



Many sculptors, curators and dealers have helped me with ideas and information about contemporary sculpture, far too many to mention personally, so this can only be a general expression of my gratitude. Three people at Phaidon Press have been of special assistance: David Anfam; Emmanuelle Perri, for tracking down the most recondite illustrations; and Julia Rolf, forester extraordinaire, who stayed calm when all about her was agitated. The biggest thank you goes to Barbara Lloyd, for walking every step of the way with me.

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Designed by Sonya Dyakova
with Bianca Wendt and Ingrid Arnell

Typeset in *Paper Alphabet* (designed by Sonya Dyakova) and *Simple* (designed by Norm)

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ENDPAPERS

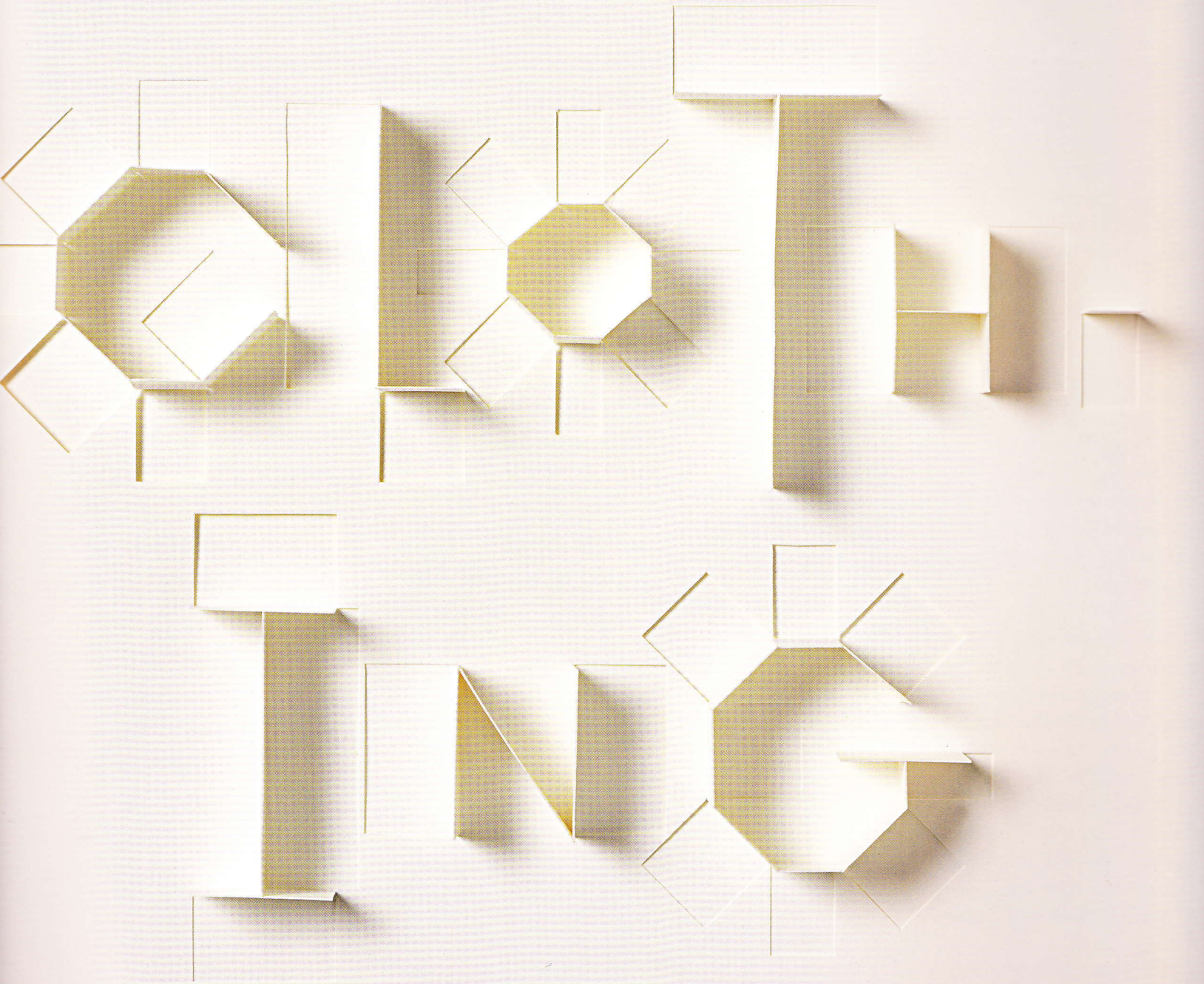
Wolfgang Laib, *Pollen from Hazelnut*, 1993. Pollen from hazelnut tree. 320 x 360 cm (138 x 141 ½ in)

Alexandra Bircken, *Gewachs*, 2005. Plaster, wool, wood, stones, fabric, plastic, thread. 130 x 80 x 64 cm (51.5 x 31.5 x 25 in)

Eva Rothschild, *Diamond Day*, 2003. Powder coated steel, wood. 200 x 200 x 200 cm (78 ½ x 78 ½ x 78 ½ in)

Richard Deacon, *What Could Make Me Feel This Way 'A'*, 1993. Bent wood, cable ties, screws. 28.6 x 56 x 48.3 m (93 ft 10 in x 183 ft 9 in x 158 ft 5 in). Sprengel Museum, Hannover

All works are in private collections unless otherwise stated



This chapter looks at the work of artists who use clothing as a means of artistic expression. The fabrics and substances with which they choose to work are very diverse, ranging from human hair to metal, and the processes are also multifarious; traditional crafts such as sewing, embroidery and knitting are employed, as well as computer-controlled industrial fabrication. Sculptors work with clothes because they are interested in their psychological, social, political and gender connotations, as well as their shapes, colours and textures. There are references to national, ethnic and religious costumes and uniforms, gender and sexual imagery, and work, play and comfort. Consideration of the production and consumption of clothing, and the way in which the fashion industry deals with notions of class and power, also play their part in the conception and execution of clothing sculptures.

