

Ingrid Aarset catalogue 2013

Text by Nina Malterud

It's not where you take things from - it's where you take them to

Ingrid displays a picture of the painting *The Ambassadors* by Hans Holbein (1533), and indicates something I've never noticed before: The textiles, in fantastic detail; fabrics, costumes, drapery and carpets – none of them coincidental. There's little doubt that Holbein enjoyed the inherent quality of these textiles, and they certainly enrich the painting with a surge of colour, texture, pattern and form, however, they have a significant symbolic function. The expert eye reads them as subject class, status and historical context.

Ingrid's project is in dialogue with artists and designers from the Middle Ages until today. Based on historical models, Ingrid draws her patterns by hand, and then computer hones them for laser cutting in wall format, in fabrics such as silk, canvas and dacron. Some of the works are developed into three dimensional form; layer by layer, either slightly out-of-sync, or in a variety of patterns, so we can look inside and through the work, and watch it change as we move. The detailed pattern is taken from her predecessors, but Ingrid carries us from Holbein's rich scenography into a textile wall, more reminiscent of a large frozen window or a huge spider web. Stripped of all the historical and pictorial, the lines of the pattern dominate and define fabric and air. The sharpness of the simplified cut effects an ascetic rawness that creates a fairytale maze, and shadows become implicitly active through the layers of fabric.

While reflecting on Ingrid's work, an article comes to mind, written by Norwegian Vigdis Hjorth (Morgenbladet 21.12.2012): *Bedrag eller bidrag* (English: Deception or contribution). In her article, Hjorth reflects over what it means to take material from other artists and then make it one's own, and she quotes, among others, the Norwegian writer Stig Sæterbakken: (...) *As though I can hardly read a page without there being a sentence or an image or a particularly precise observation that shines for me, and which, minutes later, is written more or less accurately, into my own text, **rich with the light that made me find it*** (my emphasis). And she quotes Jim Jarmusch: (...) *Select only things to steal from that speak directly to your soul. If you do this, your work (and theft) will be authentic. Authenticity is invaluable; originality is non-existent. And don't bother concealing your thievery - celebrate it if you feel like it. In any case, always remember what Jean-Luc Godard said: **It's not where you take things from - it's where you take them to.***

Ingrid's initial working title for her project was *The Precious*. She's not copying what the Renaissance found precious, and the precious in her work is not about representation of wealth or class, but rather about the material potential of textile. The beauty of Deep Lace, Soft Reliefs and Iron Curtains becomes not decorative or decorated, but sharp and naked. What is precious in this context is the artist's contribution; her engagement, research and precision.



Ingrid Aarset: From the series «Soft Reliefs», *Hermitage*, 2012. Canvas. Photo: Øystein Klakegg