

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release
March 1993

PROJECTS: READYMADE IDENTITIES

April 3 - May 18, 1993

READYMADE IDENTITIES, opening at The Museum of Modern Art on April 3, 1993, and continuing through May 18, uses clothing as a medium to explore the theme of identity, in all its layers and guises. Part of the Museum's **PROJECTS** series, **READYMADE IDENTITIES** comprises works by John Armleder, Sonia Balassanian, Suzan Etkin, Ann Hamilton, Maurizio Pellegrin, and Fred Wilson.

The exhibition examines the symbolism, coded messages, and rich lexicon of information implicit in the fabric and design of apparel. Fereshteh Daftari, curatorial assistant, Department of Painting and Sculpture, and organizer of the exhibition, writes, "A fashion show of readymade but uncomfortable identities, this exhibition presents a few of the great many garment-based works being produced by contemporary artists who are acutely aware that the choices we make are determined by social and historical designs over which we may have little conscious control."

Fred Wilson's squad of four black mannequins, dressed in the uniforms of museum guards, are lined up at the entrance to the exhibition. This installation, *Guarded View* (1991), appears next to John Armleder's *Untitled (Furniture Sculpture)* (1988), where two Brooks Brothers suits hang in a mirrored alcove. Together these works present the public facade of men, commenting on male occupations as well as other issues.

The next space encloses three works which, when viewed together, incite questions about the nature of male-female relationships. Suzan Etkin's *Dryclean V* (1993) incorporates a revolving rack of diaphanous garments,

swirling in a dance choreographed by an automatic timer. As a poignant counterpoint, Ann Hamilton's *Still Life* (1988) displays men's shirts impressed with the work of women. The 800 shirts, which have been ironed, folded, singed, and, in places, gilded, express the ambivalence beneath domestic routine and duty. In between, Maurizio Pellegrin's *Colors of a Crowd* (1991), a row of brightly colored ties huddled in boxes, seems to allude to regimented male conventions from which there may be a possibility of escape. Yet when compared to the two nearby works, Pellegrin's piece takes on a different meaning. Daftari explains, "Etkin's garments appear to be dancing to seduce these ties that preside, as a patriarchal symbol, over the labor evident in Hamilton's piece."

In the final gallery, Sonia Balassanian's installation, *The Other Side II* (1993), combines public and private space and comments on a very different world -- that of Muslim women. In this separate gallery, mannequins positioned before mirrors wear *chadors*, the traditional head-to-toe veil. Floodlights literally and symbolically obliterate them from view.

The **PROJECTS** series is made possible by generous grants from the Lannan Foundation, The Bohen Foundation, and The Contemporary Arts Council of The Museum of Modern Art.

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