The women's art movement of the 1970s helped to dismantle cultural hierarchies, and as a result ushered in processes like embroidery and knitting into fine art practice, which were used with innocence or irony. The gay liberation movement that followed also helped to shift these processes and practices into the male arena. The pursuit of fashion and the manufacture of clothing are usually identified with the feminine, but this clichéd concept has recently been demolished. Most of the artists in this chapter design or make their own forms of clothing, some of which are process-oriented, especially the labour-intensive knitting of Oliver Herring and the exquisite tailoring and embroidery of Charles LeDray. Bojan Sarcevic and Tobias Rehberger utilize commercially available new clothes of an internationally branded kind, while Erwin Wurm turns his attention to the humble sweater.

Earlier in the twentieth century, artists designed and made clothes -- Vladimir Tatlin in Russia, Sonia Delaunay in France and Oskar Schlemmer at the Bauhaus in Germany -- but these clothes were made either to be worn as high fashion or seen as utopian social statements. It was not until the performance-art events of the 1960s that clothing entered the art world as an aesthetic category. Items that were made to be worn in performance sometimes assumed their own autonomous existence. This is the case with the garments associated with Hélio Oiticica, Lygia Clark, Louise Bourgeois, Rebecca Horn and Joseph Beuys.

In 1970, Beuys made an edition of 100 felt suits (305), which were copied from one of his ordinary suits, but the sleeves and legs were lengthened, and no buttons were attached. This gives it the look of a prison uniform, although it also alludes to the work clothes designed by Tatlin and Schlemmer. The edition numbers appeared on a label sewn inside the jacket. Beuys decreed that it could be displayed directly on the wall, or hung either from a nail or on a wooden hanger, as here. He was not keen that the suit should be worn, as it would lose 'the character of the felt'. He regarded grey felt, one of the most basic fabrics, as a protective and magical material, offering both physical and spiritual comfort. He told the story that, as a pilot in the World War II flying over the Crimea, he was shot down and discovered badly wounded by a tribe of Tartars, who saved his life by wrapping him in a cocoon of fat and felt.

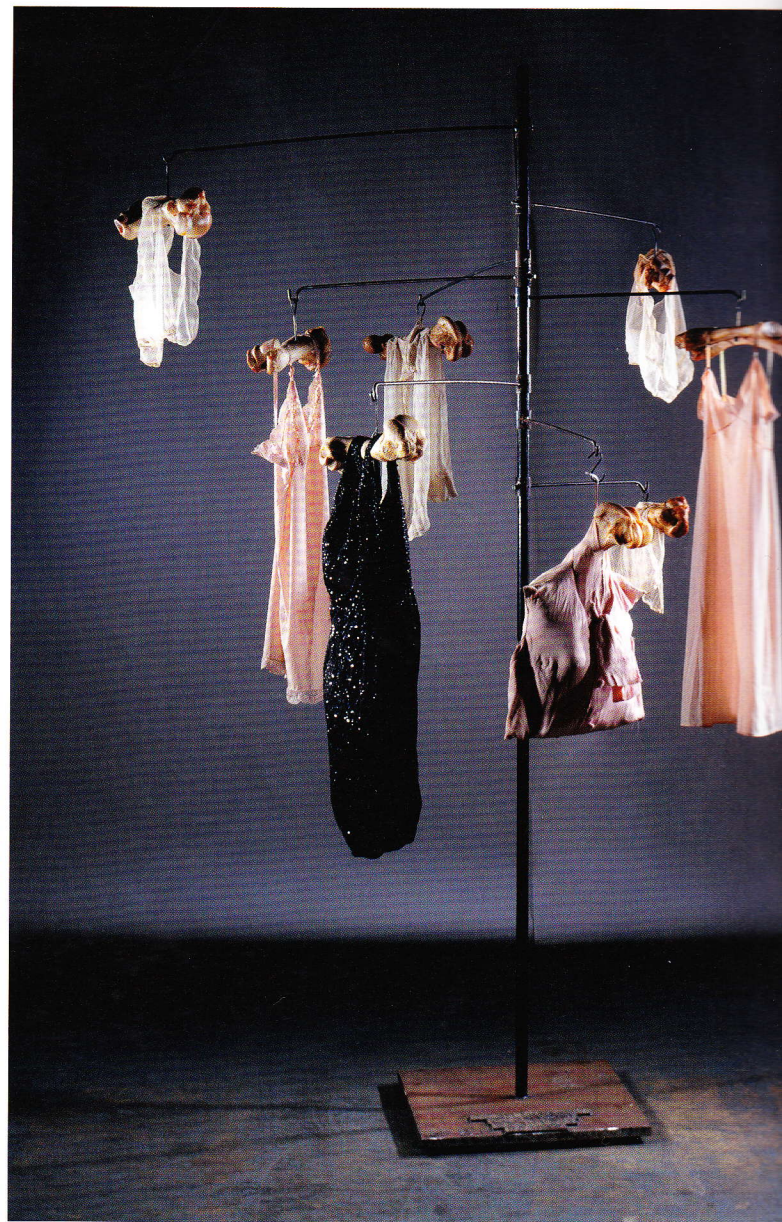
Lygia Clark (1920-88) made unusual costumes as part of her performance actions from the mid-1960s onwards. The costumes, such as fabric tunnels and conjoined plastic overalls, caused the participants to interact closely with one another, which Clark believed had a strong therapeutic effect on them; her performances and objects were made with this aim in mind. She equalled Beuys in her interest in fabric's power to nurture and heal.



