

From Trash to Treasure



Models pose in dresses made from throwaway items. Photo by Ashley Kuenstler

Garbage Bag Gala raises \$13,000.

By Ashley Kuenstler

The second annual Garbage Bag Gala brought 200 people in early August to a runway show of recyclable fashion in St. Louis, Mo. With a team of 20 designers, The Salvation Army raised \$13,000 to support its programs and services.

“Too many times, the people who need our help the most are viewed the same way: as throwaways,” said Captain Matt O’Neil, who spoke at the event. “But at The Salvation Army, we believe everything and everyone deserves a second chance.”

Among the anticipated list of designers was St. Louis native A.J. Thouvenot, who was featured on Season 8 of Project Runway. One of his designs was worn by Fox 2 news anchor Angela Hutti, who also emceed the event. Thouvenot, along with Debra Bass, Fashion Editor for the St. Louis Post Dispatch, and Sam Chadwick, Fashion Editor for ALIVE Magazine, served as judges for the evening.

<https://caringmagazine.org>

Each designer created two looks: a formal or casual design, as well as an “art-to-wear” piece using only throwaway items. They put their creativity and ingenuity to the test this year, using trash bags, duct tape, grocery bags, nails, carpet underlay, corks, VHS tapes, tissue paper, and aluminum cans as design elements.

From 40 designs, the judges chose June Greig as the top designer for the second year in a row for her pink dress made from shopping bags and tissue paper.

Greig said the dress took several weeks of thought and planning and three days to create.

“I had originally planned for a different color, but when I met my model, I knew the dress needed to be pink,” she said. “The design called for large circles made from tissue paper and plastic bags. I lost count how many I used after I reached 800.”

The inspiration for the dress came from a Valentino design.

“I just thought it was so beautiful,” she said. “I would never have the chance to go anywhere and wear something like that, so I decided to create it myself.”

Greig said she designed her first garment more than 60 years ago, when she was 8 and her mother gave her two seed sacks to occupy her time. She is self-taught and managed the alteration department for Saks Fifth Avenue for 28 years, owned her own business for custom clothing and alterations, and now teaches sewing to adults and children.

“I’ve loved sewing my entire life, and having the chance to do what I love for a great cause like The Salvation Army is just a great experience,” Greig said. “I’ve already started planning for next year.”

As the judges’ pick for top designer, Greig was awarded a Brother SB170 sewing machine donated by American Sewing Machine Co. in St. Charles. Her model, Anna Bird, was awarded two tickets to the Cards/Cubs game Aug. 10 at Busch Stadium.

After the runway lights had dimmed and the creations were put back on their hangers, the party moved to The Moonrise Hotel rooftop, where participants enjoyed a VIP after party with food, drinks, live music from DJ Epic, and the company of St. Louis’ fashion community.

The event was sponsored by Grizzard, The Moonrise Hotel, Yelp, ALIVE Magazine, Patch, Lou Fusz Fiat, Hardees, Black Diamond Glam Squad, and Fish Eye Fun.