

Smuggled whisper

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Born in 1979, she is a graduate of the Fine Arts Academy in Cracow, where she lives and works. She has been exhibiting since 2002. She has shown her work in many galleries, including the Potocka, Manhattan, Bunkier Sztuki, Otwarta Pracownia, Zachęta, and Program.

Clothing is the main subject and medium of her art. She is interested in the symbolism and significance of the message of clothing. The wealth of the language created by clothing fascinates her. This silent public language can reveal complex existential dramas. Małgorzata Markiewicz adds her own language of "sewn-on" words, enabling her to discover domains previously concealed beneath the clothing. The linguistics of clothing has no secrets. Her work usually takes the form of cycles reflecting the "nature" of clothing and appearing, for instance, as "skirts" or "evening wear." A large cycle was Yellow Motive Project, a series of off-the-rack garments with yellow circles embroidered on the chest. Marked with "light," these clothes integrated people into a positive, joyous unity. The cycle took the form of a public campaign. Flowers, on the other hand, is a private and perhaps even an intimate cycle. This is a series of photographs (displayed as lightboxes) documenting the aftereffects of a secret performance in which the artist stripped off her clothes and arranged them in flower shapes. Changes, in turn, is a metaphysical cycle connected with impermanence and the necessity of packaging the body. Małgorzata Markiewicz frequently supplements the language of clothing with photographs or objects. Aside from this, performance is one of her favorite media, as is often the case with socially committed artists.

Clothing is a gigantic branch of industry and a crucial element in the capitalist game. It makes it possible to earn money and win fame. It is therefore hardly surprising that economic speculation in clothing is possible. "Where is the workshop, and where is the retail outlet?" The former is in the East, and the latter in the West. Between one world and the other, there is a gap wide enough to accommodate injustice.

In her work *Smuggled Whisper*, Małgorzata Markiewicz reveals the profound experiences of humiliation and exploitation encountered by women and children in factories in the poor countries that manufacture clothing for the rich countries. We are forced to consume clothing bearing the names of the most exotic countries, yet also labeled by the best-known companies—and, to be on the safe side, we have no desire to explore the things that lie behind such a combination. The mechanisms of globalization whitewash the problem of contemporary slavery. At times, nevertheless, the desperate slaves inform the world of their suffering. They sew news of their fate into a jacket or pair of trousers and send it blindly out into the world, like a message in a bottle, with no idea of who will read it, or where. Perhaps the recipient will do something, or burst into tears—or, alternatively, burst out laughing because the cry of despair strikes them as a brilliant gag. Małgorzata Markiewicz learned about such practices and decided to create a cycle of clothing in which she sends out information about the condition and fate of the “seamstress.” On this occasion, she treats clothing as a shelter for smuggled letters. It appears in the role of a messenger of justice.