

# Designer brings scrappy 'Skinny Girls' to Lowell

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**F**ashion designer and artist Linda St. John grew up in a quintessential dysfunctional family, fraught with poverty, alcoholism, abuse and neglect. But, by phone from New York, she sounds upbeat and echoes no complaints about her early hardscrabble existence in southern Illinois.

Instead, St. John prefers to look on the bright side of life.

"It was an interesting life; it had humor. And one good thing that came out of it was that I taught myself to sew," says St. John, 56.

Today, she owns her own East Village clothing boutique, which caters to the likes of Bruce Springsteen. She's an author, whose memoir *Even Dogs Go*

*Home to Die* was published in 2001 by Harper Collins. She helps design costumes for Broadway and Hollywood, having worked on projects like *The Color Purple*, *Malcolm X* and *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. And she creates hundreds of pipe-cleaner figures she calls "Skinny Girls."

On Saturday from 1-4 p.m., St. John visits Lowell's Revolving Museum, where nearly 100 Skinny Girls are on display in *Race, Class, Gender (does not) Equal Character*.

St. John was a kid, making do without a Barbie doll, when she started stitching these small fashion statements, dressed in all manner of attire stitched from fabric scraps and found items like McDonald's straws and coffee creamer containers.

"I started making head-to-toe outfits using scraps.

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Artist Linda St. John with a selection of 'Skinny Girls.'

## Designer brings her 'Girls' to Lowell

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Then I decided I needed to have something to show them on. So I made the pipe cleaner girls," she explained.

"I may be recreating something I didn't have in childhood. But I have never analyzed it that much. I want to show kids that if you have a scrap, a needle and a lint ball, you can make something beautiful."

She does workshops around the country, wherever her "girls" travel. In Lowell, she will read and sign from her book, then turn people on to making something colorful and lovely from a few scraps, a needle, thread and a little lint.

The reading and workshop are free. Guests are invited to bring scraps of fabric, needle, thread, ribbons, strings, buttons, bows and found objects to create their own skinny girls.

The Revolving Museum is located at 22 Shattuck St., Lowell. Call 978-937-2787.

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