

Gallery of the Austrian Consulate General Austrian Cultural Forum, Krakow, Poland
An Exhibition within the Framework of the 2nd International Festival of Artistic Tapestry Krakow
Opening: Wednesday 16 May 2007, 4 p.m.
The exhibition runs until 31 May 2007

Skin – Cutting – Pattern

Ingrid Gaier and Barbara Graf

The exhibition title forms a leitmotif through the works of Ingrid Gaier and Barbara Graf. At the center of both artists' work is the cutting pattern and its transformation in space. Skin – Cutting – Pattern: this thread links together the entire exhibition, and it also manifests itself tangibly as a sewn line. As different as the two artistic positions are, they are nevertheless joined by the relationship between the body and that which envelops it. The body maintains its presence through its textile covering, although in many works the body itself is missing, almost completely or entirely.

In Ingrid Gaier's Pattern Book, the figure – the wearer of the clothing – only differentiates itself slightly from the background. A simple textile surface, a rectangle with three slits, envelops the body sculpturally, thus becoming a garment. The work demonstrates the various formations that this basic pattern can assume. Textile drapery is developed step by step, as in a user's manual. A red thread sewn into the fabric runs through the many-sectioned work.

The user's manual motif also appears in Barbara Graf's Anatomical Garments, here as a technical drawing demonstrating the assembly and disassembly of the body coverings and the proper arrangement for packing them into the accompanying bag. The textile sculpture becomes a nomadic piece of carry-on luggage. The anatomical act of disassembly demonstrates the underlying cutting pattern, as in Folded Ribbon Vertebrae and Eight Elements. These are flexible sculptures with multiple possibilities for presentation: as pattern, as spinal column, as empty wrapping, or worn on the body.

Cutting Patterns by Ingrid Gaier takes pattern drawings for cutting fabric as its point of departure. On the basis of clothing archetypes, elements of various cuts are combined and printed on fabric. Worn on the body, this painterly image becomes a garment that oscillates irritatingly between space and surface. A movement from the two-dimensional to the three-dimensional is also made tangible in Gaier's multi-sectioned installation in/out. The outlines of a female figure are continued from one element to the next, as are the pieces of clothing integrated vertically into the surface. Shifting the individual sections gives rise to a disjoining of the figure.

In Barbara Graf's Handbag there is a labyrinthine quality to both the red thread and the disintegration manifested in the work. Closed, the bag only hints at what its content might be. When opened, it reveals hand-shaped layers reminiscent of the elevation contours of geographic modeling. Drawn out into space, the compact mountain range unfolds. The layers become progressively smaller, eventually diminishing into a circle, whereby the labyrinth sewn in red thread condenses almost to a surface. In Ear Object with Bag the labyrinth is the cochlea of the inner ear. With its ear-shaped opening, this textile accessory can be worn on the outer ear.

Interior and exterior, three-dimensional envelopment, reduction to a flat cutting pattern, displacement and turning inside out, combination and disintegration, mobility and momentary standstill are shown poetically and analytically in the work of both artists, irritatingly and with delicate irony. Both use their own body as a frame of reference, giving rise to expressive formulations on the body, its boundaries, and their displacement. The "second skin" becomes permeable in a variety of directions.

(Text: I.G. / B.G., Vienna, 2007)