

Armour

An Exhibition of the Lucerne Museum of History

27 September 2011 - 4 March 2012

There is a great amount of mediaeval armour on display in the History Museum of Lucerne. Whoever once put it on and closed the visor of the helmet was well protected but was hardly able to see or hear any more. We all feel the need for protection. But we also feel the need for the agility to react to what goes on around us. We protect our body physically from the influences of the weather and against injury; we also protect ourselves psychologically against observation and threats by others. With concrete, metal or fabric, according to what we are doing, where we are or how we feel.

The exhibition shows many variations of “armour”: spectacular protective clothing worn at our workplaces or on the sporting field; life style accessories like waistcoat and jacket, cravats, gloves or sunglasses. The exhibition also thematizes public discussion about ethnic and religious “armour” by presenting european and foreign variations of the headscarf and the veil, aesthetically concentrated in the impressive video art of Grace Ndiritu: “The Nightingale”.

Armour is a protective clothing. It used to be forged from iron. Nowadays, according to the protective function, it is fabricated from the most modern materials. But not only the protective clothing worn for performing dangerous tasks serves as armour. Even normal everyday clothing can protect: the dark suit of the banker, the robe of the judge. The armour always stands between the person wearing it and his counterpart and produces a certain reaction.

The motives for choosing a specific type of armour are manifold:

If I am enclosed in a block of concrete, I am very well protected yet completely immobile. If I am scantily clad, I am open to injury yet readily able to react. Perhaps I do not want to be recognized, perhaps I want to seem mysterious, perhaps I want to attract someone or to distract him.

I conceal, veil or disguise myself because I want to follow the traditions of my culture, because I want to follow the mores of a group, because I am ordered to or merely because I want to.

I have to keep asking myself about the purpose of my armour. Is it protection against danger? Does it lend me self-assurance when appearing in public? Am I conforming to the customs of my environment? Am I trying to hide in the crowd?

I can let my armour surround me in a way that makes me feel good. I can also use it in an entirely different way. Armour can tell a lie, it can deceive, conceal. And it can pretend to be far more than it really is.

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Opening hours: 10-17, closed Monday (except holidays)