

Jennifer Howison's "Vanity Plate" was one of several pieces created and donated for the Breast Reconstruction Awareness (BRA) Day event in October. Howison says her work often creates an "apparently playful world infused with ... unexpected dialogues."



## RECONSTRUCTED

"You hear about breast cancer and about curing it, which is obviously very important," says Carolyn De La Cruz. But what's next? Especially if the cure involves mastectomy.

"There's breast reconstruction," says the University of Pittsburgh assistant professor of plastic surgery, "And that has a different flavor to it, because we're creating something."

With this in mind—and spurred by the American Society of Plastic Surgeons' designation of October 17 as the first Breast Reconstruction Awareness (BRA) Day—De La Cruz enlisted the help of more than a dozen area artists, who employed their creativity to adorn mannequins of female torsos with breast reconstruction-themed art.

That evening, at the Mattress Factory art museum in Pittsburgh's Mexi-

can War Streets neighborhood, 200 guests assembled to mingle and bid on the mannequins.

Artist Laura Jean McLaughlin (her work can be seen around town at sites ranging from Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC to the Pittsburgh Zoo & PPG Aquarium) created a mannequin that depicted, in glass and ceramic mosaic tile, a girl praying to her fairy godmother. The piece commemorated a friend who'd died of breast cancer at age 30.

"She found out too late," McLaughlin says. "I had that in the back of my mind when I was making the piece. And mosaics are a lot of small pieces coming together to create something larger than yourself," like this event did, she says.

—Joe Miksch

—Photo by Martha Rial