Wanka Shonibare, *Three Graces*, 2001. Three mannequins, Dutch wax-printed cotton. Dimensions variable



305 Joseph Beuys, *Felt Suit*, 1970. Felt. 170 x 60 cm [67 x 23 ½ in]



306 Louise Bourgeois, *Untitled*, 1996. Cloth, bone, rubber, steel. 300.3 x 208.2 x [118 ½ x 82 x 77 in]

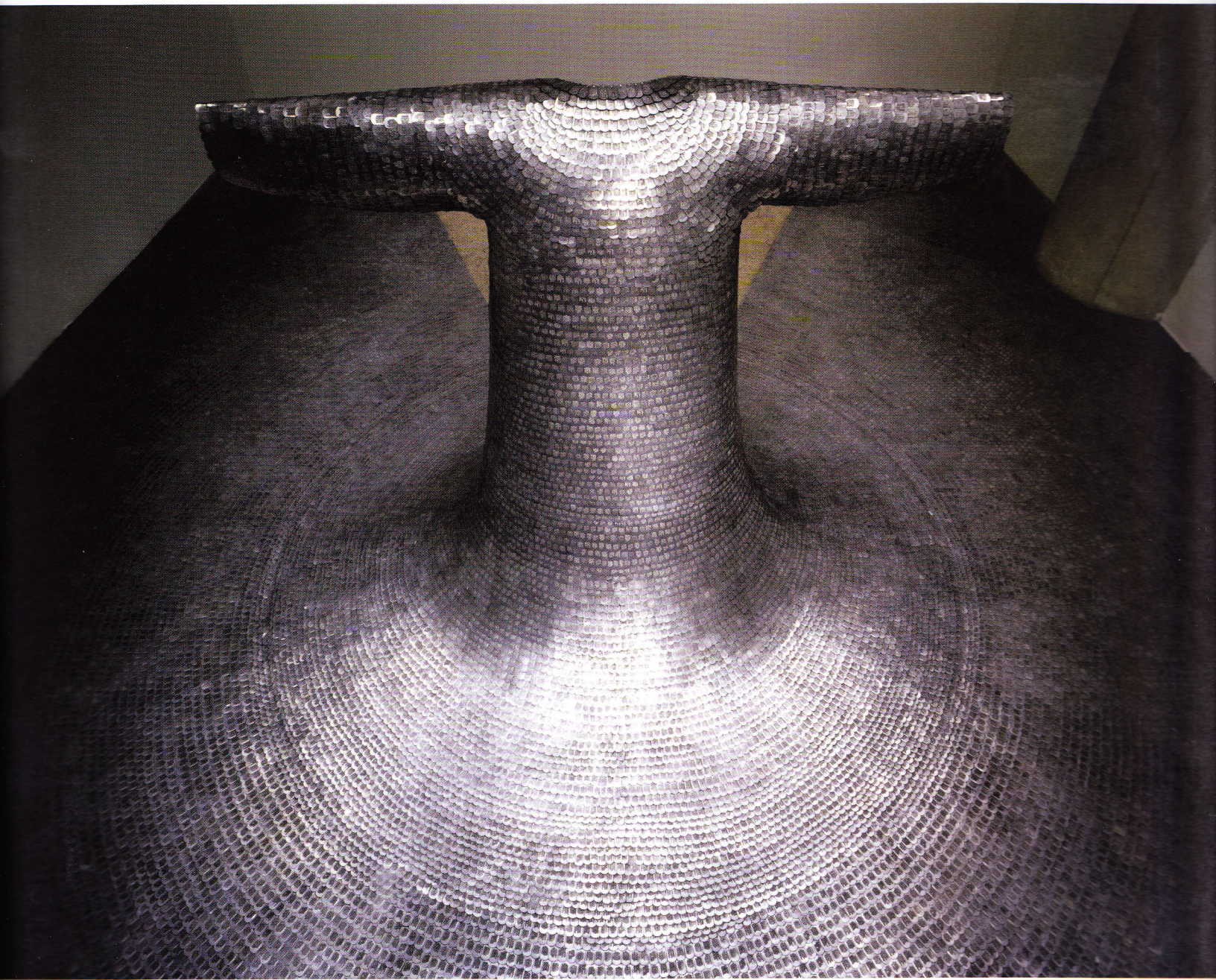
A similar belief lay behind the creation of many of Bourgeois's fabric works. She first showed a kind of clothing at a performance in 1978, entitled *A Banquet/A Fashion Show of Body Parts* at the Hamilton Gallery, New York. For this, she made transparent garments of latex, onto which were fixed lumps that could be read as multiple breasts or a kind of body armour. Her mother and grandmother worked in the French textile industry, her father had a tapestry restoration business, and sewing and repairing fabrics was a major part of her childhood experience. She has said that when she was growing up 'all the women in my house were using needles.... The needle is used to repair damage. It's a claim to forgiveness.' *Untitled* [306] is a more unusual example of her fabric sculptures, and comprises several items of women's attire suspended from large bones, which are hung from meathooks. Most of these garments were saved from her childhood home, and this adds a flavour of history and memory.





