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The dress by Adolfo, left, and the costume by Colette, above, are nostalgic fantasies. Andy Warhol's dress, right, is practical fantasy.

If bicycles don't suit you, nostalgia might

By Betty Ommerman
Newsday Fashion Editor

Trust Rudi Gernreich to wheel in a way-out fashion line—bicycle parts.

The designer who brought you topless bathing suits now brings you his-and-hers handlebars, fenders, reflectors, rear view mirrors and, for the man, a bicycle seat coverup. Bicycle chains provide fringe.

In fairness to Gernreich, he was only taking seriously his assignment to prepare a fantasy outfit (or outfits—Gernreich did male and female bicycle-part costumes) for a "Fantasy as Fashion" exhibit by 53 designers for the benefit of Fountain House, a psychiatric rehabilitation center at 425 W. 47th St., Manhattan. The exhibit will continue at the Rizzoli International Gallery, 712 Fifth Ave., Manhattan, through Jan. 31—but without the live models who displayed them at the preview last Tuesday. The fantasy clothes will be draped on plastic mannequins.

"You could call this basic bicycle clothes, or 'after the fall,'" Gernreich said, as his female model struggled to stay inside her handlebar shoulder straps, and the male model adjusted a sculpted fender to his shaven head. Jewelry sculptor Christopher Dan Blaker assembled the parts from various junked bicycles that he and Gernreich scavenged around his Torrance, Calif., neighborhood.

While Gernreich's fashion fantasies were racing off into another century

or so, most of the other 52 designers continued to dwell in the sea of nostalgia. "In the year 2000, when women will be dressed by Rudi, they will still dream of the beaded dresses of 1924," said Adolfo, justifying his rhinestone-beaded, blue chiffon creation, with a blue rose at the shoulder and a fluttering blue ostrich fan.

Colette, a Manhattan sculptor who, like Adolfo, uses only one name, sat pouting at an old-fashioned school desk, in her ecru lace drawers, ecru waist-cincher with an attached miniature music box, ecru lace runner draped across her bosom, a wide picture hat with a gossamer veil, blue-laced high shoes and, over it all, a cloak made from a parachute.

"I am my environment," Colette explained. "The studio in which I live is all in silk and when I'm dressed in silk, it's hard to find me." Colette said she delves through second-hand stores to find the fragments for her designs. "I believe in costumes, not styles," she said. "I don't believe in clothes that are practical. Fashion gets boring if it is practical."

Surprisingly, pop artist Andy Warhol created the most practical fantasy. Warhol combined a black one-shoulder ruffled jersey by Clovis Ruffin with the back and sleeves of a Diane von Furstenberg spatter-print, all stitched in red in the manner of Stephen Burrows, and ready to go to the Christmas party.

International Gallery is open weekdays and Saturdays 10 AM to midnight. The exhibit is free. /II



Rudi Gernreich's bicycle suits.

Newsday Photos by Stan Wolfson

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