

## Portland artist MK Guth becomes Rapunzel at Cosmo's P3 Studio

Artist-in-residence wears other people's issues in several hundred feet of braids.

Kristen Peterson

Wed, Oct 5, 2011 (6 p.m.)



Portland multidisciplinary artist MK Guth stands with her braids inside the Cosmopolitan's P3 Studio.

Photo: Leila Navidi

The fairy tale scenario inside the Cosmopolitan P3 Studio can only make you smile. Here sits MK Guth, an artist with a friendly demeanor and two braids woven into her hair, stretching more than 200 feet, hanging from the ceiling and extending through the two-room studio.

Behind her (like handmaidens) are two assistants braiding in more synthetic hair and strips of fabric containing the thoughts, hopes and dreams of visitors who have dropped into the studio.

This interactive performance and installation titled Best Wishes has required the Portland artist to lug around the blonde Rapunzel-like ropes day and night since arriving at the Cosmo September 23 as the new artist-in-residence. The hair won't be removed until October 11. Originally, Guth had been getting around the hotel wearing a specially engineered jacket that balances the extensions so she can be mobile. Now the connected braids are pulled behind her in a decorated wagon. "I'm going stir crazy," she says with a smile.

So why bother?

Similar to Guth's collaborative project, Red Shoe Delivery Service, where participants slip into red shoes and are driven to a destination after clicking their heels and saying "There is No Place Like ..." Best Wishes uses a pre-existing narrative (and unusual process) as an entry point for people to engage in art that they'd usually be uncomfortable with.

"People don't generally want to interact with art," says Guth, who teaches at Pacific Northwest College of Art. "And we're always asking viewers to reconsider what art is."

The environment at Cosmo, however, eases viewers in and they become part of the experience, as they chat with the artist, the assistants and each other while writing down their thoughts.

"Some people write one word. Some write a tome," Guth says as she pulls out a scissor and snips a few loose hairs from a braid. The project stems from a video work in which the artist, as an animated Rapunzel, was trapped in contemporary dilemmas.

Guth has done similar braided hair projects at the Whitney Biennial in 2008 and Yerba Buena Center For the Arts. Because of her lodgings at the Cosmopolitan, this is the longest she's been able to endure the hair, serving, she says, as a temporary repository.

"I have the burden, literally, of other people's concerns."

## The Details

### **BEST WISHES**

Through October 12  
(except October 10), 3-9  
p.m.

Cosmopolitan's P3 Studio



Photo: [Kristen Peterson](#)

Photo:

Synthetic hair, braided with strips of fabric containing people's dreams, hangs from the ceiling inside P3 Studio. The braids are woven into artist MK Guth's own hair.