

FASHION

Here's How Artist Bailey Scieszka Brings Her Alter-Ego to Life With Handcrafted Costumes

BY BROOKE BOBB
February 8, 2019



Wearing Old Put in Custom Craft Neckbeast. Photo: Courtesy of Bailey Scieszka

Bailey Scieszka refers to herself as “a visual beast.” She’s a 29-year-old, Detroit-based interdisciplinary artist who works in painting, drawing, video, and performance, and, as she explains, “fashion is definitely a catalyst for all of my fantasies.” Her main fantasy surrounds a fictional character she’s invented who goes by the name Old Put. The persona, she describes, is “a shapeshifting alien/clown/demon who lives in the shadows of society and inside of me.” Old Put has taken form in Scieszka’s paintings, installations, and in her performances, usually wearing something vibrant and embellished with various types of trinkets. The costumes are inspired by the handmade and specifically, its impact on American pop culture. As Scieszka explains, “I love exploring the artistic possibilities of crafting, which is a real American medium, through jewelry making, cooking, sewing costumes and clothes, and making pine cone or corn husk dolls.”



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Photo: Courtesy of Bailey Scieszka
Old Put: Shush in the Night

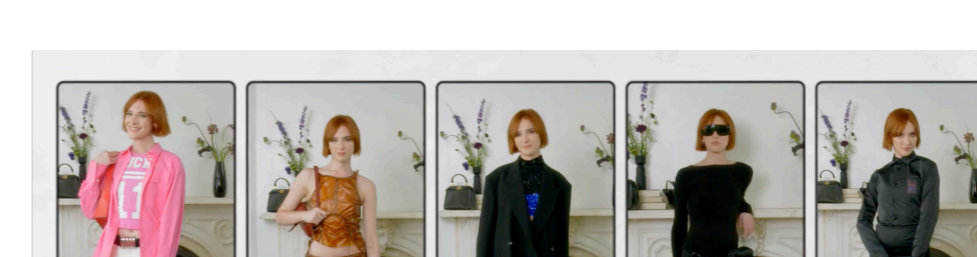
Scieszka has performed and shown her work in galleries around the world, including Paris, L.A., Zurich, and New York. She’s created projects around historically-minded themes, from the French Revolution to 20th Century conspiracy theories to the history of wrestling. Currently, she’s dreaming up a new body of work that will explore what constitutes propaganda in art. Scieszka has been looking at Playboy centerfolds, the paintings of Thomas Kinkade, and Diego Rivera’s murals. “I am writing a play for this show where Old Put dons a costume that’s a hybrid of the anatomy-focused museum exhibit “Bodies... The Exhibition” [which drew controversy because it showcased real, dissected and preserved human bodies] as well as the English redcoats from the Revolutionary War,” she says.



Crash the Control Cane. Photo: Courtesy of Bailey Scieszka

While Old Put mostly exists in these real life public spaces, Scieszka also uses her Instagram account as a means to explore other scenarios, and sartorial situations, with her alter-ego. She always begins with a mental trip to the dress up box, noting that when she writes a play for Old Put, she “first thinks about what I am wearing.” She adds, “because of my interest in history, I use that research to make conceptual choices for the costuming. I then create a fabric and have it printed online. Full control for Old Put’s costumes, down to the buttons being custom-made, is important for creating a full universe in my plays.”

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