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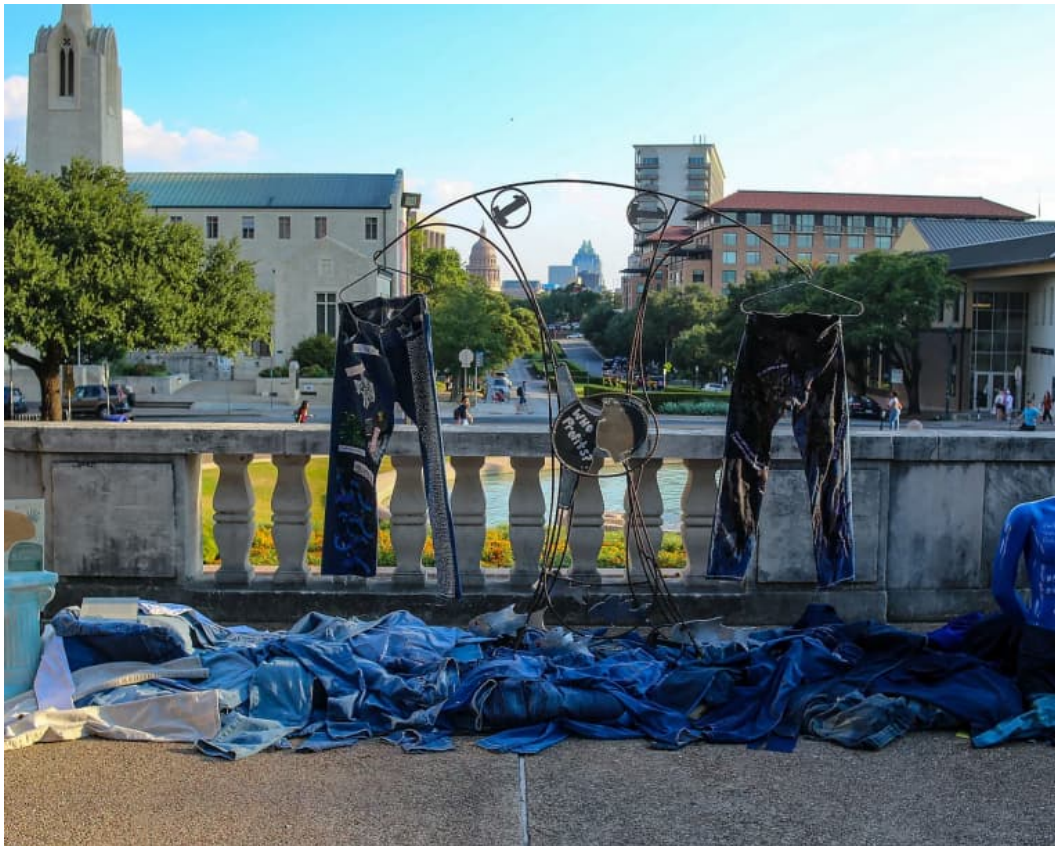
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CAMPUS

Pop Up Sculptures across Campus Call out the Fast Fashion Industry

BY COURTNEY THOMAS ON SEPTEMBER 23, 2019 • (1 COMMENT)



From Sept. 6 through Oct. 4, a series of eye-catching sculptural installations will greet students as they walk to class. They were built by the student group Fashion Anonymous to raise awareness about the environmental cost of fast

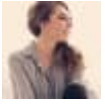
fashion. The series, which is entitled *Wardrobe Reflections*, received a grant from the **Green Fund** (<https://sustainability.utexas.edu/getinvolved/greenfund>), an initiative at UT Austin that supports sustainability-related projects. Although they may not be aware, each UT student contributes \$5 per semester (and \$2.50 per summer session) to the Green Fund through their tuition payments.

The series of installations promotes sustainability through what Ashlee Bushee, the leader of Fashion Anonymous and *Wardrobe Reflections* project lead, describes as “quiet activism.” Her work aims to engage students’ curiosity instead of becoming just another voice calling for climate protection. The installations are spread across campus, taking advantage of student traffic patterns and separating the different elements of the series to highlight that clothing waste is a multifaceted issue with no single solution. All of the textiles used in the creation of the pieces were either donated or purchased second hand.

Aesthetically, the *Wardrobe Reflections* installations are designed to be Instagrammable, promoting a digital spread of Fashion Anonymous’ message. Many of the installations include hashtags and small printouts with barcodes that link to digital surveys. The individual pieces, however, are symbol-laden, calling out consumers, manufacturers, and retailers. Each piece tackles one ethical or environmental issue in the fashion industry. Bushee hopes that the installations will break down sustainable fashion into “bite-sized pieces,” allowing viewers to recognize individual changes in consumer behavior that can have wide-ranging impacts.

The installations make use of both visuals and text to encourage ethical, sustainable clothing consumption. Behind Littlefield Fountain, in the piece *I’m Finished*, discarded denim forms an ocean, behind which sits the welded outline of a coin asking, “Who Profits?” In the fine print, the coin reads: “Is GDP worth more than the people and the planet?” *To Dye For*, tucked inside the Gearing Hall courtyard, is a mess of color and bottles, with names of health conditions suffered by workers in the dye industry scrawled across a mannequin. *Hanging by A Thread*, near the Turtle Pond, uses natural and synthetic fibers hung from trees to examine the environmental impact of each. Mirrors frame the *Sew Cute* installation on West Mall, which addresses working conditions in the garment industry. In it, a birdcage reads “Is your consumption keeping another human trapped in a cage?” Nearby, a bed frame wrapped in fibers as part of the piece *Constant Consumption* asserts that consumerism breeds unhappiness.

Ashlee Bushee says the series is investigating whether or not “people’s consumer behavior changes if they see an art exhibit about fashion.” The installations make a strong and visible case for changing consumer behavior, but individual actions on the part of her audience, the UT student body, will ultimately determine whether or not the project has been a success.



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