wearable architecture, speaks to the archetypal concept illuminated in Francois Truffault's *Wild Child*. Adrienne and I live in the Bay Area, and another such story comes to mind as well. Ishi was the last member of the Yahi, the last surviving group of the Yana people of California. My bible, Wikipedia, states, "Ishi is believed to be the last Native American in Northern California to have lived most of his life completely outside the European American culture. He emerged from the wild near Oroville, California, leaving his ancestral homeland in the foothills near Lassen Peak." If my memory serves me correctly, he also "camped" on a hill below my former home located above UCSF, where Ishi was studied by researchers whose line of inquiry may align with, rather than call attention to "civilizing impulses." Ishi ended up living the rest of his life in a laboratory, under surveillance.

*The Missionary Muumuu Dress Tent* is based on the historical fact that missionaries brought the muumuu to Hawaii to cover up native Hawaiian women, who typically were partially unclothed. We wanted to magnify this idea, illuminate it, and poke fun at it. This dress tent was installed at Kailua Beach, Oahu, Hawaii right down the street from Adrienne's family's house in Kailua. This dress is made of light cotton, and the day we had to photograph, the trade winds were exceptionally strong. We were worried that we were not going to be able to pitch the tent, let alone photograph it. However we quickly realized, after witnessing Adrienne's linen shirt blowing in the wind that the dress tent might blow up as well. And it

did – it was amazing to witness! The Missionary Muumuu Dress Tent does indeed, “blow up” certain notions around colonization of the body and soul via “covering up” the corpus and “sheltering” the soul. So, yes, some of the Dress Tents do allude to our culture’s need to cover up (dress) and shelter (hide) certain secrets of the wild. Most of the dress tents, made for the Hawaiian landscape, deal with colonization, our desire to consume the other, in an attempt to control.

Some of the dress tents are designed to literally “hide” or “harbour” individuals. Ms. Homeland Security: Illegal Entry Dress Tent harbours border crossers, of all sorts. ....hmmmm I planned to continue on from here, but I note by collaborator, Adrienne, just dashed off her note to ya. I was struck that both Adrienne and I, independently, wrote about the Missionary Muumuu Dress Tent in response to your provocative question.

In order to keep the ball rolling, I will send this off now, too.

I am interested and wondering where we will go next..... Robin

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Dear Robin and Adrienne: your informative and thoughtful responses provide material for many avenues of inquiry. For example, you each referred to *The Missionary Muumuu Dress Tent*, an artwork that offers a compelling historic narrative. The work invites two interpretations of ‘missionary’:

- On the one hand, it exposes the invasive strategies of colonizers. In this instance it references missionaries who occupied and captured native definitions of decorum. By imposing the muumuu dress tents on the native women, they expelled an entire population of innocent ‘Eves’ from their native Paradise. These missionaries asserted European definitions of female modesty.

This interpretation seems to focus on the dress theme. It quells acceptance of the naked body and its sexuality.

- On the other hand, the photograph that documents this artwork depicts the women wearing the tent-dress lying on her back on an expanse of beach in Oahu under a post-card perfect sky. The woman’s arms lie in a seductive manner above her head. It is from this vantage point that the viewer observes the dress billowing toward the open horizon and the sea, presumably offering tent entry to visitors. In other words, she has assumed a missionary position, as if inviting sexual intercourse.

This interpretation focuses on the theme of shelter that separates a public exterior from a private interior. It encourages the expression of sexuality.

Please comment. Linda

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Dear Linda: I looked up the etiology of “missionary position” sparked by your commentary and question. I wondered if, indeed, the term stemmed from some ideology of the

missionaries. Here are a few things I discovered by simply typing into Google, "missionary style sex, and history of the word" Anwerers.com came up revealing the following:

A common myth states that the term "missionary position" arose in response to Christian missionaries, who taught that the position was the only proper way to engage in sexual intercourse.

In medieval Europe, partly influenced by Thomas Aquinas, some commentators regarded this as the only acceptable positions since all others were regarded as unfavorable to pregnancy and encouraging pleasure seeking.[2] It appears in ancient artwork of the Romans, Peruvians, Indians, Chinese and Japanese.

