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'Computational Couture' at MIT

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(AP) -- A recent fashion show at the MIT Media Lab combined things of beauty with rules of math.

There was a weighted inflatable dress powered by a hacked vacuum cleaner, a purse designed using a Russian theory of inventive problem solving and a necklace made from 125-volt fuses. Other highlights: sneakers embedded with sensors and a shoulder-covering shrug wired like the vintage electronic game "Simon."



A necklace made from 2-amp 125-volt slow blow fuses.

The show, called "Seamless: Computational Couture," was organized by MIT graduate students Christine Liu, 22, and Nick Knouf, 25, who were inspired by the cyborg looks created by the winner of the reality TV show "Project Runway."

Some pieces at the MIT show were more conceptual than others, such as a "reactive undergarment" that logs the experience of an airport pat-down, and a "kitty skirt," which has motors that turn tendrils on the skirt into cat toys. The skirt is meant to play on the predator/prey relationship, according to a description by its creator, Gemma Shusterman.

"You attract cats, but I think you also can attract other creatures, too," Liu said.

One outfit included boots that, with each step, pump air into a tube attached to a dress. The pumped-in air activates color-changing ink, so the dress's color changes to reflect how far the wearer had traveled.

The show, which featured about 30 high-tech looks from students at MIT, the Rhode Island School of Design and Harvard University, played to a packed house last month.

Is MIT starved for fashion?

"Its focus is not fashion," Knouf acknowledged. "But there are a lot of people at the Media Lab who we've found through this project who are interested in the future of fashion."

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