

# SARTOR RESARTUS

20.08.2021 - 17.10.2021

Curated by Jeppe Ugelvig

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**Nina Beier, *Portrait Mode (Triptych)*, 2011.**

**Courtesy the artist and Standard, Oslo.**

Nina Beier's *Portrait Mode* is a monumental triptych that, from a distance, could be mistaken for an abstract painting. However, upon a closer look, the large-scale picture frames are revealed to suspend a pile of clothes printed with leopard and other "exotic" animal patterns, sourced from the internet and second-hand shops. Beier uses artworks as opportunities to comment on trade and commercial systems of exchange of objects, often with particular attention to animals and the way they are made into products either directly (such as fur) or as image (such as pattern). The artwork's title suggests a portrait of a process that is hard to grasp and even harder to represent – the trendification of animals. Beier presents art as a space to reflect on phenomena such as trend-making, commodity manufacturing, and object obsolescence – what happens when cheap tops are reified as artworks, frozen in time as painterly surface?

**Anna-Sophie Berger, *Cloak*, and *A failed play*, both 2021**

**Courtesy the artist and Emanuel Layr, Vienna.**

Trained as a fashion designer, Anna-Sophie Berger's work considers the role of the body within design. Berger often approaches the body as an unlikely and defenseless object that can be imaginatively and symbolically stretched, altered, modified, adorned, replicated, or destroyed through its designed environment. Her new work, *Cloak*, was developed in response to research into historical sumptuary laws (laws that try to regulate consumption for moral reasons, often in relation to fashion and style) and the so-called Hemline Index, a theory developed in the 1920s by economist George Taylor that posited that skirt length (hemlines) rise or fall along with stock prices and the economy. In this proposed interdependent logic between body, finance, subjectivity, and clothing design, Berger proposes a velvet manteau with hemlines so long that it swallows the wearer whole, effectively obscuring the entire body under a tent-like structure, draped, nonetheless, in a fashionable manner. Rather than clothing objects staging the body, Berger's *Cloak* works closer to a kind of storage unit that can contain and protect the body along with one's possessions. As a sartorial addendum, the smaller work *A failed play* proposes a speculative semiotic system of subjectivity for a range of fabric swatches, awarding them affective and intellectual traits.

**Pia Camil, *Skin' shirt Curtain*, 2018.**

**Courtesy the artist and Sultana, Paris.**

Pia Camil's *Skin' shirt Curtain* is composed entirely of second-hand t-shirts in hues resembling human skin, sourced from the enormous open-air market Iztapalapa in Mexico City. Inspired by the open-air markets of Latin America, the artist comments on a cycle in which shirts designed in the U.S. are manufactured in Latin America, worn and discarded in the United States, and then sent back to Latin America to be sold again in second-hand markets, where their logos advocate for causes far removed from the local culture. As such, Camil uses sculpture to confront viewers with the material politics of globalized consumer capitalism shaped by Western overconsumption, imbalanced trade policies, and exploitative labor markets. Sewing together these lost heterogeneous objects into one curtain to illustrate a shared cycle of consumption, Camil suggests that discarded fashion objects may continue to "haunt" their places of origin.

**Victoria Colmegna**

**Replica of Lady Di's Maternity Dresses, 2018**

**Courtesy the artist and Paul Soto, Los Angeles**

Victoria Colmegna explores the limit between industries: art trends blend with fashion seasons, functional objects become works of art, the rules of each game becoming interchangeable. In this spirit, her collection of replicas of Lady Diana pregnancy dresses exist somewhere between fan item, designer/art commodity, and practical maternity wear, frenetically border hopping between categories. The dresses belong to a collection from a brand invented by the artist called *Lalangue* – a Lacanian term for the language of desire, one that cannot be spoken. Here the artist puts forward women's pop-cultural obsession with fertility and birth, especially when prompted by its opposite, death (of mothers

and/or babies). She realized that much of this cultural zeitgeist was encapsulated in the late Lady Diana: mortality with fertility, royalty with maternity, pop icon with tabloid scandals, and a certain timelessness. Colmegna embarked on an exhaustive collection of every image of the princess's sartorial pregnancy in a stalker-like fashion. The replicas, made in Peruvian cotton and Egyptian linen and presented here in a mausoleum-type display, show how fabric is itself an embedded code for class. The dresses' tapestry inserts are a detail invented by the artist, as if the garments would somehow blend with the castle's furniture. "The dresses also have something very tarot about them," she explains: "if you have them some time in a space, someone might get pregnant."

#### **Anna Franceschini**

##### ***The Stuffed Shirt, 2012***

**Courtesy the artist, Vistamare/Vistamarestudio, Pescara/Milano and Vera Cortes, Lisbon**

Artist and filmmaker Anna Franceschini approaches cinema as a movement machine, an apparatus both industrial and emotional. Her work often portrays sites of industrial production, and her camera lingers with its assembly line and moments of automation until objects begin to take on a life of their own. The title of her video *The Stuffed Shirt* alludes to an Anglo-Saxon idiom indicating someone very pompous, pretentious, conservative, and reactionary. The expression, as the artist understands it, emphasizes dress in order to denigrate the wearer, who in turn becomes a mere filling material. The video explores the mechanical behavior of the so-called "dressman" machine, an automatic ironing system used by industrial laundries that violently inflates air in shirts to eliminate pleats and wrinkles, and that, in doing so, produces an episodic illusion of life in the garment. This alluring spectacle, repeated endlessly by industrial processes, is deeply grotesque, with the shirt body repeatedly suddenly swelling up and looming over onlookers to become a monster that, escaping human control, seems to potentially cause catastrophe. Trapped between the categories of the uncanny and the eerie, Franceschini approaches the dressman as a strange object of poetic contemplation, and connects it to other non-human creatures such as golems and robots.