308 Sui Jianguo, *Legacy Mantle*, 1997. Painted fibreglass. Each 240 x 190 x 160 cm [94 ½ x 74 ¾ x 63 in]

Away from the world of handicraft, Rosemarie Trockel established her reputation in 1985 with her 'Knit Pictures', coloured woollen rectangles that she hung on the wall so that they looked like colour-field paintings. Based on a hand-made design, all Trockel's knitted works are professionally made by a computer-controlled knitting machine. She then branched out into making pullovers for two people, and what looked like functional knitted woollen items, such as socks, underwear, a dress and balaclavas, which she exhibited either singly or in groups displayed on mannequin heads in a Perspex box. Her *Balakovas* (307) sport repeated patterns on neutral backgrounds, and although these lend a jaunty air to the garments, the absence of apertures for the mouth hints at suffocation or the impossibility of communication. The idea of the balaclava as an item of headgear that offers warmth and protection is subverted. Others in the series are decorated with different repeated patterns, such as the swastika and the hammer and sickle motif, and these blend the worlds of decoration and social systems in a perverse kind of anthropology.



David LaPlante, *Some/One*, 2001. Stainless steel military dog tags, nickel-plated copper sheets, steel structure, glass fibre reinforced resin, rubber sheets. 205 cm (80 3/4 in) x 122 cm (48 in) diam. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York



Encounter -- Looking Into Sewing,
bedspreads. Dimensions variable

In this time of polyculturalism, two sculptors have turned their attention to the form and content of national and ethnic costumes, examining how loaded they are with cultural and political implications. Yinka Shonibare, born in London and raised in Nigeria, creates costumes that interweave these two nationalities. The outfits are made from 'African' batik fabrics, which are not actually African in origin, although they present the identity of that continent to Western eyes. Batik fabrics originated in Indonesia, were imported to Holland, then exported to West Africa, and at the beginning of the twentieth century they were copied in factories in England, again for export to West Africa. When Nigeria gained its independence in 1960, such fabrics virtually became the national dress. Shonibare's costumes are based on Victorian models, and he sets them on headless mannequins (304), often borrowing the pose of figures from famous eighteenth- and nineteenth-century paintings by artists like William Hogarth or Jean-Honoré Fragonard.

Since 1997 Sui Jianguo has been working on a series of large-scale sculpted jackets in bronze and fibreglass that depict the garment that for most of the twentieth century was the uniform for both men and women. In China the jacket is known as the Sun Yat-sen, the name of the revolutionary who was the first to wear it, whereas in the West, it is called the Mao, after Mao Tsetung (308). Jianguo states that none of the Chinese have truly taken off their Mao suits, even though the revolutionary era is over, and his larger-than-life-size jackets can be read as symbols of restriction and limitation. Jianguo is using national clothing to re-evaluate an established political symbol, aware that he can do so in the freer climate of modern China. He has also made works in fibreglass depicting copies of famous Graeco-Roman and Renaissance marble sculptures of nudes -- such as Michelangelo's slaves -- clothed in the Mao Suit, perhaps implying that Eastern influences will overwhelm the culture of the West.

Two Korean-born artists, Do-Ho Suh and Kimsooja, who now live and work in New York, respond to their cultural displacement by creating pieces that relate back to the fabrics and sewing techniques of their native country. Suh sees the crafts of sewing and dressmaking as allied to architecture: 'When you expand this idea of clothing as a space, it becomes an inhabitable structure, a building, a house made of fabric.' His *High School Uniform* of 1997 consists of 300 Korean schoolboys' jackets on hangers, sewn together into a submissive, regimented grid as though standing to attention for scrutiny by an authority figure. His *Some/One* (309) is a huge metal robe composed of thousands of stainless steel army-style dog tags. These allude to the military, while the large tent-like structure could be seen as a shelter; domination versus protection. Kimsooja does not design or make clothing, but instead creates performances, sculptures and installations using a familiar and ubiquitous piece of household fabric: the traditional Korean bedspread. Embroidered with symbolic patterns, these are traditionally given to newly married couples, and thus signify a human relationship. She has displayed them on the ground, hung like laundry on a clothes line, placed in layers veiling a figure, *Encounter -- Looking Into Sewing* (310), and knotted into bundles filled with personal household items, as though ready for travel.

A trend that emerged during the late 1980s was for artists to get involved in social projects, and this extended to working with fabrics and garments. Since the early 1990s, Lucy Orta has been making unusual items of clothing to which she has given the generic term 'Body Architecture'. From 1993 she began to make 'Refugee Wear', partly in response to the homeless who featured in global news stories -- earthquake survivors, civil-war victims, the unemployed -- and these garments amalgamated sleeping bags with integrated medical supplies and personal waterproof shelters. The following year, she moved from making items for individuals to 'Collective Wear' (311), stating that the physical links brought about by her clothing could assist social links, and help to ameliorate the condition of the homeless and the isolated. In this, she is an heir to Lygia Clark.



