

# IRA STEHMANN

FINE ART

## **Corina Gertz. The Averted Portrait—The Quiet Language of Textiles**

**Solo exhibition: 29 January 2026 – 31 March 2026**

Ira Stehmann Fine Art is pleased to present the solo exhibition *The Averted Portrait — The Quiet Language of Textiles* by the artist Corina Gertz.

In her long-term project *The Averted Portrait*, Corina Gertz develops a consciously reimagined form of portraiture that departs from classical conventions. Her photographs show women in traditional clothing, mostly seen from behind or turned slightly away, so that their facial features remain hidden. The focus shifts away from the individual toward cultural identity, bodily presence and the language of clothing. Gertz does not understand the portrait as a psychological depiction, but as a space in which lived history, belonging and cultural practices become visible. Through this deliberate staging, clothing itself becomes the bearer of history, identity and social meaning; skin colour, facial features and bodily proportions recede, revealing a cultural memory inscribed in fabrics, patterns and craftsmanship.

Many of the garments depicted are heirlooms, rich in history, tradition and familial meaning. They embody knowledge passed down through generations and reflect social, aesthetic and socio-political narratives. By concealing the face, Gertz frees her subjects from the expectation to express personality through facial expression. Instead, she invites viewers to immerse themselves in the depth of textures, embroideries and forms. In this way, a sensitive portrait of collective identity emerges — between personal belonging and social context.

Corina Gertz's artistic approach is grounded in respect, deceleration and encounter. She does not work as a distant observer, but in close relationship with the people and their cultural contexts. Through the serial structure of the work, a visual archive is created that goes far beyond a documentary collection: the visual language intensifies the garments' presence as expressions of cultural diversity while also pointing to their emotional and political dimensions.

The exhibition presents a curated selection from this extensive project. A particular focus lies on works from Germany and China, which reveal different forms of textile tradition and cultural coding. In Germany, Gertz encounters traditional costumes often associated with local pride as well as nostalgic projections; she removes their folkloristic connotations and presents them as timeless expressions of a living culture. In China, the garments of various ethnic groups carry coded meanings — concerning familial ties, stages of life or spiritual affiliation. Colours, patterns and handcrafted structures appear like autonomous visual signs embedded in a long tradition of textile craftsmanship.

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The selection is complemented by individual works from Romania and Spain, which open up further cultural perspectives. In Romania, a particular closeness between clothing, ritual and familial heritage becomes visible: many blouses have been passed down through generations, each seam sewn by the hands of mothers and grandmothers, turning the garment into a living connection between past and present. The work from Spain points to other historical and regional textile traditions and expands the geographical and cultural horizon of the exhibition.

Corina Gertz's photographs make visible what is often overlooked or marginalised, creating spaces for attentiveness, reflection and appreciation of cultural difference. They present cultural identity not as a form of demarcation, but as a relational space — and as a foundation for a pluralistic social coexistence.

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### Biography

Corina Gertz studied fashion design and created collections for international labels in Düsseldorf, Hong Kong, Cape Town and London. From 2013 to 2017 she held teaching positions at the Beijing University of Technology and was a visiting professor at Xijing University in Xi'an, China. Since 2001, Gertz has explored clothing in her photographic work as a form of non-verbal communication — as a sign of status and social position, group affiliation, regional identity, religious denomination and official function.

She has been working on her series *The Averted Portrait* since 2010. Her works have been shown in international museums and galleries, including Marta Herford, the Shanghai Art Museum, the National Museum of Singapore, the Museo delle Culture del Mondo in Genoa, and the White Box Art Center 798 in Beijing.