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Clothing and power

New exhibit asks women what 'trappings' give them strength

New Mexico Business Weekly - by [Megan Kamerick](#) NMBW Staff

For Sharon Maloof, it's her grandmother's fur coat.

But for Pam Bazant-Jung, it's jeans, a turtleneck and New Mexico jewelry, while two hidden raven tattoos are the answer for Linda Durham.

These were the responses of three New Mexico businesswomen when asked "What do you wear that makes you feel powerful?"

And now their answers will be among more than 600 stories and photos of women in a new multimedia exhibit at 516 ARTS in downtown Albuquerque.

"Trappings: Stories of Women, Power and Clothing," is a national traveling exhibition that will be on display not only at the 516 gallery, starting June 13, but also on 43 banners on building facades and lightposts along Central Avenue and in installations inside the three D-Ride buses that serve Downtown. In fact, in order to see the entire exhibition, people will have to go to the gallery at 516 Central SW, but also walk along Central and look at all the banners and go inside each bus, said Suzanne Sbarge, executive director of 516 ARTS.

Several building owners are donating space for the banners, including David Blanc, who owns the building where the **One Up Club** is located at 3rd and Central, and Anna Muller, who owns the Kress Building. The Historic District Improvement Co. is giving space at its Crossroads building at 4th and Central and the Theater Block building at 1st and Central.

Sbarge said one reason she chose to bring Trappings here was to involve Albuquerque in a national dialog.

"Part of our mission at 516 is to help connect Albuquerque with cultural trends and discussions," she said. "I think our local involvement lends important voices to the dialogue, including many Native American and Hispanic women."

The project was created by **Two Girls Working**, a collaboration of Tiffany Ludwig and Renee Piechocki. Since 2001, the two have interviewed more than 600 women in 15 states, including New Mexico. They released a book last year with some of those interviews. They also returned to the state earlier this year and interviewed more than 40 women at sessions hosted by the Albuquerque Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, the National Hispanic Cultural Center, the Rio Grande Community Development Corporation, the South Valley Economic Development Center and Zuni Pueblo.

"We realized that clothing was a kind of vehicle to talk about those issues of identity and presentation," Ludwig said. "We wanted to have a conversation about tough topics and realized the word 'power' was a complicated word that has many associations and many different meanings."

Durham, owner of **Linda Durham Contemporary Art** in Santa Fe, is featured in the book and her images and parts of her interview will be inside a D-Ride bus, where a phone number allows riders to call and hear the entire interview.

"I was wearing a jacket I liked very much, but I said in the end, 'it's those tattoos on my back,'" she said. "I can feel powerful all the time. They don't go away."

Maloof, deputy secretary of tourism for the state, said the fur coat invokes the grace and elegance of her grandmother -- someone she would like to emulate.

"She was the most positive person," Maloof said.

Bazant-Jung, president of **Heritage Hotels and Resorts**, said her clothing choice made her feel very comfortable and also was a true representation of who she is -- casual and approachable.

"It was very much to the point, which is how I am as a person," she said of her interview session.

Sherri Brueggemann, public art program manager for the city of Albuquerque, was interviewed several years ago by the Two Girls in Santa Fe. She was going through a major career transition from artist to art administrator. So she wore a straight skirt and black top, but expressed her artist side with handmade jewelry.

"I didn't want to lose that edginess of being that arts person, but I also wanted to be taken seriously," she said.

The exhibition not only goes beyond the gallery walls, but outside traditional definitions of art, Sbarge said.

"It's a documentary project about people's stories presented in an arts context," she said.

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