



# Jeffrey Gibson: This Is the Day

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The newest exhibition at the Wellin Museum of Art at Hamilton College in Clinton, N. Y. started with a discussion.

“Actually it was several different discussions,” says director Tracy Adler. But one was: “What do we want to do that we haven’t done before?”

And so was born “Jeffrey Gibson: This Is the Day.”

“The garments created for the show combine 1980s club culture bling with influences from the 19th Century Ghost Dance Movement referencing the belief that native people had in the power of garments,” she says. “And bringing together disparate elements, like his garments with his sculpture and his unique approach to them.”

They’re impractical – oversized, very large and a couple of them are double-sided. “They’re not meant to be practical or worn and that’s why they’re hung from the ceiling,” she says. “They’re meant to be seen as sculptural objects.”

Gibson made them all out of fringe and jingles often used in pow-wow attire. “They’re custom-printed satin, silk and organza – a combination of many different things, like found materials, quilts, sequins and roller-skate laces,” she says. There’s also a film commissioned by the Wellin Museum that Gibson created about a Native American trans woman living on a reservation in Mississippi.

“Gibson’s voice is one-of-a-kind and critical at a time when some people, whether through race or sexual orientation, or both, are being marginalized, Adler says. “He has a very positive voice, a hopeful voice that comes through as colorful and accessible,” she says. “In our community we found it to be very accessible – he wants people to have a fresh engagement with Native American culture and Queer culture.”

Designed by Machado Silvetti Associates, the Wellin opened in 2012. Its curators and administrators immediately began looking beyond the traditional for diversity and original first-time artists like Gibson, who created all new garments, helmets, abstract geometric paintings, and videos for the show that opened on Sept. 8.

Alas, it closes on Dec. 9. “I’ll be sad to see it go – it’s such a fabulous exhibition,” she says. “It tells many stories – the garments are hung so people can walk between them in a very experiential way.”

And at the Wellin, that had never been done before.

By Michael Welton