

***Edited Telephone Interview with Jenny Marketou, New York Artist***

October 3, 2009

Apexart Gallery Exhibitor, New York

*A Way Beyond Fashion*, September 16 to October 24, 2009

Interviewer: Barbara J. West

Interviewer: ***In the exhibition *Way Beyond Fashion*, what statement are you making with your work?***

Jenny: I want to make it clear that I am not a fashion designer so I don't come from the fashion world. I really wanted to make a comment about fashion and how it has taken over the way we act, who we are. With my paper wearables that I don't even consider as fashion, I wanted to comment about the high end of fashion and approach it in a much more democratic and interventionist way. Fashion is something on our minds and in the wearer's. We can do whatever we want with it. I wanted to make a statement that fashion is something democratic for everybody. You can use it to make statements about the social and political environment we live in today rather than just being a commodity.

Interviewer: ***How do you define yourself? Obviously you just said you are not a fashion designer.***

Jenny: It is very difficult in our time to define who is the artist, who is the designer, who is the fashion designer. I think there is so much confusion because we all somehow borrow the medium of each other. I assume I am an artist; I am someone who creates ideas and creates situations. The way I describe this work is a project of wearable situations, which goes back to the Brazilian artist Helio Oiticica, and he was one of the main inspirations along with the 60s. I can define myself as an artist, as a designer, as someone who creates public situations and interventions and brings some kind of awareness.

Interviewer: ***Have you designed clothing before or is this your first project using clothing as a medium?***

Jenny: I have designed many ephemeral objects which can be used as tools. Going back to my wearable situations, to my wearable fashion, I consider it as a tool that gives the wearer some kind of empowerment. It gives the wearer the opportunity to embed themselves or wear another kind of persona. During the opening, when people were wearing those dresses, it was very interesting how the pattern of behaviour changed. I give the opportunity to my viewers to inhabit different kinds of situations or personas, so in this case, my dresses come in the same category as my previous work, like all the inflatables, all the ephemerals, all the nomadic installations and situations I have created. I wouldn't describe this as the first time I have worked with this kind of idea. I can give you many examples, like *Camp in my Tent*, *Dress Local*, *Flying Spy Potatoes*, *99 Red Balloons* and *Redeyed Skywalkers*.

Interviewer: ***Do you perceive clothing can be used as a medium to create 'avant-garde' art?***

Jenny: Oh yes, and I think it has been all along, If you remember the Dadas, they were throwing dances and balls and were always dressed in some kind of costume. As human beings we all want to inhabit a costume which will give us the opportunity to be another persona. We are so trapped in our daily convictions and daily life that costume presents an opportunity to get out of that. I think that fashion, but I always want to use the word wearable, gives us this opportunity. It is very empowering. If you look at fashion in general and especially high fashion, the designers try to make a statement and I think that is very liberating. Many people cannot wear high fashion because they are very vulnerable and do not have the self confidence. That is why we admire the people who make a statement through their dress. Punk is one of the examples.

Interviewer: ***You make a distinction between art and wearables. What is important to you about making such a distinction?***

Jenny: Using the word wearable, I would call it wearable art. That is the best definition of the work that was in this exhibition. It is art because it was hand crafted and all the signs on the paper were hand printed. It had personal input, although it is a ready made. At the same time readymade is art. We perceive it as art because it has all this handcrafting at the same time it comes in multiples. I can make as many as I want. So I would describe it as a wearable multiple or wearable art. Of course wearable is easy to understand because you can wear it.

Interviewer: ***During the panel discussion, Vito Acconci was definite that he is a designer, not an artist, and Carla Hernandez clearly stated she is a fashion designer. Yet this exhibition was in an art gallery and it was organized as art. Would you comment on how that experience was for you?***

Jenny: I consider myself a conceptual artist. The dresses are very conceptual because of the way I am using them as an object of art. I make my work very democratic. It came to life the moment it was worn by someone. It is different when you see the dress on the wall, different when you see the dress worn by the public and different again on video. when it has been documented as a performance. So right there is a very interesting concept about the presentation of my work and a very interesting way for me to display my work in different mediums.

Right away I see this as very different from the way that Carla [Fernandez] showed her work. Carla made the dresses and hanged them on the wall. They became precious objects. Vito Acconci very conceptually designed an apparatus; a prototype which he put on the wall. On the other hand, I was able to make the paper dresses which were not commodified at all. On the contrary they were passed out to the guests that evening to wear. Some of them were torn. I had to use tape to repair them. The dresses started to map some of the movements and the behaviour of the wearer which became

interactive with the human body. They started changing as I was taping and my aim for the end of the exhibition was to map behaviour, so you see how much more extended my work is and how many small things are about art, fashion, creativity and participation. The work includes many ideas about how I use fashion as a medium or as a venue to express these ideas. It is a piece of art because it allows for so many layers of meaning and participation and engagement from the viewer.

Interviewer: ***Typically you think of art hanging on the wall, yet you were interactive with performance art whereas the people who typically would not be putting something on the wall, displayed their work in the traditional art way.***

Jenny: In that exhibition, the fashion designer ended up showing her work as an object hanging on the wall. I, as an artist, took an object and put it into public use with many layers of meaning. My work presents a very interesting aspect of fashion. People love my project. We love anything that has to do with our bodies. Don't forget the signs that are written on these dresses. They make either a political comment or a comment about everyday life like "The more you watch me the less you see me" This makes reference to the way we are controlled or surveyed in our public space. Fashion and language together are used to make a public statement.

Interviewer: ***What impact do you feel the art world and the history of art have in how you do your work?***

It would be a lie if I said I didn't take the art world into consideration. My work has always been shown in an art venue. But at the same time, you saw my work at Apexart. I have shown in major museums and biennials, you know, important institutions. I have always tried to have a component which allows the viewer to be part of the work. I am aware of and want to show in these venues, but at the same time I am always trying to create situations or projects that don't necessarily support the commodification of the art world. On the contrary, my art conveys some kind of public participation, and as a result, a democratic way of using art to make a statement or bring some kind of awareness. I don't believe that art can change the world. It never did. It was an elitist project. But the contrary can bring some kind of awareness as you work with the public and the community and create sustainable situations, where people are brought into art without being exposed. I think that is the way of creating art for me.

We people get so confused sometimes. We want to put things in categories where we tend to call some things design and some things art. I don't believe in these things. I think art has a much wider meaning.