Richard Long Architecture -- *The Unit x 10*, 1999. Microporous polyester, mixed media. 2.1 x 10 x 0.5 m [6 ft 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ in x 32 ft 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ in x 1 ft 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ in].
Perth, Western Australia, Perth



J. Morgan Puett,
Diagnostic Nurse, 2003-4. Mixed media.
ble



313 Bojan Sarcevic, *Workers' Favourite Clothes Worn While S/He Worked*, 1999/2000. 23 items of clothing, 10 presentation tables. Dimensions variable

Another angle on protective clothing is provided by Mark Dion, who, with his partner J. Morgan Puett, collaborated with The Fabric Workshop, Philadelphia, in 2003, to create an exhibition of nurses' uniforms. The Fabric Workshop is a pioneering institution in America that encourages the creation and exhibition of new work in fabrics and experimental materials by contemporary artists. Dion and Puett proposed an exhibition that traced the 150-year-old history of nurses' uniforms, and they combined historical items from museums alongside their proposals for contemporary and future Nurses' Uniforms, which included the *Bio-Terror Nurse*, the *Diagnostic Nurse*, the *Post-Apocalyptic Nurse* and the *Intergalactic Nurse*. Dion used materials strong enough to stop bullets, and the *Bio-Terror Nurse* would render its wearer capable of carrying on her duties in the event of a chemical terrorist attack [312]. The uniforms owe as much to science fiction as they do to new technologies, yet if put into commercial production, they could play a functional, if somewhat decorative, role. Another artistic and social project involving workwear and its ramifications was initiated by Bojan Sarcevic. In 2000 he presented *Workers' Favourite Clothes Worn While S/He Worked* [313], which involved the assistance of fifteen male and female manual workers, including a garage mechanic, a carpenter, a building worker, a kitchen assistant and a baker. Sarcevic gave the workers stylish clothing provided by the fashion designer Agnès b, and asked them to wear it continuously for a period of two weeks, as they went about their daily work. He wanted the loaned clothing to reflect the traces of their labour, both their habitual movements and the materials they regularly used, samples of which were likely to fall onto the clothes. At the end of this period, he exhibited the soiled and stained clothes on tables in a gallery at the Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst, Bremen, as an act of homage to manual labour and its grimy traces, evidence not usually set on public display.

Sarcevic is matched in his use of readymade, commercially available clothing by Tobias Rehberger, who makes installations that mimic fashion, design and boutique presentations. He uses designer clothing from the collections of Helmut Lang, Martin Margiela and Walter Van Beirendonck, which he sets in displays that ape designer boutiques, causing the viewer to oscillate between reading the work as fashion or art. Rehberger's most conceptual clothing piece was his underwear design for the security guards at the Venice Biennale exhibition of 1997, a set of which is preserved in the Biennale Archives. His flesh-coloured underwear could be found on sale at the Biennale shop, with the proceeds benefiting an Italian AIDS support organization.

There are numerous artists who use unusual materials or make dramatic changes in scale in their works featuring clothes. Jana Sterbak heads this list with her full-length wire-mesh dress, which is encircled by an electric filament plugged into the mains: *I Want You to Feel the Way I Do* (1984-5). This was the first in a series of sculptures that use clothing to explore troubled states of mind. Two years later, Sterbak showed *Vanitas: Flesh Dress for an Albino Anorectic*, a low-necked clinging dress made from 60 pounds of raw beef steaks sewn together (314). The meat, which had been salted and allowed to air-dry, changed in texture and colour during the duration of the exhibition and ended up with the appearance of dry leather. The title of the piece refers to the eating disorder of anorexia. In a provocative photographic work, *Absorption: Work in Progress* (1995), Sterbak also cast herself as a moth whose ambition is to eat all of Beuys's felt suits.

314 Jana Sterbak, *Vanitas: Flesh Dress for an Albino Anorectic*, 1987. Mannequin, flank steak, salt, thread. Dimensions variable. Walker Art Center, Minneapolis





Semmes, *Red Dress*, 1992. Velvet, wood, metal hanger. Dimensions variable. Hirschhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC

Beverly Semmes and E.V. Day combine glamour with a sense of menace in their garments. Semmes creates exaggerated clothing forms that merge social commentary with a formal investigation of texture and colour through her choice of material, which is often luxurious, such as silk, velvet or organza. She creates enormous versions of cocktail dresses and ball gowns, expensive attire with a social meaning, and she hopes to make a link between the viewer's body and architecture. She is well aware that in Greek and Roman classical art, the human figure was the prototype for the proportions and measurements of architecture. The massive scale and sumptuous material of some of her dresses recall the thirty-three-foot dress of gold sheets made for Pheidias' 40-foot statue of Athena for the Parthenon in Athens. Her *Red Dress* [315], made of velvet, is displayed on a wooden hanger 12 feet from the floor and has the capacity to expand up to 50 feet in length, depending on the gallery space in which it is shown. It can look monumental, but the overwhelming colour and shape also suggest flowing blood and a sense of violence or damage.



1999. White crepe dress, monofilament, turnbuckles. 487.7 x 609.6 x 609.6 cm [192 x 240 x 240 in]

Day cuts up and expands dresses and wetsuits. Her series 'Exploding Couture' began in the late 1990s; in each of these works, she creates then cuts up a huge dress into hundreds of different sized pieces and suspends them in mid-air on wires attached to the floor and the ceiling, so that the garment appears to have been caught in a violent explosion. For *Bombshell* (316), she created an 8-foot-high reproduction of the white dress worn by Marilyn Monroe in the film *The Seven Year Itch*. It conflates sex and the military, orgasm and detonation, and responds to the term 'blonde bombshell', which was used as an epithet for Monroe in the 1950s.

