

FLAUNT

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HAUSER WIRTH & SCHIMMEL: MAKING OF "REVOLUTION IN THE MAKING"

We speak to artist Lara Schnitger about her preparation for the Los Angeles Art Center's inaugural exhibition.

You're known to find materials from thrift stores and wherever you happen to be—what's available. Do the materials kind of dictate the tone of the piece or do you look for certain things when you're thinking about an artwork?

Yeah, well I'm not really using thrift store pieces in a kind a sentimental way, you know, it's not about a dress that had been worn or something or stockings or knee-highs, you know. I think, coming to Los Angeles, that's when I really started using more and more thrift store materials. I also was making, at the time, different characters inspired by women on the street wearing all this vintage clothing. So then I went and looked for certain patterns which you can't find now, and that's why I often ended up using clothing or things which I cannot buy the raw fabrics from in the stores.

Interesting.

I find these pieces wherever I can find them, but, although I like the idea of recycling, it's not so much about that. I keep it very much in a material way, not in a sentimental way.

So, do the materials come first or does the concept of the piece come first?

Well, I always use flexible materials. Since I started to make art, I've been using flexible materials, so I've always worked with fabrics or things which are raw and don't say much on their own yet. They need me to make it happen. Most of the time the form is going to come from [the material]. I sew the fabrics together and some are stretchy and some are not stretchy, that's how I create the shapes. And then I do go and look for specific materials to indicate a certain atmosphere for that piece.

You lived in Japan and China right after graduating from the Hague. Both of those cultures have a very rich history of textile art. Do you feel like you took some of that into your own work?



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No. Actually not so specifically about the textile art. I know they have beautiful textiles, and sometimes I take textiles abroad, but in Japan I think my time there was such a culture shock. Just the way the people are living. I had actually a huge breakthrough in my work in Japan. Before I went to Japan, I would make my pieces all stretched over in space; they would never be free-standing. They were kind of like, I called them my “parasites inside the space.” Without the space they wouldn’t be able to live because they were stretched to all different sides; to the walls and to everything, and that’s how they would get their shapes.

In Japan, I think with the way a lot of Japanese people are—which is a big generalization—I felt very vulgar being there. I would shout out ‘Oh I love that movie!’ or, ‘I hate this, or that.’ The Japanese are much more careful with their words and much more respectful of each other’s personal space. There was more tension coming from the inside. So my work actually started flipping completely. Instead of using wool, and stretching my tension out as much as I could in spaces, in all the places where I would do shows, I kept the tension always in the sculptures; and sculptures became free-standing. The sticks which were going inside the sculptures created the border for the skin and the bone and the shape. So it was much more about the inner tension than about the outer tension.

It’s like the Bonsai trees; the love of nature but then the force of shaping it into the shape you like. In a way I play a lot in my work with natural gravity and the pull and push of certain materials and I feel a little bit like a Bonsai person shaping it.

I can see that in your work. There was a quote about it, somebody said that it’s very precise on the inside and very, kind of amorphous on the outside.

That’s true, yeah, it has a feeling. I think with that precision of the pattern-making and all the precise details I have before I start—and then there is the natural force which will make pieces go the way they are—that’s an interesting battle as an artist, when you start something. That’s why I don’t really start at a specific drawing or an idea; I have a global idea of what I want it to be like but I never want it to be like that [laughs].

I hope that something else will happen that triggers me and the piece together and we will come to a new solution. Something beyond my own mind. Something about the material and me and these weird forces together and what we create together at that moment.

Written by Amy Marie Slocum

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