

Brishty Alam

The Wearables

2024

A publication usually refers to an edition such as an artist book, a pamphlet, or a magazine. However, included in this format is also the notion of "the multiple". A multiple is a small or large number of stickers, patches, bags but not limited to articles of clothing such as scarves, sweat and T-shirts, or even socks and underwear. Also known as "wearables", it is an age-old format, Indie bands use it for merch; sport teams, youth groups, and social movements as markers for encoded identities and counter-culture.

At artist book fairs, multiples have become a standard fixture, as less people read and buy publications but rather shell out for "a bundle"¹, i.e. a sweater, magazine, and tote bag. Thereby, also showing and emanating support for a unique community or parcel of ideas.

The hand-made jumper edition "Kleiner Brauner" by Brishty Alam takes the notion of the multiple a step further by positioning it in the art world as a wearable and collectible artwork, and self-determining garment for belonging as a solo and collective endeavor.

Like the imprint of a magazine, the inscriptions in the material of the jumper tell the story of its maker and making. Instead of paper, the soft, organic cotton, handed-dyed in bright colors from light and bright citric lemon to medium saffron to dark turmeric. The fabric is unisex and 'made proudly in Bangladesh'. The text is embroidered lettering on this soft page, reading cursively "Kleiner Brauner". A "kleiner Brauner" in Viennese coffee house culture is a term for an espresso shot with milk and life quality boost. Alam reclaims this term as a patch and sweater for her own identity and as an artist living in Austria in the diaspora.

Who wears this sweatshirt? "People are always looking for answers," Alam notes, but to her, it is important to maintain an open projection on the project. The people, wearing the publication, become living publications, and perhaps the bright jumper tones are more suited to melanin-rich complexions. Is this the formation of a movement, procession, or fashion trend? The article opens up questions about cultural translations and their effects. Is it more precise to call it a sweat shirt or a jumper? Does the American English allude to the labor involved in creating a work? Or, does the British English evoke layers of activity? What connotation and translations occur with

the term “Kleiner Brauner” in German, in Austria, or elsewhere? It is like a reverse anglicism, turning the German into a Denglish third culture term.

Are there common and/or different parameters? And, do new meanings emerge? The jumper’s inscription protects itself from potential attacker and becomes an armor for a growing counter-cultural squad. Its distribution and power imprinted on the bodies that wear it. First worn during the exhibition opening at Ve.Sch Kunstverein –a Viennese off-space– by DJs and creative allies. The sweatshirts assembled, gathered, and danced. Each individual, sporting a unique copy with dignity, visibility, joy, and their own style. As a group or edition, the jumpers are statement piece, no longer acting alone. There is safety in numbers.

¹ Information references Kemi Fatoba, publisher of Daddy Magazine at Indiecon Conference in 2020

by Nina Prader

Exhibition text for ‘*Wearables – Kleiner Brauners from Vienna to Berlin. Brishty Alam X Dalia Hassan @ ladylibertylibrary*’ 2024, *Lady Liberty Library*, Berlin.

Nina Prader is an artist, writer, curator and independent publisher. Born in Washington D.C., she studied at the Museum School of Fine Arts in Boston in affiliation with Tufts University and at the Slade in London in affiliation with UCL. She received her MA in Critical Studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, Austria. She has exhibited and written internationally in Boston, NY, Vienna, Salzburg, Berlin, and London.
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