When titling the "Missionary Muumuu" Dress Tent, I don't believe Adrienne and I were consciously thinking about the sexual play on the title, but rather, the historic account of the origins of the muumuu. Of course, others immediately made those connections. Some laughed, others criticized. In any case, intentional or not, sexual connotations are there and we claim them!

The Missionary Muumuu Dress Tent does encourage the expression of sexuality, and, at the same time, alludes to the history of the domination of this expression. While this may seem contradictory, our hybrids intentionally pose questions, on both sides of the isle. The dress tents provide shelter to meditate upon an idea, rather than offering a specific point of view from the creators. The conflation of home and shelter may encourage simultaneous consideration of the private verses public, interior verses exterior, the ying and yang of any given situation or idea.

Having said this, I do feel the early dress tents are based on the expression/suppression of desire, specifically sexuality. However, the topic broadens, over time, to include many facets of human desire.

The emerging dress tents created for the Hawaiian landscape pose questions around the exotic, tourism, and exploitation of people and the land. The early dress tents are created for the photograph. The questions posed, deal with photographic theory; the ways in which people and the land, are portrayed, via lens based tradition, centered on the gaze. As the series progresses, the work evolves. The Dress Tents migrate, camping in California. The changing landscape shifts the focus of the work. The Dress Tents are now immersive multimedia installations, social sculptures providing space for meetings of the mind, as well as experienced as photographs. Our exploration of desire moves away from immediate bodily desire, to our culture's voracious appetite (consumerism), our multi faceted relationship to ecology, and our treatment of our borders, and those who cross them.

Looking forward to our next exchange, Robin

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Dear Linda,

Interior/Exterior  
Public/Private  
Disclose/Enclose  
Reveal/Hide

Fantasy/Reality  
Modesty/Exhibitionism

As you suggested in your recent inquiries, the Missionary Muumuu Dress Tent offers varying modes of interpretation. While we could suggest one ideal or belief system, we find challenge in playing with that fine line between many modes of translation.

In the **Green House Dress Tent**, the subject is encased in a plastic greenhouse, attached to a shelter, coming up through her shelter, and viewed through the shelter itself. She is a contained object, viewed in situ at a working greenhouse, Color Spot, in Richmond, California.

This piece started as a playful look at the fashion of being green. Yet she almost became symbolic of a Victorian woman, framed within her translucent shelter.

At the core of each Dress Tent lie **an examination of the public and private dichotomy and the confrontation of one's own desires**. Could I enter her skirt? Would I enter her skirt? If I could enter her skirt, what would I see in there? What will she do if I pinch her frilly pantaloons or tickle her feet? Should I tell her I did it? Is it okay to just look?  
Adrienne

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Dear Adrienne and Robin, the *Green House Dress Tent* offers a compelling exploration of borders within art, some of which are cultural and some that are physical. In both cases, they share the qualities of borders in the physical world, especially those that maintain life. As enclosing membranes, borders distinguish inside from outside. In this manner, they prevent the universe of forms and ideas from blending into uniform consistency. In living organisms, this sealing capacity also offers protection against intrusive forces. But borders also contain portals where leaks occur. In this manner they provide access to vital substances like air, nutrients, and fluids, as well as exits to expel harmful substances like urine, CO<sub>2</sub>, and heat. In order to maintain life, borders enclose and separate AND they provide entrances and exits.

*Green House Dress Tent* is structured as a series of portals within nesting borders. The largest border enclosure is a green house that appears in the photograph as an enclosed space that the viewer has already entered. It surrounds a circular gazebo-like tent that serves as a visually permeable but physically restricted space. Inside the gazebo stands the woman wearing a hoop skirt that comprises the third transparent border but no access portals. This fetching, scantily clad woman is the destination for those who traverse each border passing. As such, she suggests an ultimate portal, the genitals of the woman.

