

SARTOR RESARTUS

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Nina Beier, Anna-Sophie Berger, Pia Camil, Victoria Colmegna, Anna Franceschini, Eric N. Mack, Tenant of Culture, Issy Wood, Bruno Zhu

Curated by Jeppe Ugelvig

In 1836, Thomas Carlyle published *Sartor Resartus* ("The Tailor Retailored"), a satirical novel about the fictional German philosopher Diogenes Teufelsdröckh and his thesis *Clothes: Their Origin and Influence*. Teufelsdröckh's groundbreaking project fails and is never finished, but Carlyle can still be credited for having accidentally invented the concept of fashion semiotics: the reading of clothes as symbols of meaning. As the book makes clear, the deciphering of fashion's signifiers is a near-impossible task, as they exist in a constant state of flux between personal, material, political, historical, and cultural signification. This has only been accelerated further in today's globalized consumer society, where fashion commodities and languages of style continuously drift across social and economic contexts, morphing and producing meaning anew.

Adapting Carlyle's non-methodological methodology of fashion as an "impossible medium," *Sartor Resartus* presents artworks that attempt to decipher and understand the ubiquity of clothing in society, objects at once intensely banal and forever fascinating. The exhibition sets out to explore clothes as a signifier at once empty and over-burdened: as expressions of people and places, as palimpsests for capitalist production cycles, and as nondescript material debris. The exhibition, void of living bodies, presents a series of "clothing objects" made or found by artists – presented here as sculpture, costume, painting, and moving image – haunted by various forms of signification. What knowledge, the exhibition asks, can we gather from studying clothes when they are severed from everyday life? Can wearability and value, here, be used as a classifying device? And to what extent is "fashion" even ever successfully signified by things? The artists in the exhibition offer no easy solution to this question, but instead a wealth of complex, confusing, and humorous narratives through their work.

Coinciding with the opening of "Sartor Resartus" is the launch of the second issue of [Viscose](#), the journal for fashion criticism and research, published in partnership with Huset for Kunst og Design. The issue, featuring a wide range of contributors from around the world, extends the exhibition's inquiry into clothing as it appears in art. Copies will exclusively be for sale at Huset for Kunst og Design for 150 DKK.