



## ATTRACTION OF THE MONTH, GERMANY

# Exploring humans' 'second skin' in art and fashion

**The human skin is a wondrous thing; it protects the body, keeps it warm and safe from injuries, cold and wetness. But for many it is also a special feature signalling beauty and attractiveness. So it is no wonder that artists and designers speak of the second skin when talking about clothes and fashion, something a new exhibition at the museum Sinclair Haus focuses on.**

TEXT: JESSICA HOLZHAUSEN

No matter how protective clothes are, they are always ways to express our identity, our personality and how we want others to see ourselves. This is why it is no longer only in focus of fashion designers, but also in that of contemporary artists, many of whom now focus on natural materials as part of their working process.

"The longing civilised people have to immediately experience nature seems to be bigger than ever before. But what kind of bodily experience of nature can we still have today?" asks the museum's director Dr. Johannes Janssen about artists' fascination with natural materials – even crawling insects and bugs.

Experiencing nature today is a strange mixture between setting boundaries and allowing permeability, between fear and desire. "It is noticeable how many artists in recent years have explored the human's relationship with nature and creature." The skin here is the visible barrier. A barrier many artists are playing with when using nature's own creations as clothes.

The arc of suspense created through poetic positions on the one hand and strange expressions on the other can for example be seen in Sarah Cooper's and Nina Gorfer's photographs or Deborah Sengl's plastics. "Sengl reverses the existing circumstances

in a polemic way, when she lets minks wear handbags, hats and scarves made of human skin," says Dr. Johannes Janssen. Other artists' photographs show people wearing animals – living birds for example – as clothes, a woman has antlers growing out of her head while she walks in a long period dress through the landscape, another wears twigs as hat.

Exhibitions at Sinclair Haus develop around the overall, guiding concept of 'nature in contemporary art', distinguished from white cube exhibitions but with a very focused presentation where every piece can make an impact. Every exhibition is accompanied by concerts, book readings or discussions. Museum Sinclair Haus in Bad Homburg vor der Höhe is part of the Altana foundation, established by entrepreneur Susanne Klatten in 2007.

[www.altana-kulturstiftung.de/museum-sinclair-haus/ausstellungen](http://www.altana-kulturstiftung.de/museum-sinclair-haus/ausstellungen)

Left: Cooper & Gorfer, *Girls Sewn to Trees*, 2014.  
Loan from the artists.  
Middle: Cooper & Gorfer, *Ena Holds the Sea*, 2014.  
Loan from the artists.  
Right: Deborah Sengl, *Killed to Be Dressed*, 2010,  
wax preparation. Private loan.