

The skin is our largest organ and at the same time it's what we see when we look at ourselves. Michel Serres says the deepest thing we have is our skin. Our vulnerability becomes visible in it. Pain. Our skin moves with every one of our movements. S-T-R-E-T-C-H. For our entire life. That's something we should think about. Our lips stretch to utter every word we speak. We're used to seeing our bodies and objects as things that are whole and wrapped in a covering. And if we ever lose this thing that protects, clothes, covers and represents us, or if something is ever cut in two and we get to glimpse inside, then we get a big shock. That's odd, don't you think? I'm interested in the structure, the texture, the function that then becomes visible. That reveals the truth. That is real. That's when it gets really interesting. When you cut your skin, you can sew it up again. The body heals and goes on working. But what remains is a scar that will remind you of the wound forever. So the body is an Other. »

« Alexandra Bircken, interview with Claire Le Restif, Kathleen Rahn and Susanne Titz » (excerpt) in *Alexandra Bircken, STRETCH*. Catalogue of the shows at Kunstverein Hannover, Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach, Le Crédac, Ivry-sur-Seine, ed. Walther König, Cologne, 2017.

Alexandra Bircken (born in 1967, Cologne) places the body and its enveloppes at the heart of her sculptural practice. Trained in styling at St. Martins College in London, sewing, weaving, knitting, assembling, and connecting all come into play, as do cutting, separating, dissolving, tearing, and disassembling. In the exhibited body of works, the apparent brittleness of soft and transparent materials - wool, nylon, hair - stands alongside the permanence and resistance of bronze and steel. Female organ casts as well as damaged motorcycle suits are transformed into autonomous body fragments. Archetypes of power, motorcycles and guns are sculpted and cut, disabling and revaluing their iconic performance.

*STRETCH* is Alexandra Bircken's first solo show in France, it has been jointly conceived by Kunstverein Hannover, Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach and Crédac. The exhibition is supported by IFA.

Alexandra Bircken is born in 1967 in Cologne en Allemagne, where she lives and works. She is represented by galleries BQ, Berlin and Herald St., London.

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