You state that you intend, in such works, to address cultural borders. Since borders are both barriers and access routes, *Green House Dress Tent* inspires numerous cultural associations: titillation, seduction, reproduction, desire, procreation, rape, pleasure, refuge, adventure, temptation, frustration, etc. This theme is augmented by the green house location. The woman stands in the midst of potted flowering plants. If she, too, is considered a hot-house beauty like the flowers in her midst, she suggests a new volley of associations: Barriers protect the woman (chastity?) while trapping energy from incoming radiation (a voyeur?), and heating up (her desire? his desire?). Like the flowers, she too must be shielded from conditions that are adverse to her well-being: storms (of emotion?) and pests (unwanted suitors?). The green house setting is artificial, which includes the

necessity of artificial pollination (sexual fantasy?) and investments of energy and resources (seduction?).

In the midst of freely associating the innuendos elicited by this art work, it occurred to me that the titled can suggest an entirely different reading if it is not read as 'greenhouse dress' but as 'green housedress'. In this instance your invitation to explore "private verses public, interior verses exterior, bodily desires versus consumerism, and our multi faceted relationship to ecology" would need to be completely revised. Please advise. Linda

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Dear Linda, *The Bell Jar*, Sylvia Plath's only novel, comes to mind as I ponder your descriptions, musings, and questions about the Green House Dress Tent.

If we were gathered around a dinner table, and your writing about the tent dress was passed from one person to another, as one of the dishes; I would be tempted to say "short stops" before responding to the last comment/question you raise in your insightful writing. I would serve myself first, and then pass along the rest. The food for thought in your writing is very tempting.

As I read your freely associated innuendos, I am struck by the fact, that although the *Dress Tents* take form as multi media installations; performances including sound, video, and robotics, the writing is centered around the photographic encapsulation of the experience. The Dress Tents series is designed to be ingested as performance / fashion / architecture and photography. The combination and conflation of materials and sensibilities allows us to continually shift the point of reference, layering rather than leveling the playing field.

Let's begin with a visitor who approaches the first portal of the Green House Dress Tent installation. Before stepping through the clear, UV coated plastic door, a mechanical bird perched outside the circular gazebo/tent notices the visitor's presence and begins to sing, twisting its head back and forth, back and forth. Mechanically moving its' beak, twitching, singing. As the visitor moves forward towards the tent interior, the faux flowers potted inside the transparent tent appear to be sporting sunglasses and gyrating in response to the birdcalls. They are sound activated and dance when the birds sing. The birds respond to motion and sing when they notice the flowers dancing. The visitor gasps, the flowers spin in delight. The visitor walks through the portal, amongst the frolicking flowers, and the adventurer's presence inside the tent, triggers a computer voice that also begins to sing like the birds; the lyrics begin with the words; are you green? Do you drive a hybrid car? Do you use solar and wind generated power? The flowers dance and shake their sunny heads. Next, the traveler moves forward and confronts a Persian woman, wearing a transparent green housedress, situated within the transparent green house architecture. She performs as she asks the visitor, are you wearing hemp underwear? Are you fashionably green? Perhaps the woman/performer, wearing the "green housedress," is busy thinking about green washing. She is nobody's fool.

The photograph, "Green House Dress Tent" accents the installation, and is installed around the bend from this piece of wearable architecture. The visitor, pleasure seeker, refugee, adventurer, ecologist, exchanges words and shares a moment with the green house dress performer, while slowly moving towards the next portal, the border between the tent dress experience and the photograph that documents the dress tent in its' original home.

Robin

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Dear Robin, thank you for explaining the extraordinary multi-media real-time experience you and Adrienne choreographed for this work. My interpretation did not account for such vital components as dancing flowers, singing birds, and computer voice-overs. These essential components of the audience's actual encounter with the work could not be discerned from the photograph that serves as its representation. Please explain why the piece survives as a photograph and not a medium like film where movement and sound could be included. What role does the photograph play during the performance/installation? What role does it play within the installation after the performance terminates? What role does it play after the installation has been dismantled? Linda

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Dear Linda, I am interested in your idea that the dress tent project, "survives as a photograph, and not a medium like film, where audio and movement might be recorded." I am not exactly sure what you mean by survive, but we do exhibit the dress tent photographs and videos, along with the installations. In terms of media reproduction, the photographs do get top billing. When the dress tent videos appear in the media, as in coverage of the project by the French/German television program, Arte.tv: TRACKS, they utilized our dress tent video collection, as well as bringing their camera - person/ reporter on site, to interview and record our performance at Cal Arts.

