

Nina Azoulay

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“perhaps’ by the term “everyday life” we also mean the potential. We allude sympathetically to the lyrical tone of clothing and furniture since they clearly reveal to the eye, mind and judgement the real shapes of peopled sentiment.”

Lisa Robertson, *Occasional Work and Seven Walk from the Office for Soft Architecture*

By the chance of an opportune meeting, by fortunate circumstances, through the immediate chemistry of certain bodies or the labor of numerous attempts, one occasionally witnesses the magic of well-crafted arrangements. For, despite calculations or appearances, one thing sometimes fits perfectly with another, matching it as though tailor-made. I believe that it is at this initial scale—the one of fortuitous assemblies, of an art of connection and detail—that Nina Azoulay’s work can be understood. Her gestures draw equally from the precision of the goldsmith and the resourcefulness of childhood; thus, through the simplicity of a stacking or sometimes a perforation, objects that would seem incompatible are affected and come together as sculptures—creating moments of weightlessness in certain places, levitations in others. This grammar of weight and balance bears the quality of tightrope walking, which, by bending its thread, divides space and makes gravity palpable. These plays of ties and lines sketch figures of a suspicious verticality; for, alongside the irregular contours of flesh, Nina Azoulay supplements the sharpness of geometry. Thus, *Rosalind*, suspended by the chimney, is emptied of her body, of which only the final garment remains.

Facing her, a fabric envelops the rigidity of a curtain rod, akin to a padded chrysalis, warming her with its curves [*Oh oh oh oh oh oh, is the world still spinnin’ round*]. There is a certain indulgence in these layers, which pile upon one another like a mille-feuilles; a melancholy in these figures, broken by their destinies, intertwining and suffocating one another.



Bouquet, 2024
65 x 9 x 9 cm



Oh oh oh oh oh oh, is the world still spinnin’ round, 2024
350 x 50 x 50 cm

Azoulay thus employs clothing for its condensing quality and the ambivalence it carries: on the one hand, it contains potential lives, and on the other, it forces one into preordained function. The artist brings attention to identity’s inherent artifice and performance. She even adopts circus vocabulary and the props of spectacle to expose both the set and behind the scenes, revealing the strings behind the craft; these strings then accumulate into ligatures, wrapping around one another like pulleys hastily mended together. Needles stitch sequins, transforming them into bouquets [*The Ballad of Ariel*]; a spool of rhinestones suspends a silhouette, strangling it in a river of diamonds [*Rosalind*]. Here, ornamentation is far from a mere finishing touch or decorative addition. On the contrary, it provides the piece with its skeleton, even its mechanics. But it is something else besides vanity, egoism, and love of self that is at stake. *Is it*



Rosalind, 2024
150 x 20 x 20 cm

*Death itself?*¹ This wardrobe has something both pop and ghostly about it, made of spectral and garish presences. It summons grand, sometimes tragic shadows: Isadora, killed by her scarf caught in the door of her car², Abdallah, who committed suicide surrounded by the books Genet had dedicated to him³. Azoulay carves the space through a landscape of sharp objects where bodies measure and balance themselves like in a diagram; a path winding between the weeds and the rosebed. Then, our reflection ripples and doubles in every petal, reminding the self of its unease—*So that you sparkle, of course, but above all so that [...] you may lose, during the journey from your dressing room to the stage, a few poorly stitched sequins [...]*.⁴

Salomé Burstein
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Nina Azoulay, born in 1992, graduated from Ecole nationale des arts décoratifs of Paris and Beaux arts of Cergy in 2022 and 2023. In January 2024 she was invited by Maëlle Dault to hold her first solo show in the Project room at Le Plateau - Frac Ile-de-France. Along with that, she participated in various group shows «100% l'Expo» at La Grande Halle de la Villette in Paris - 2024, «*Semblable à un petit os de seiche*» in Bétonsalon - 2023). She also initiates and co-organizes exhibitions (group show at Confort Mental - 2023, recently hosted the work of Suzie Crespin in her apartment - 2024).

Her main research theme is clothing seen as a social coating, an architecture of the body, a surface of expression, and a space of simultaneous freedom and constraint. Through her work, she questions ideas like limits, emptiness, edges, inheritance and transformation. Her practices of volume, drawing and writing are made of fragments' gathering : a thick and sandwiched poetry.

The research on clothing crosses the themes of skin, costume and origins. This light and superficial envelope, that shows and hides everything at the same time, carries all the weight of identity. In the folds of a T-shirt, the twists and turns of identity are piled up and intertwined.

¹ Jean Genet, *Le Funambule*, Paris, Gallimard, coll. L'arbalète, 2010 (1957), p.14.

² Isadora Duncan (1877-1927) was an American dancer, performer, and choreographer who became a Soviet citizen, a pioneer of European "modern" dance, and later contemporary dance. She tragically died in Nice.

³ Abdallah Bentaga (1937-1964) was an acrobat of Algerian and German descent, whom Jean Genet fell deeply in love with and to whom he dedicated his text *The Tightrope Walker (Le Funambule)*. He committed suicide after a serious injury sustained during a performance, which prevented him from returning to the tightrope.

⁴ Jean Genet, *Le Funambule*, Paris, Gallimard, coll. L'arbalète, 2010 (1957), p.25.