

Not After Not Before

2022

Where does it begin, and when does it end?

In her work *Not After Not Before*, artist Signe Guttormsen explores the circulation and interrelations between materials, sensitivities and knowledge production. In the facade window of iconic fashion store Nørgaard på Strøget, Guttormsen has placed a large light table with a series of photographic prints and paper sheets arranged on it. The light from the table illuminates the composition from underneath, simultaneously revealing and dissolving its material and motive – the coarse, irregular texture of the paper emerges, while the black ink of the photographs disintegrates into the background. By way of the laboratory-like display, Guttormsen challenges the formal aesthetic hierarchies between surface and object, between background and form, and draws attention to the transitional state of them both.

Typical for Signe Guttormsen's practice, nothing in *Not After Not Before* is random. Everything is considered in the smallest of detail. Guttormsen combines materials, narratives, spaces and structures in poetic collages where every component alters, nuances or intensifies the reading of the other. And this work is no exception – when taking a closer look at the photographs, contours of pieces of clothing appear: a hood, a pocket, a sleeve. This not only hints at the specific location of the work – in the window of a clothing store – but the very material of which the sheets are made. A timely, delicate and highly water consuming process, Guttormsen has handcrafted every sheet from used and leftover clothes, that she cuts up and blends, before finely spreading the pulp in special moulds. In this way, Guttormsen subtly mimics the fabrication process of clothing.

By using the age-old method of making paper out of textile fibres and afterwards penetrating them with electric light, Guttormsen calls attention to the migration and distribution of natural resources, and how they change shape and meaning according to context. Everything is in a constant state of transformation – natural, political, cultural – and what we took for granted before might be considered exceptional, odd or questionable today. The light flickers, the material dissolves, the narrative collapses.

Where does it end, when does it begin?

Text by Nanna Balslev Strøjer