“Sewn Identity” at the Washington Street Art Center

Small town girl, Danielle Festa of Melrose, is making a name for herself in Somerville. The UMASS Amherst graduate revealed her, “Sewn Identity”, art collection on September 9th, at the Washington Street Art Center. It is not her first show but it was her largest crowd to date and she could not be happier about the support that she has been receiving.

Her newest collection is an eclectic mix of oil painted portraits with fabric worked throughout in different ways. She is a traditional artist in many of her methods but her use of fabric makes these portraits really fresh and unique.

She hopes that her audience asks.” What does fabric really mean to people?” And refers to one portrait she has named “School Uniform”, where she has captured the attitude of the average high school girl wearing Uggs and blue jeans. Festa points out that, “The girl in the painting "School Uniform" is someone almost anyone can relate to seeing. There have always been social pressures around attire in schools, the 'haves' and the 'have-nots', but lately there has been a more obvious distinction, you either have a Northface and Uggs or you do not. In this instance dress is used to conform and to feel accepted by peers.” Festa says, “I try to capture a variety of different dress, not just the extremes, so I can call attention to the way clothing decides our character before we even speak.”

Festa is inspired by the works of Cindy Sherman and can identify with her creative process. Some portraits can take months to complete and do not always make it into her collection but her favorites do, such as the portrait titled “Nana” of her grandmother, that reveals her skill with ribbon weaved to create the stunning hat that is the focal point of this piece.

These portraits as well as the rest of her collection can be seen during gallery hours on Saturdays in September from 12-4pm. On Sunday, September 25 from 4-6pm, Festa will be hosting the closing ceremony, with live music, featuring the "Steve GutenBand".