Ghada Amer makes tracings from pornographic magazines of women in provocative poses and embroiders these in repetitive patterns onto painted canvases or cloths. She also selects texts for her embroidery. For her sculpture *Private Rooms* (317), which consists of a rack of highly coloured satin clothes-covers and shoe racks, she embroidered onto the surfaces excerpts from the Qur'an that deal specifically with women and their correct apparel. Amer followed the strict rules about quoting from the Qur'an, but also chose to work from a French translation of the Qur'an rather than the Arabic itself, so that she was at one remove from the problem.

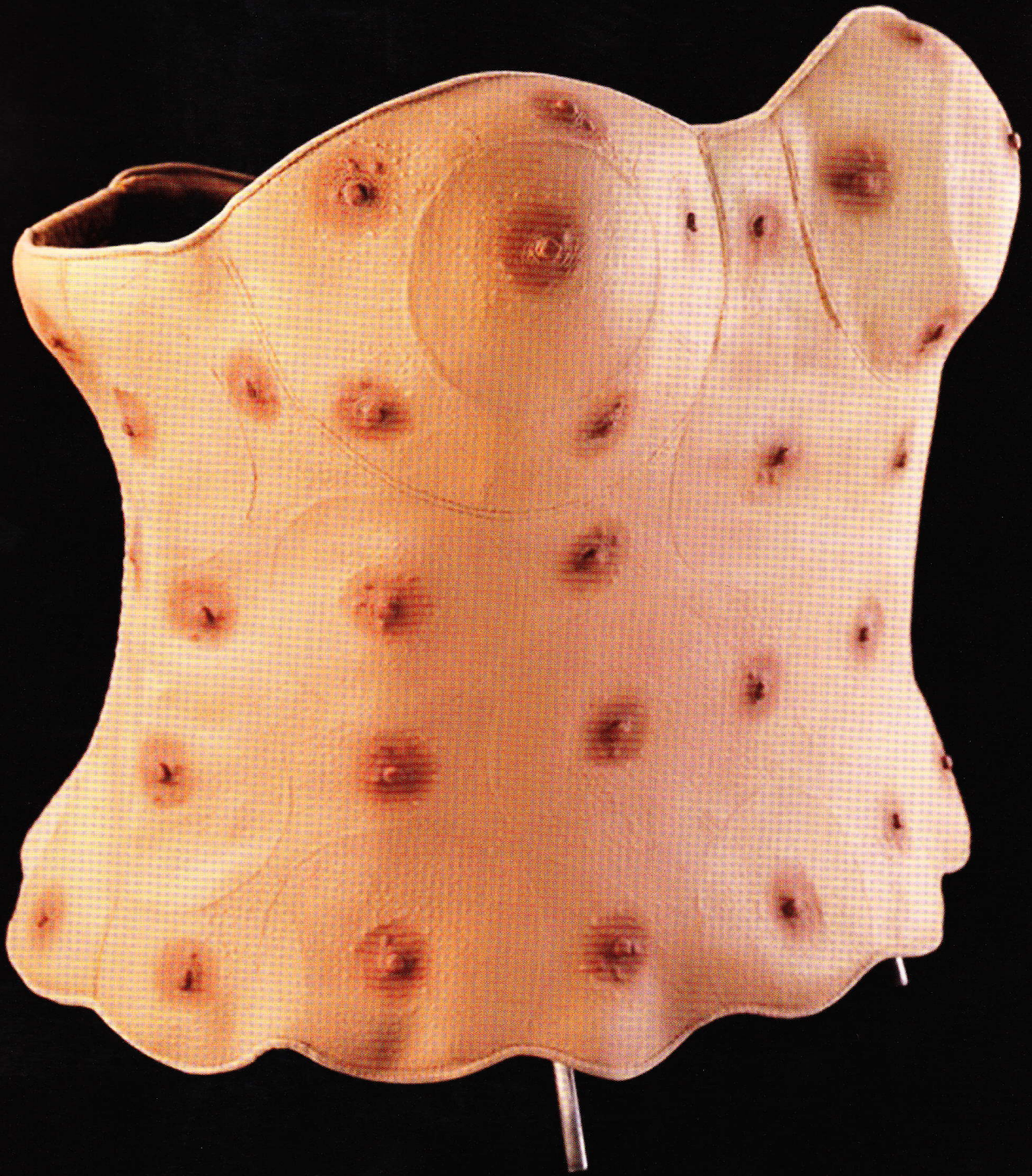
317 Ghada Amer, *Private Rooms*, 1998. Embroidered sculpture, satin. Dimensions variable





318 Jan Fabre, *Wall of the Ascending Angels*, 1993. Beetles on iron wire. 160 x 50 x 50 cm (63 x 19 ½ x 19 ½ in)

The Belgian artist Jan Fabre is the great grandson of the famous nineteenth-century French entomologist Jean-Henri Fabre, and he has inherited his ancestor's interests. He is obsessed with beetles, with which he has covered skulls, ceilings and balls, and numerous garments. *Wall of the Ascending Angels* (318) is a long dress made from thousands of iridescent green jewel beetles stitched together over a wire mesh support. These beetles are found in abundance in Australia and Indonesia, where they are fried, eaten and their shells discarded. Fabre considers that man should look to angels as role models, and he seeks to make sculptures that 'render the body spiritualized'. He views beetles as a metaphor for adaptability and resurrection, and is also attracted by the fact that, unlike man, a beetle's skeleton is external; a dress like this one is built up of thousands of exoskeletons.



