

# THE OXFORD EAGLE

Serving Oxford, Lafayette County and the University of Mississippi

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## Oxford interviews among 'Trappings' subjects

Artist duo back with new book, tonight and Wednesday

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Beginning in 2001, a pair of artists asked women around the nation — and here in Oxford — to answer a simple question: "What do you wear that makes you feel powerful?"

After gathering more than 500 answers to that question, Tiffany Ludwig and Renee Piechocki of Two Girls Working have compiled the highlights into a new book, "Trappings: Stories of Women, Power and Clothing."

Making the cut are two interviewees from Oxford, including one whose image graces the book's cover.

"I thought it was an interesting topic and one I could relate to," said Clara Lee Arnold, who in the book's cover image is wearing a pink evening gown as she walks across South Lamar Boulevard toward Square Books, with a white pickup truck cruising behind her.

"Everybody has the outfit they feel the most confident in or the most sexy in or the most beautiful in, for whatever reason," she said. "While that doesn't necessarily mean 'power,' you do feel an internal strength when you're wearing certain things."

Arnold was interviewed along with a handful of other local women in an October 2002 session hosted by the Yoknapatawpha Arts Council at the Lafayette County and Oxford Public Library. Two Girls Working also held an interview session on the University of Mississippi campus.

### Style as springboard

In her interview five years ago, Arnold wore and talked about three outfits: her boxing gear (at the time, she was training to be a professional boxer), a black evening gown and a frilly pink lingerie set. The outfits were a springboard to her talking about the dynamics between the feminine and masculine sides of her personality.

"I try so hard to be feminine and look feminine because deep down inside I feel like a linebacker," she said at the time, further exploring that dynamic in a 2006 follow-up interview also included in the book.

Featured with her is Anna Laurenzo, in interviews from

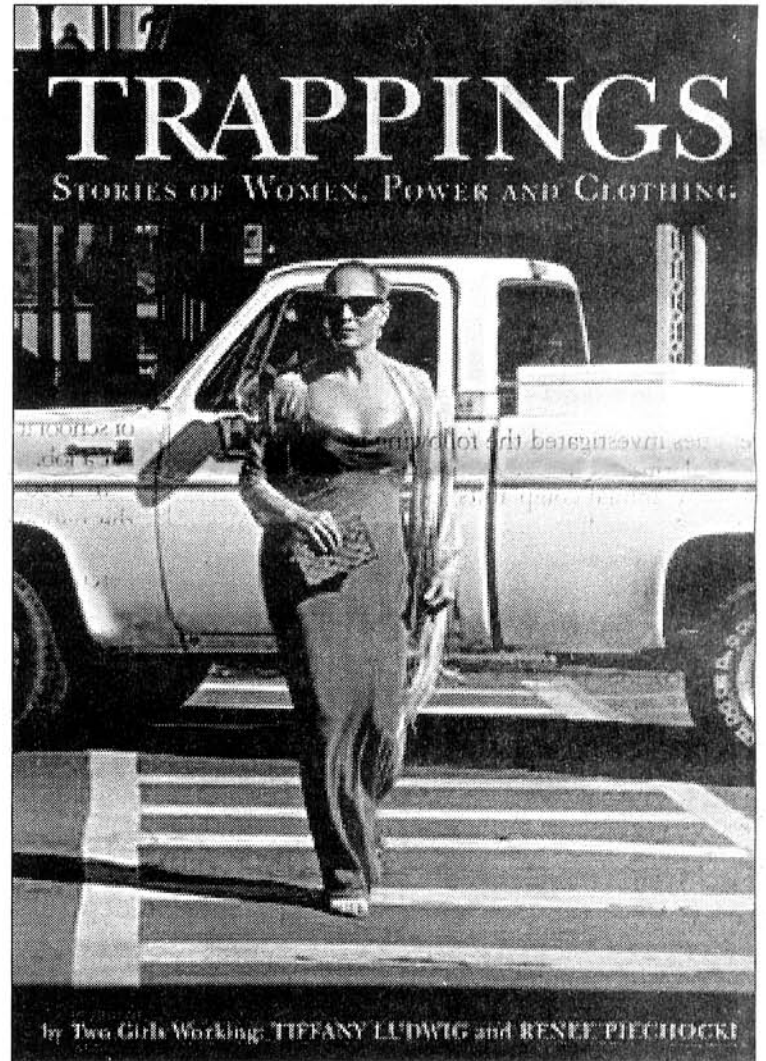
2002 when she was 4 years old, and from last year when she was 8. The time lapse takes her from total tomboy style, wearing a "Star Wars" T-shirt and boxers, to a sporty Puma sweatsuit and glittery purple undershirt.

"(A power outfit) makes you feel like you can do whatever it is," she said in the 2006 interview. "I could do any sport in this outfit."

### Sharing stories

The Oxford sessions were among 70 sessions held in 15 states, from Alaska to Massachusetts. The project has produced several exhibits and installations, in addition to an online public archive of the interviews. A planned feature-length documentary of the project is to be completed in 2008.

"This project is not about fashion and to a large extent not even about clothing," the artists say in the book's introduction. "From the start, we knew that we wanted to speak with a diverse range of women about topics they may not have considered before."



"We wanted to speak with them about feminism. We wanted to speak with them about the cultural constraints of female identity. We wanted to speak with them about the role of power in their lives and what made them feel powerful."

The book was published this October by Rutgers University Press.

As part of a signing tour, Ludwig and Piechocki will be making appearances today at 5 p.m. at Off Square Books, and Wednesday at noon at the University of Mississippi Museum.

For more about the project, visit [www.trappings-stories.com](http://www.trappings-stories.com).

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