In terms of how we exhibit the work, often the piece is performed at an opening reception; a dress form replaces the performer for the duration of the exhibition. A series of dress tent photographs and videos are exhibited in a gallery space nearby, usually not in direct eye shot, of the dress tent installation. When the dress tent is not being performed live, the photographs and video allow visitors to understand that the installation, now being "worn" by a dress form, exists during other moments in time, as living sculpture and that living sculpture, has a native home, thus a cultural context.

The dress tents photographs are published, around the world, in books and magazines that promote art, design, fashion, travel, architecture, or camping. If you wish, hop on to the website, [www.robinlasser.com](http://www.robinlasser.com), click onto Dress Tents and review the on-line and published press pages. Adrienne and I are continually stunned, by the requests we receive, from around the globe, to include the dress tent photographs in magazines as diverse as *Play Boy* *South America* or *In Touch* magazine, *US to magazines and sites that highlight art, fashion and design*.

Sometimes the project appears on-line in blogs and sites that sell gadgets, discover trends, or in listings such as "10 creative and unusual camping tents from around the world"

<http://www.idbreak.com/2010/01/10-creative-and-unusual-camping-tents.html>

Or "11 weird dresses from around the world"

[http://www.oddee.com/item\\_96512.aspx](http://www.oddee.com/item_96512.aspx)

Adrienne and I really appreciate that a varied, public embraces the Dress Tent photographs, globally. (We do not solicit these publications; they have come to us, thus the surprising appeal across disciplines and borders.) Although we do exhibit the installations and video,

internationally, the photographs migrate / go camping fluidly. In this way they function to bring the work to a wider audience.

The photograph merges the landscape and the dress tent, giving context to the installations. For example, it is important that The Ice Queen: Glacial Retreat Dress Tent is photographed under an advancing glacier. Ms. Homeland Security, Illegal Entry Dress Tent is photographed at the border between the US and Mexico. The photograph provides a visual homeland for the dress tents within a particular landscape. When the dress tents migrate beyond their original home, and are exhibited in a gallery or museum setting, the social/cultural context of the original site is re created in the interior of the tent. Once again, to provide context for the "persona" of each tent. For instance, the Ice Queen: Glacial Retreat Dress Tent was commissioned by ZERO1: Global Art on the Edge Biennial. This international biennial takes place in San Jose, California. No glaciers are to be seen in this urban center. The work is originally photographed in a glacial area, as glaciers are a visible barometer of climate change. Without a glacier in the vicinity, we create an environment, in the interior of the tent that works with notions around climate change. This particular dress tent is a working, worn weather station. She holds a weather balloon that wirelessly transmits climate data to the interior of the tent. NOAA hazard weather reports are constantly playing, while crickets sing in the background, their voices modify as global temperatures increase over time. The photograph and the installation, both convey information about climate change, differently. We also create videos that document the sound and moving elements, and those are shown along with the photographs in museum settings. Once the performance of the dress tent is complete, and the installation continues for several months, the photographs on the wall, the videos, and the immersive interactive environment within the tent itself, provide a staging ground for the piece.

Adrienne and I do not feel that one form of exploration around any given idea is more important or dominant than another. The photographs, videos, and installations allow us to explore ideas from multiple perspectives. The consumption and dissemination of the project, is expansive, rather than tightly edited. The Dress Tents are like people, they may take on different attitudes, and convey different information, and are appreciated differently in varying media, and venues. They are complex, sometimes perplexing, and they enjoy that liberty.

As to what survives, what do you think? Robin

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Hello all: I am immediately struck by two ideas, one of which we briefly addressed in one of our prior conversations.

Multiplicity...