Leather is one of the oldest of clothing materials, and sculptors often use it today for its animal qualities. It also comes with its own content of sensuality and sacrifice. Nicola Costantino worked in her mother's clothing factory in her late teens, helping with design and production matters. In her early sculptural works she made dresses from unorthodox animal skins such as chickens. She also makes stylish garments such as *Peleteria* (319) that resemble pale suede, but on close inspection reveal themselves to be made of silicone, which carries in its surface the casts of human nipples, navels and anuses. She edges the garments with fringes of human hair. Costantino deals with controversial subjects in her work; she has made sculptures cast from the stillborn fetuses of calves, reminding us that expensive coats are made from such material.

Dorothy Cross arrives at the use of animal skins from quite a different angle. In the 1990s she produced two large series of sculptures, one using cured cow skins and cow udders and the other employing stuffed snakes, which drew on both creatures' rich store of symbolic associations across cultures, to investigate issues of sexuality and religion. *Virgin Shroud* (1993) is an amalgam of her grandmother's silk wedding dress and a cow skin complete with udder. Cross recalled that Sigmund Freud described cows' udders as 'intermediate between a nipple and a penis', lending them a cross-gender identity. The cow skin covers the figure's head, preventing communication and making it seem like a dumb animal. The title of the work alludes to the Virgin Mary and the teats of the udder around the head can be read as a crown.

A group of gay male artists deal with sexual identity in their clothing pieces; gay codes and cross-gender apparel are found in the work of Charles LeDray, Robert Gober, Nayland Blake and Oliver Herring. LeDray was taught to sew by his mother when he was four, and he made his own puppets and toys. At the time he moved to New York in 1989, he was making worn and weathered velvet teddy bears, which he regarded as self-portraits but did not exhibit. He revealed his tailoring skills in the early 1990s, when he began a series of men's suits and uniforms, made to around one-third human scale. Several can be read as self-portraits, since they carry an embroidered name patch with the word 'Charles' or its derivations. LeDray either displays his clothes on hangers on the wall, on a handmade tailor's dummy, or on an armature within a Perspex case. His tiny outfits are fashioned with tenderness, but *Chuck*, a sport-fisherman's outfit, looks as though it has been savaged by a shark, and *Torn Suit* might have been through an industrial shredder. However, LeDray underplays this disarray and implied violence by stating that such works are exercises in adding and subtracting materials.

320 Oliver Herring, *Raft*, 1995. Knitted transparent mylar. 213.3 x 235 cm (84 x 88 in)



Charles (321) comprises a worker's short blue jacket of a kind worn by gay men in the 1970s, with navy trousers and a blue shirt. Dangling from the hem of the jacket and trousers are small garments, both male and female, including underpants and a patterned bra. There are many ways of reading this device: the smaller clothes could imply offspring, and there is also the possibility of cross-dressing.

Robert Gober has written about how the AIDS epidemic in New York in the late 1980s re-ordered the way in which he saw the world, and not surprisingly, his work reflects this. He lithographically doctored a page from *The New York Times*, so that the majority was taken up with a large Saks Fifth Avenue advert for bridal wear, showing a photograph of Gober in a long white wedding dress. The headline of the article above read 'Vatican Condoned Discrimination Against Homosexuals'. The wedding dress, handmade by Gober, assumed its own autonomous state as a sculpture, and became the central feature in a gallery installation at the Hamburger Kunsthalle, along with printed wallpaper and handmade bags of cat litter (323). The empty dress speaks of absence and loss; the bride stands alone without her groom.

321 Charles LeDray, *Charles*, 1995. Fabric, thread, metal, plastic, paint. 48.2 x 35.5 x 11.5 cm (19 x 14 x 4 ½ in)





Nayland Blake is a gay artist who draws attention to his size and his sexuality through his work. In the early 1990s, he created a performance piece wearing a rabbit suit hired from a costume shop, and since 1994 his sculptures and some videos have focused on rabbits, an animal that has become a surrogate figure for the artist. He has made works using toy rabbits, chocolate rabbits, rabbit pelts and images of well-known rabbit characters from folk tales and cartoons, such as Brer Rabbit, Bugs Bunny and Uncle Wiggily. In 2000, Blake appeared in his own video *Starting Over* wearing a specially made rabbit suit of white flannel padded with 140 pounds of dry beans, the weight of his partner. He attempted to tap dance, but the heavy suit impeded his movements. The suit then became an autonomous work, the *Starting Over Suit* (322), and was shown displayed on a metal armature, along with its accompanying rabbit hat and ears.

Oliver Herring appeared on the New York art scene in 1993 with his knitted outfits, which were offered as memorials to the performance artist and drag queen Ethyl Eichelberger, who committed suicide in 1990 while suffering from AIDS. Eichelberger performed his own plays, which celebrated the lives of strong women such as Cleopatra, while wearing long gowns, elaborate wigs and high heels. Herring's dresses and coats are immensely labour intensive, since he knits them himself using strips of reflective and transparent mylar, a synthetic material. He has employed other non-traditional knitting materials, such as paper, Sellotape and wood veneer, but the silvery pale, ghostly mylar garments such as *Raft* (320) are more successful in conveying a sense of emptiness, absence and loss, a fitting tribute to a fellow gay artist. Herring's knitting makes a strong statement about a traditionally female activity being taken over by a male for expressive purposes.

