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Ovation

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Visual arts

Charlotte Kruk: Teacher's works use humor to make a statement

By Stephanie Wright Hession

Although she holds fond memories as a child of falling asleep to the sound of her grandmother's sewing machine every afternoon, Charlotte Kruk rejected the idea of learning how to sew until the age of 23. Despite this, today she creates intricately detailed and labor-intensive sculptures that she fashions into wearable garments, dress forms and wall pieces.

"With my new work, I've been doing a lot of embellishing — and because I don't come from a sewing background, I have to deconstruct various patterns and try to put them back together," Kruk says. "Because my dad died when I was young, and I was the youngest, I had to be more macho, which is why I am amazed what I am making, because I refused to wear a dress until a couple of years ago."

The Dogpatch Cafe and Gallery features several of her works for "Charlotte Kruk: Eye Candy," her solo, pop-up exhibition presented by the Museum of Craft and Design. As her primary material, the artist uses candy wrappers, cake mix boxes and assorted product packaging.

The title of the show holds both literal and conceptual meaning.

"For me it was a way to get started, as far as making this statement that fashion is sort of ridiculous in that we try to keep up with current trends or fashions," says the sculptor, an art teacher at Lynbrook High School in San Jose. "It's very interesting that you are a package, and the way that you pres-

Through Jan. 25, 7 a.m.-6 p.m. daily, Dogpatch Cafe and Gallery, 2295 Third St., S.F. (415) 773-0303. www.sfmcd.org.

ent yourself on a daily basis becomes either your level of confidence that you bring to the universe, or people make snap judgments about who you are and where you belong."

The sculptures include "El Flamenco," a strapless, body hugging dress made with milk chocolate and peanut butter M&M's bags and accented with crimson sequins, which flares out into rows of voluptuous ruffles. For "Wisdom Tooth Fairy," which covers a dress form, Kruk patched together empty boxes from a variety of toothpaste brands, filled the silver wings with twisted pink, red and purple toothbrushes and created a coin necklace accented with actual wisdom teeth.

"I've been working on and improving this for quite a number of years. It's really grown to be an installation piece. It's about the wisdom tooth, especially being a high school teacher, when students are at the age of having the wisdom teeth removed," Kruk says. "We have a relationship with the tooth fairy as a child but then you give this up. It plays with the idea of the concept that this is lost with maturity."

For Marr D'Estout, curator for the Museum of Craft and Design, Kruk's societal humor and statement on consumerism attracted him to her work.

"Charlotte Kruk has been working with these concepts for



Museum of Craft and Design

"Wisdom Tooth Fairy" features empty toothpaste boxes, toothbrushes and a necklace that includes real wisdom teeth.

a few years. She draws you in with the flash, then nudges you to think deeper," he says. "I wanted to provide an exhibit that would work on a number of levels to a varied audience — younger viewers, and more seasoned viewers as well. Her

humor and the festive style of her work seemed perfect, and of course, the works are very well crafted."

Stephanie Wright Hession is a freelance writer. E-mail: 96hours@sfbchronicle.com