

SYLVIE FLEURY

ART AND LUXURY: FASHION,
THE NEW RELIGION?



Cristalle Custom Commando, doré, 2008

With her objects, performances, and space-filling installations, Swiss artist Sylvie Fleury has a radical approach to the modern world of commodities, fashion, and luxury goods matched by almost no other Western artist. Since she, too, has become a brand name as a permanent component of the art world, Fleury identifies herself as a “fashion victim”.

Fleury’s inclusion in the Nicola Erni Collection draws a fascinating thematic arc from *Zeitgeist & Glamour*—and fashion photography as original core of the collection—to our present day of status symbols and luxury living.

In the work *Cristalle Custom Commando, doré, 2008*, a shot-up, perforated Chanel bag is mounted on a black target. The piece is part of an eponymous series presented in New York on the occasion of the fiftieth birthday of the renowned 255-Coco Chanel bag, and was shown alongside other international artistic positions on the theme of Chanel in a mobile “Chanel Art Pavilion” designed by star architect Zaha Hadid.

The installation contained a monitor in an oversized sculpture shaped like a Chanel bag, disguised as an opened powder compact with mirror. The video *Cristalle Custom Commando* played on the monitor: in a fifty-minute loop, the video shows a brigade of women bikers in skintight leather suits—power women, so-called *She-Devils on wheels*—riding their motorcycles to a shooting range. When they arrive, they aim their machine guns at the elegant, expensive Chanel bags hung on the targets there. As spectators, we can look into the crystal ball and watch this martial commando. Ultimately, it is about gaining hold of the object of your desire and celebrating it. But first you have to identify the relevant object—in this case, the Chanel bag—as desirable; if you then want to take possession of it, you have to take action—almost like a compulsion: our action and thought is determined by our desire.

In connection with this, Fleury also questions the notion of femininity, and drafts a new image of women, which nonetheless also turns out to be a cliché. As she admits herself, this projected idea of living for oneself goes entirely against her own maxim: *Be amazing!*, as one can only inspire through an inner, spiritual power.

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