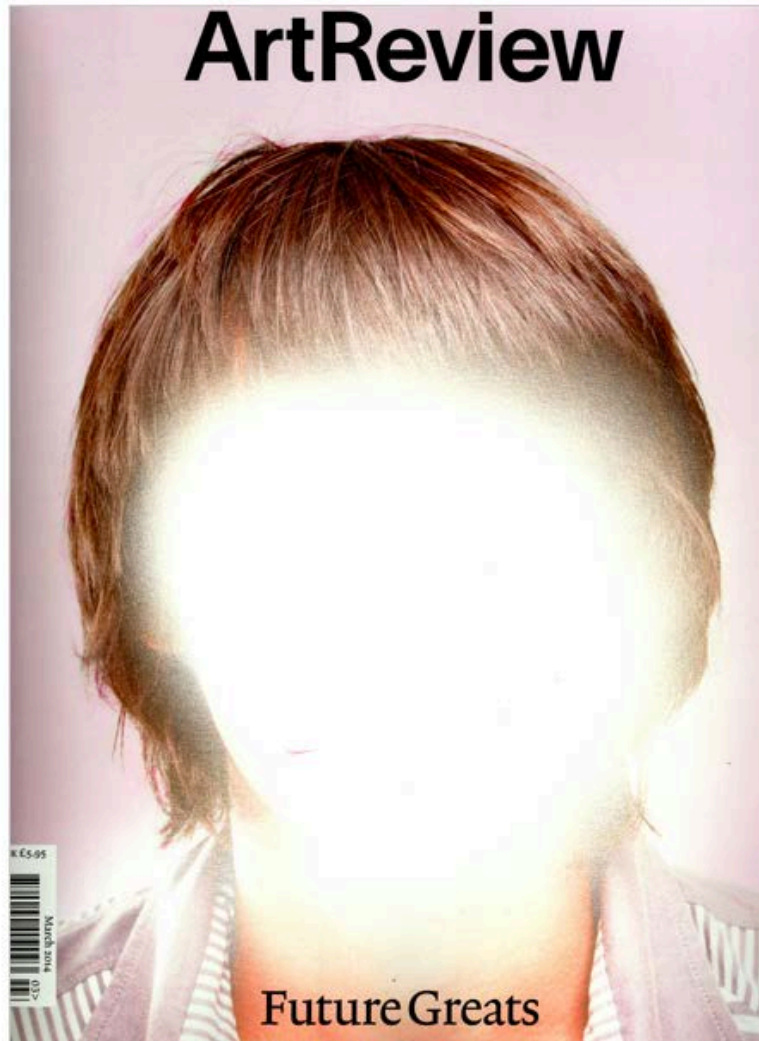


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Morgane Tschiember *Polystyrene, Shibari & Co*

Loevenbruck, Paris 13 December – 8 February

The recently installed frosted glass facade of Loevenbruck was, to say the least, a considerate architectural choice, concealing an otherwise risqué business from innocent passers-by: for what Morgane Tschiember installed behind the opaque front window feels strictly intended for adults. So leave your children behind and your virtue as well – in her third solo show at the gallery, the French artist's somewhat sensuous and handmade approach to Postminimalism verges on the erotic and profane realm of BDSM. Ouch. While the artist dominates with her great touch, or tact if you will, the submissive part is here played by something that, while not the most popular medium in contemporary art practice, is nevertheless the one and only *prima materia* of the (pre-Fall) man: clay, here bending to the maker's will. Yes Adam, get back to your origins: within three ensembles of sculptural works, *Shibari*, *Skin* and *Polystyrene* (all works 2013), Tschiember digs into and sexes-up the traditional art of pottery.

All the pieces presented at Loevenbruck were made last summer during the newly created NUOVE//Residency programme, a project through which international artists

can learn the techniques of and experiment with ceramics in Nove, which has been the historic 'capital' of the earthenware industries in Northern Italy since the seventeenth century. In *Shibari*, Tschiember revisits the eponymous and traditional Japanese practice of bondage – also known by connoisseurs as 'Kinbaku,' which literally means the 'beauty of tight binding'. The body of work comprises three shapeless pots, each intricately tied up and suspended by linen rope, one beside the other, from the ceiling. If the art of Shibari is often considered a fetish by (corrupted) Westerners, it is nonetheless an aesthetics designed to reach communion on a carnal and spiritual level with (consenting) enslaved models – whether naked people or, as is the case for Tschiember, clay vessels. A rather sensual attempt, you'll admit, to inhabit or explore the medium she's recently seized upon, the tortuous knotting of the ceramics right after their spinning on the potter's wheel and before their firing caused not only their voluptuous misshaping, but also many cracks on their flesh.

Speaking of which, the two ceramic works that constitute the second ensemble presented at Loevenbruck, *Skin*, do indeed share a certain

quality with flesh's delicate complexion and slow necrosis. Resembling something between a wedding veil and a death shroud, both are embroidered sheets that Tschiember covered with clay, preserving its natural whiteness for the one and applying mint green engobe to the other, before firing the compositions. The result is absolutely astonishing. While both ceramic textiles are displayed hanging from high steel pedestals, the clay does not adhere strongly to the fabrics and, throughout the length of the show, imperceptibly crumbles down to form their bottom small heaps of powder. How do it go: from dust you were made, and to dust you will return?

It might as well be. The last ensemble displayed at Loevenbruck, *Polystyrene*, features three ceramic casts of the same 50-inch cube of white foam, made at three different stages in the process of carving the lightweight block with a welding torch. A little reminiscent of gravestones, the resulting clay sculptures are installed on three large steel panels laid on the floor in the middle of the gallery. And thus the pure, heavenly matter – polystyrene is composed of 98 percent air, after all – is forever frozen in stone. *Violaine Boutet de Monvel*



*Shibari*, 2013, ceramic, mint-green slip, blue glass enamel and linen rope, dimensions variable. Photo: Isabelle Giovacchini/© Adagp, Paris