



Photo: Photographs by Benjamin Alexander Huseby. Digital Technician: Dimitri Ramazankhani; Photography Assistant: Luis Einhauser.

By Diane Solway — October 25, 2016

Toys, aircraft-window panels, and her own medical X-rays are just some of the materials that have tantalized the German artist **Isa Genzken**, whose inventive, mercurial output over the past 40 years continues to thwart attempts at categorization. Painting, assemblages, and skyscraper-like constructions have all found a place in her work. Born in 1948, Genzken came of age with a postwar generation of German artists, many of whom quickly became much better known than her — among them, Sigmar Polke and Genzken's ex-husband, Gerhard Richter. Genzken, who has grappled with bipolar disorder for much of her adult life, eventually became an art star in Europe, and rose to prominence in the United States in 2013, following her critically acclaimed retrospective at New York's Museum of Modern Art. For that traveling exhibition, Genzken created the first of her "Schauspieler (Actors)" sculptures, presented as an installation of 13 mannequins, many wearing her own clothing, combined with props and accessories that held meaning for her. Positioned in various arrangements, they suggested self-portraiture and reflected on consumer culture.

The sculptor has since produced "Schauspieler" for other shows, working, as she has for more than 20 years, in a vast loft inside a former industrial building in Berlin. In 2016, the mannequins were featured in a survey exhibition at Berlin's Martin-Gropius-Bau, organized by the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, and additional iterations are currently on view in Genzken's first large-scale solo exhibition in California, at Hauser Wirth & Schimmel, in Los Angeles. **Meanwhile, a show of new work by the artist, featuring primarily collages, opens at Galerie Buchholz, in New York, on November 2, the same day that Genzken will be the honoree at the SculptureCenter's annual benefit gala.**

Genzken, who is tall and striking, favors men's clothing, and has her leather pants and jackets custom-made at Rob Berlin, a gay fetish retailer. The artist has typically outfitted her mannequins in clothes from her own wardrobe, but for this W commission, Genzken reworked runway pieces that were sent to her, reconstructing and deconstructing them as she saw fit, on mannequins she selected and adding props that she found herself. Assembling them in a line in front of a work in progress, she envisioned a silent catwalk populated by these uncanny products of her teeming mind.

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From left: DKNY shirt; Alternative Apparel tank top (around feet); Genzken's own beanie. Genzken's own jacket.



Isa Genzken's own jacket.



Alpha Industries jacket; Genzken's own pants.



Dr. Martens boots; Genzken's own headpiece.



Michael Kors Collection turtleneck; Proenza Schouler dress; Genzken's own sunglasses.



Burberry trenchcoat; Dr. Martens boots.