This work always suggests multiple interpretations. As I ponder this garment as a greenhouse dress or a green housedress, I realize that each of the Dress Tents is infused with multiplicity. When Robin and I began this work, there was about a year or so in the beginning of the process where we repeatedly asked the following questions: "Will people understand this?" "What is this work about?" and most importantly, "Can we effectively create a critique while making such amorphous and interpretive work?" Greenhouse Dress Tent was created when the concept of being "green" was everywhere in the media, and fashion. Green housedress was infused into the piece at the time of the photograph. Elly, our seductive Armenian friend and fashion designer extraordinaire, volunteered to wear this garment she sewed.

On our drive to Color Spot we addressed the thematic quality of the work...or did we? Reflecting back to the conversation on our drive over together, I remember talking to Elly about what she should envision while being photographed in the Greenhouse Dress/Green House Dress. We talked about plasticity, entrapment, the Victorian era, being looked at, being caught, and becoming encased. This greenhouse becomes a fictitious bell jar, a terrarium, a carefully enclosed fantasy. Could this garden actually exist?

Replication...

Woman in a green house dress tent, in a working greenhouse, wearing a structure, encased in this structure, placed within the architecture of her own body.

Rows of flowers, orderly, refined, "perfect" flowers run through the space. These flowers are watered at certain intervals, placed .5 inches apart, fertilized, grown, trimmed, sold at Wal-Mart. Their colors are so fantastical they are almost blinding...and intoxicating.

There is no wild growth here. I'd like to cultivate this garden. Adrienne

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Dear Robin and Adrienne: Initially I doubted my ability to conduct a constructive interview with you because I have never seen any of your performances or installations. Now I believe that my lack of information was an advantage. It led me to ask the kind of questions that elicited full descriptions of the on-site experience of the dress tents as well as explanations of their formal and thematic components. Your insightful responses are valuable tools for comprehending and appreciating your ambitious project.

On behalf of the readers, may I conclude this exchange by asking you to share an essential aspect of this project that remains unexplored - your collaborative working relationship. Robin and Adrienne, please scrutinize tomorrow's newspaper and select one article that might inspire the next addition to the dress tent series. Do not consult with each other. Please exchange your selections with each other along with a few ideas regarding a dress tent and context suggested by the article. Then please comment on each others' concepts. In this manner, the initiating phase of your working process will serve as the culminating comments for this interview. Thank you for cooperation. Linda

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Hi Adrienne, thanks for your links from our local on-line papers. I read them and have been giving some thought to the readings in connection to our work. Influenced by some of the writing, I have a few ideas and questions for you with regards to our potential new work, Local Hot Chick: Urban Farmer Dress Tent.

With our dress tent project, we often highlight historic or contemporary fantasies about women. What is the "female fantasy / myth" we are highlighting here? Are our culture's notions of hot chicks evolving from infatuations with exotic women from distant lands, to locals who fertilize their back yards with chicken shit? Do urban farmers taste better in bed?

It feels like we work with the dress tents, as if they are giant mirrors, reflecting the "fashion of our times." Sometimes poking fun of issues and movements that we, ourselves proscribe to and believe in, deeply. Laughing at/with oneself. I think this is true, again with our new musings, yes? You live with a couple of chickens in your back yard in Oakland, and plan to marry a man who is deeply involved with urban distribution of locally grown and prepared food. Much of our work comments on aspects of our culture in transition, running fast and hard to try to accommodate our quickly evolving environmental

and public health issues, even if we do this with a wink and in hot pink. I think this is true of our next vision as well. But...

What if we change strategies, a bit, with the new dress tent and utilize more of a Makers, DIY mentality, and instead of making a one of a kind, dress tent, consider making a "pattern" in the course of our "product development" that could be free source, on line, to globally encourage local food preparation and production. After all, our dress tents often appear in magazines and on line blogs under "gadgets", listed and imaged in commercial tent distribution sites, industrial design sites, Trend Hunter sites, travel packages etc. Remember that artist in Australia who painted Ms. Homeland Security, and used her for the opening card of his big new show at a prestigious contemporary art gallery in Sidney? Because the work imaged, was our "art", his dealer, who received calls from the public, calling this to his attention, admonished this artist and he contacted us, to try to resolve the situation I loved the artist's solution, to paint over the bottom of Ms Homeland Security, leaving the top of her popping out of a mobile camper rather than a tent! In any case, he apologized saying that he fell in love with the dress tent and utilized it in his "best work to date" thinking it was an industrially designed object, as he viewed it on line in sites selling gadgets, tents, and mobile gear!

