

Elizabeth Delfs

Artists' statement

"This was the order in which mankind learnt how to build. In the beginning was dressing"

- Vitruvius

My interests lie in the intersection between art, garment and the built environment, and my work vacillates between habitations and figurative sculpture. I create "object garments" that are viewed on the body through photographic stills or installed in a gallery setting. My objects investigate the relationship between garment and the history of building; and the built environments lineage with textile processes.

Influenced by the canon of Japanese designers Issey Miyake, Yoji Yamamoto and Rei Kawakubo, I create garments that transcend barriers of age, gender and body type, and create garments that celebrate "*ma*" – the space between cloth and flesh. I work in direct relation to the body and when my objects are installed they create a sense of unfamiliar sensuality.

Through the act of dressing from a young age we are conditioned to try to achieve beauty – the meaning of which is something we long for or desire to be; a condition by which the definition sets us up to fail. The commercial beauty and fashion industry keep us on the cycle of constant consumerism, buying and trying to achieve the next unattainable standard to turn us into the complete cultural package.

Challenging mainstream notions of garment and beauty I work specifically with unconventional materials, such as foam, fly wire and plastics; exploring the inherent properties of material and striking a balance between tradition and innovation. I seek to find innovative applications of material and their manipulation through traditional textile processes, such as dyeing, printing, smocking and cutting, creating structures which implode and explode, with transient visual qualities to be experienced from all angles. During the process of making there is a deliberatness in the manipulation of material, while at the same time allowing myself to be directed by the material. In doing so, shapes are created that at times spring organically outwards from a source, with little concern of the weight being distributed centrally or securely and when installed create a sense of unfamiliar sensuality. This method of working creates pieces that are irregular, while still achieving a delicate sense of equipoise, recalling the Japanese aesthetic of wabi-sabi.

My work proposes a fresh experience of beauty related to the difference and variety of human feeling and form. Once applied to the body the wearer is transformed into an agent of art, dress

and architecture, whose principles are visual and intellectual, with abstractions of beauty, feeling and philosophy; blurring the boundaries between the body and the built environment. It asks how we may see ourselves as individuals wrapped in garments, and enveloped by buildings, while ultimately posing the question to the audience of the function of cloth and garment.

The garments created are all based on the circle, square and triangle, which are the universal symbols of beauty. These shapes are used as the basis of structures which denies the gendering of the garment, done traditionally through the structure of a garment in Western fashion. Through the rhythmic and repetitious use of cutting, smocking and printing, the material is manipulated to create a garment, that when applied to the body, or hung in site specific installation, echo architectural principles, redistribute bodily proportions and distort the silhouette, thus asking whose body may go beneath this?

I have also recently begun branding my objects with a "logoture", a combination of logo and signature, thereby refusing to label them exclusively as either art objects or couture.