

Informed Source

Judy Bales

I have developed these body-related works as a counterpoint to my abstract fiber and mixed media sculpture. I am intrigued by cold, sterile materials cast off from technologies and their potential use to create objects that contain humor and life.

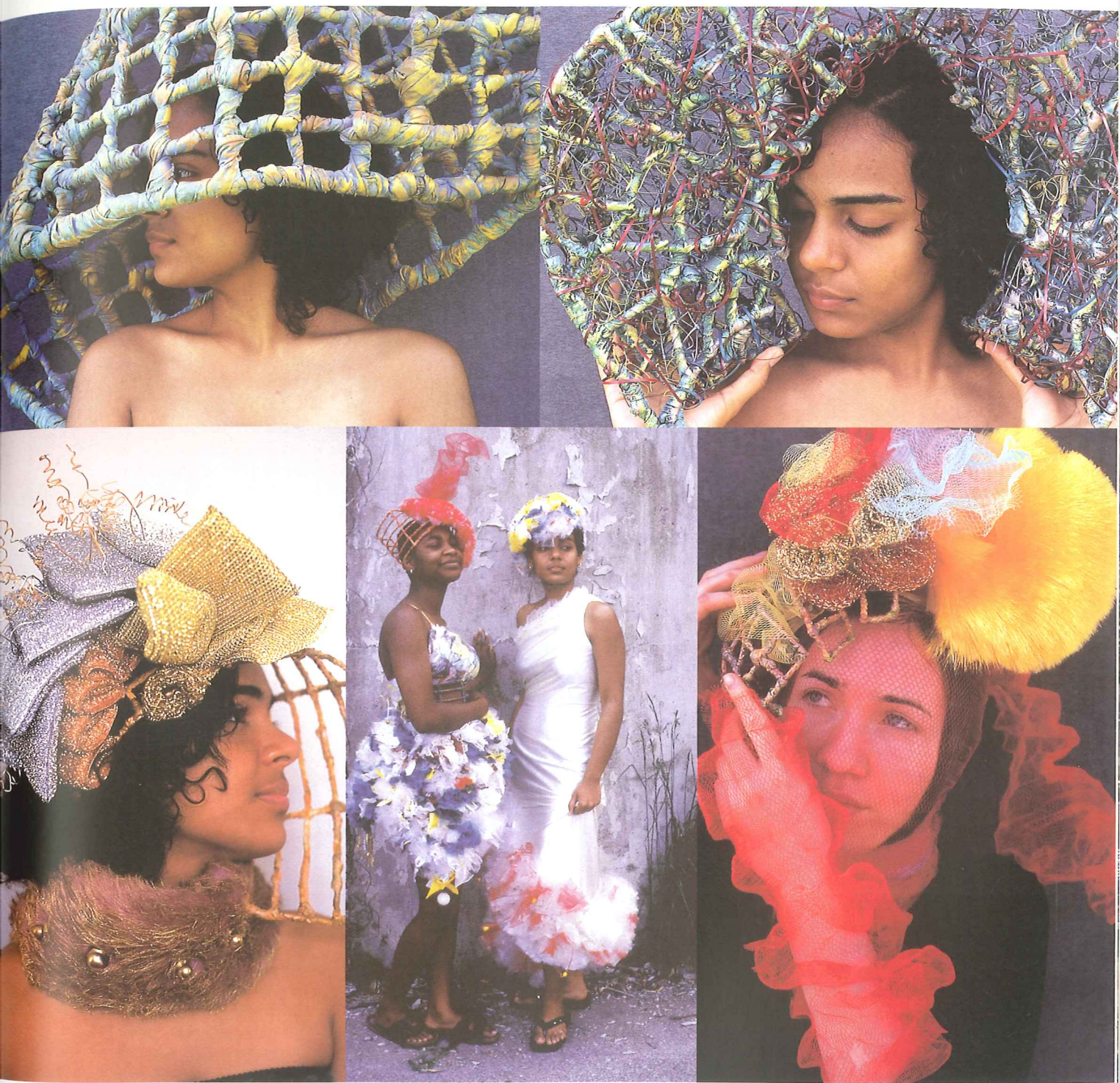
My chosen “fabrics” are common, everyday materials that I transform into objects of beauty and mystery. My love of using a material in a context other than that for which it was intended combines with the humorous side of historical and contemporary fashion, enabling me to create personal “fashion statements.” I enjoy utilizing very simple construction techniques and materials such as plastic grocery bags to create elegant attire. This alludes to the heart of creation—concrete matter springs from pure energy or, in this case, materials moving from the ubiquitous to the particular.

My abstract fiber sculptures draw from experiences with nature and the landscape. Landforms are often suggestive of the human body. This association with the human body is exhibited in the sensuous undulations of hills, valleys, or rivers and in rich coverings of vegetation that suggests hair or fur. Perceiving this human connection with the land increases our awareness of the unity of all life on earth. Creating body-related sculptures is a way of unifying my body of work, drawing from sources rooted in the environment, landforms, and forms from the human body.

My core material for both my abstract and clothing-related work is almost always a wire grid, by nature rigid and geometric. Much as artist/craftsmen of the past gathered natural materials—reeds or grasses, for instance—I collect materials readily available to me, choosing those that suit my particular methods of working. The collection and creation process is the same as that throughout history; only the raw materials have changed.

This approach enables the viewer to see materials in a new light. All materials are revealed as being created equal; it is the creativity of the artist, the wearer, and the viewer that brings forth art and beauty. This places things such as disposable plastic bags or kitchen scrubbers at potentially the same level as silks or exotic furs, a useful idea in our society of waste and depletion of precious resources.

—Judy Bales lives in Fairfield, Iowa.



TOP LEFT: JUDY BALES *Maria with Fabric and Wire Grid Sculpture* Fabric wrapping on wire, paint, 2004.

TOP RIGHT: JUDY BALES *Maria with Elizabethan Sculpture* Fabric wrapping on wire, paint, plastic mesh, 2004.

BOTTOM LEFT: JUDY BALES *Brillo Hat* Hat: Fabric wrapping on wire, paint, various kitchen supplies. Collar: altered ear muff, 2004.

BOTTOM CENTER: JUDY BALES *Eco-Couture Series* Headdresses: Wire, mesh, plastic rain capes, bath scrubbers, plastic shopping bags, fabric paint. Dresses (by Judy Bales and Debbie Freeberg-Renwick): Wire mesh, plastic rain capes, plastic shopping bags, fabric, paint, 2003.

BOTTOM RIGHT: JUDY BALES *Sculpture for the Head* Fabric wrapping on wire, metal pot scrubbers, nylon mesh, household dusters, 2004.