In any case, this time, what if we design a "functional" dress tent and offer the pattern on line, free source? What if we make the dress tent out of recycled materials, natural to the source (like chicken feathers) and or up-cycled from the backyard or garage storage like fencing. Since many family members of yours, live in Hawaii, (and your uncle and cousins have cocks running the roost in and outside of their amazing house!)-What if we re looked at some of the Hawaiian historic cloaks made entirely of bird feathers, and think about those designs and how we may wish to adapt them to urban living patterns. How about us creating a "mobile home" (taking back the idea from the Australian artist) on wheels, this time, so that the chicken shit can be easily shifted around the back yard, to fertilize the lawn. (Does chicken poop make a good back yard fertilizer?) This way the "performer/backyard farmer" wears the mobile chicken coop, rolling up her sleeves of flapping feathers, lifting up her skirt, all in the spirit of keeping the backyard green, and omelets on the table! Free Source! What do you think? Robin

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Dear Robin, free source...free omelets. I like your thinking.

When I envision this dress tent, I see a woman at the forefront of a long tractor/trailer coop, made of chicken wire and engulfed by many, many feathers. The feathers should be dark and light orange and might even look like flames - yes, she's a hot rod of sorts. She'll be paired with her perfect landscape: an urban backyard that's full to the brim with veggies, compost and other "amenities." We could use my backyard or a more extensive one - maybe Novella Carpenter's (<http://oaktownart.com/2009/11/05/ghost-town-farm/>)? She's a popular writer specializing in urban farming, a student of Michael Pollan's, and part owner of the bio-diesel station in Berkeley that wanted a Dress Tent at one of their events. In terms of sound, I hear chickens yelling, BART screeching past, crows crowing, cars careening...all with a gentle breeze whooshing in the background.

The hot chick? While this lies again in the role of the female as the fertile object of desire. Google "hot chick" and you'll be barraged by women in the come hither position. This hot chick is a sexy provider, a nurturer, a beauty queen dressed up in feathers, and very trendy. She can make a kick-ass omelet and also grow her own food.

What more could you ask for? So self-sufficient is she that her lovely nest quickly opens up for anyone that would like to roost. Or is she fiercely independent, so much so that she refuses to rely upon anyone but herself for her food and shelter?

We definitely work with "fashions of the times" and this is no different. Everywhere I look I see desire for self-sufficiency and a revised look at the back-to-the-land movement. Consumption is in question and we hope to take some control of our food system back into our own hands. Take a look at the documentary "FOOD, Inc." and your ideals will forever be changed. While in the end it is not much cheaper to have chickens for eggs, or grow our own lettuce, there is a small amount of pride in re-claiming ownership of our food source.

Your idea of bringing in the DIY mentality to this dress tent is an excellent one, and I think we could utilize this. There are many coop "plans" or blueprints available for purchase on the internet. Maybe we can create a "plan" that we could sell or donate, that would somehow encourage and support the local food movement. Maybe we could sell our "plan" on Etsy? And yes, the poop is part of the chicken magic. Everyone wants some chicken poop in their garden, but it can't be too "hot" (fresh), or it will burn up delicate seedlings.

Somehow, we should integrate some of this "magic" into the installation.

By the way, urban farmers do like it dirty. Until next time, Adrienne

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Dear Reader: I hope you have enjoyed this exchange as I have. While words can never replace art experiences, Adrienne's and Robin's thoughtful commentary demonstrates that words can enhance those experiences. The text they have provided constitutes an insider's studio-view of their collaborative relationship, and a primer for appreciating the visual and conceptual richness of their work. Please join me in expressing gratitude to them both.  
Linda