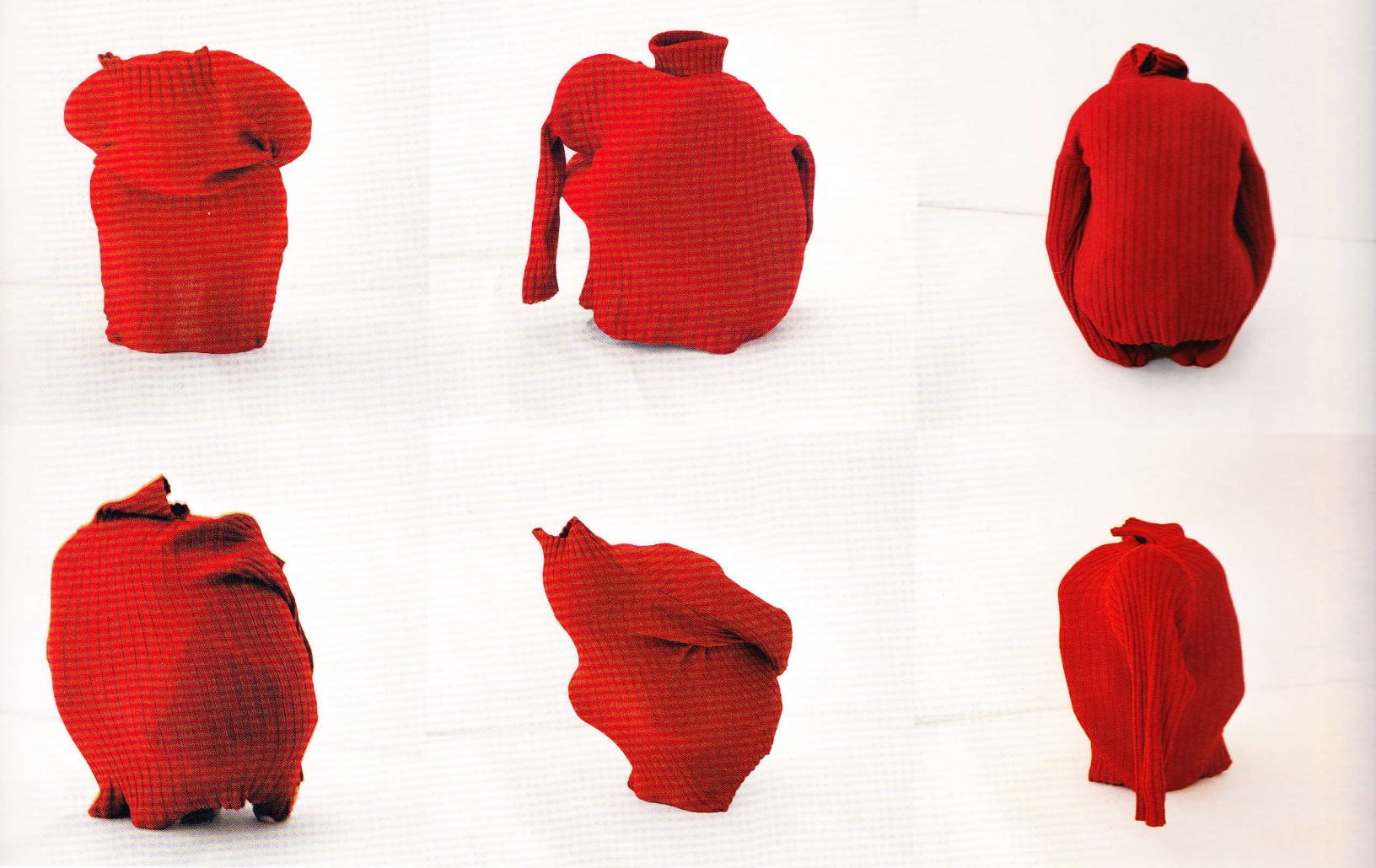
Starting Over Suit, 2000. Cloth, 140 pounds of beans, metal armature.
(83 x 46 x 22 in)

Wiebke Siem looks at how garments are presented in shops, and how they are perceived in relation to each other, as though they were a series with variations. Starting as a painter in the 1980s, she also made functional clothes for herself and her friends, onto which she sewed lop-sided stripes and checks. In 1989 she made a series of unwearable hats from foam rubber, and by the 1990s she was beginning to make collections of unwearable dresses, furs and hats, as well as shoes carved from wood, and wigs made out of plaster. Her favourite material is jersey, and she lines her garments with foam rubber or wire mesh to render them stiff and volumetric; their look is anonymous and impersonal even though their dimensions derive from her own body measurements. They hang on the wall stiffly, 'like medieval armour', and they speak of emptiness; no body has been near them [325].

Quite the opposite is found in the sweater sculptures of Erwin Wurm. *Untitled* [324] is a photographic record of six of his 'One Minute Sculptures', where he invites members of the public to become a sculpture for that length of time, providing them with the materials to do so, in this case a large red sweater. They were asked to hold a pose within the sweater, thereby bringing into play sculptural matters such as shape, colour and texture, stability and equilibrium. As Wurm has said: 'When the sweater is stretched so that the body of the wearer can find its way into this envelope ... an essential plastic process takes place.' In the early 1990s Wurm also exhibited some of his own sweaters, hung from nails directly onto gallery walls.

323 Robert Gober, *Wedding Gown*, 1989. Silk satin, muslin, linen, tulle, welded steel armature. Dimensions variable





Wuom, *Untitled*, 2000. C-prints on PVC. 200 x 300 cm (78 3/4 x 118 in)



de Siem, *Work Group - Dresses*, 1991-4. Wire mesh, fleece, jersey. Dimensions variable