



Karina Bergmans: IN STITCHES

Wearing an outlandishly asymmetrical sweater she has made out of yellow double-knit, purple stretch jersey pants, and glittery candy-coloured shoes, Karina Bergmans says, "I do make crazy clothes."

Colour and texture are always on Bergmans' mind. She sews her clothing the same way she makes her art. Call her a sculptor, an installation artist, a performance artist: Bergmans' work always entails dying, sewing, wrapping, and even stuffing all matter of textiles.

Two years after she created malfunctioning body organs for her exhibition *Ligaments and Ligatures*, things have lightened up considerably. Bergmans is now investigating the lymphatic system, which means spending a lot of time with a clear fluid that "cleans the blood as you move," she explains. Out of this mysterious network (we never give a thought to this part of our immune system, do we?) Bergmans has created a series of elegant — and comic — performances called *Lymph Nymph*. Bergmans uses the word *nymph* as double entendre, meaning both a sylvan sprite and the juvenile form of certain insects (the mayfly, for instance).

In one performance, she zips open a vinyl bowling bag and pulls out a yellow-green hazmat suit. Bergmans slips into the onesie, then pulls from the bag string-

like lymphatic vessels of silk organza and tulle. All the while, she dances like a mythical nymph. Her delicate yet exaggerated movements remind one of Jacques Tati's 1950s character, the ever-perplexed Monsieur Hulot. In the background, you hear sounds. Frogs chirp in one performance at Crotch Lake (yes, it's a real name). In another, birdsong. Bergmans attaches the lymphatic vessels to herself and, like magic, pulls out of her bag a green diaphanous parachute. At one point, she pushes her head through an opening in the nylon so that it billows behind as she dances. She's a dragonfly! She's a queen! No, wait, she's Superwoman! Here is Bergmans operating within three aspects of our world: the body's inner workings, the natural world outside, and the myths that explain everything. All are crucial to us living beings. Bergmans works her magic, weaves an enigmatic spell, and makes us laugh.

Meanwhile, back on planet Earth, Bergmans sews together scraps from three radically different sweaters. Is she making a fourth sweater for the winter hibernation or something else entirely? We'll just have to wait and see. ■