#### **Eric N. Mack, *Out of Pocket, 2017-2021***

**Courtesy the artist and Morán Morán Gallery, Los Angeles.**

Trained as a painter, Eric Mack's work engages clothes as both canvas and material to produce solemn, poetic relics of a material world. Integrated into the timeless space of painting, the once-fashionable textiles and garments carefully chosen by Mack offer a wealth of meanings: residues of personal and collective wardrobes, artifacts of fashion-in-time, or even subtle studies of pattern and color. His new work, *Out of Pocket*, appears as a full outfit hung on the wall, protruding into space via a piece of textile and string. An attached lampshade serves as a kind of void, catching and containing light as the day passes. Mack describes *Out of Pocket* as an index of gifted garments and textiles transformed over time; configuring this vernacular reliquary into an outfit result in the manufacturing of fictional narratives of wearers and style authors.

#### **Tenant of Culture**

***Puzzlecut Boot Oxblood, 2021, Puzzlecut Boot Miscellaneous, 2021 and Puzzlecut Booth White, 2021***

**Courtesy the artist and Soft Opening, London.**

Tenant of Culture presents the material excretions of fashion in a fossilized state, suspended between archaeology and commodity. Much like trash, her works—often assembled using discarded and recycled denim, jackets, socks and accessories sourced from charity shops or eBay—tell stories inchoately; there is the outline of a plot, but only in the form of a puzzle, fragments of an impossible history. Her series *Autumn Cloth* consists of single boot sculptures on a glass and steel pedestal, distinct for their blown-out, aggregate shapes, have been produced following traditional shoe-making techniques, only using an erratic patchwork made up entirely of recycled shoes and handbags as its material. By exposing the details of this process, Tenant of Culture visualises common manufacturing processes in the industry while materially evoking their mutated nature: hybrid zombie-objects haunted by former product lives. *Autumn Cloth* takes its name from the English economist Nicholas Barbon, an early theorist of fashion consumption, who in a 1690 essay praised fashion's ability to "dress a man as if he lived in a perpetual spring – he never sees the autumn of his cloth." In this evocative metaphor, "autumn cloth" – threadbare cloth that needs replacing – is never reached thanks to the cycle of fashion that replaces clothes long before it is actually necessary. Since the time of Barbon's writing, this mode of fashion production has only accelerated, particularly with the rise of the global fast fashion industry, where cheap price points and dozens of product drops a year render garments ever more expendable, accelerating their obsolescence. The artist proposes art as a strange archive of this permanent disaster, where materials and objects may go to take on new meanings and values in a fossilized state.

**Issy Wood*****Study for good will 3, 2021*****Courtesy the artist and Carlos Ishikawa, London.**

The paintings of Issy Wood depict ephemera such as fashion, car interiors, and antiques from auction catalogs, conveying a seeming obsessive relationship with commodity culture. Rendered in an impressionist style, Wood makes strange our desire or fascination with objects, teasing out their innately alienating or anxiety-inducing effects. While fashion remains a popular motif in the artist's work, Wood has for several years also painted directly onto discarded clothing objects, transforming them into strange relics that force viewers to relate to them with their own body. "Clothes are important: They are the very definition of frivolity but also the most fundamental," writes the artist in an essay accompanying this exhibition, in which she pin-points how clothes tend to become proxies for dealing with our bodies, and vice versa. As a kind of revenge on the power of clothes – our incessant desire to own them, to *fit into them*, at times with devastating effects – Wood's objectification of them as artworks functions as a relief, a conclusive distancing from the body. "When I realised I could paint on the clothes I can't or won't wear, suddenly those compulsive insomniac purchases and years of physicians watching my weight, it all mattered less," she reflects. "Often when wearing clothes wears you out, the best clothes are ones you don't have to wear at all."

**Bruno Zhu*****Men, 2017-18*****Courtesy the artist**

Bruno Zhu's background in fashion design has led to a conceptual interest in style and consumerism, which manifests in his work through both objects and situations. His series *Men* is comprised of a series of opera gloves made of trousers, hanging on the wall as worn garments or body shells. While the design follows that of female leather gloves (highlighted in their particular construction) emphasising elegance and glamour, the trousers are originally tailored and made for men, typically an office requirement in male-dominated, white collar office environments. Zhu's altercation brings out the way that gender norms and class aspirations manifest and are upheld through garments, efficient as they are in conjuring complex social and political meanings that we, in turn, identify with and desire intensely. As mutant commodities, *Men* are both irreverent and confusing, haunted by former meanings while inviting for new interpretation and signification.