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A New Art Installation Is Draped Over the National Museum of Women in the Arts

It's the first U.S. installation of the international art project "Solange."

WRITTEN BY JESSICA RUF  | PUBLISHED ON OCTOBER 24, 2022



SOLANGE #27 by Katharina Cibulka. Photograph by Kevin Allen.

Austrian artist Katharina Cibulka has been turning construction sites into feminist conversation pieces in cities across France, Austria, Germany, Italy, Slovenia, and Morocco. Now her handiwork has reached U.S. shores.

This morning, she and her team draped a 7,000-square-foot mesh installation across the north facade of the National Museum of Women in the Arts, which has been under renovation since 2021. Made of white mesh and embroidered with bright pink tulle, the work reads: "As long as generations change but our struggles stay the same, I will be a feminist."

It's the second installation of NMWA's "Lookout" project, which has been repurposing the museum's construction scaffolding as a canvas for artwork while under renovation. A four-story MISS CHELOVE mural had been on the exterior since March.

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"The [scaffolding] presented the perfect opportunity and backdrop for the museum to continue its mission to champion women artists, even while the interior galleries are temporarily closed," wrote Hannah Shambroom, NMWA exhibition coordinator, over email. The project has been financially supported by the Share Fund and members of NMWA.

For Cibulka, this marks the 27th installation of her four-year-old project entitled "Solange" —the German word for "as long as," which is how the pithy phrases on all of her installations begin. Cibulka says she tailors the phrases to the concerns of women in the places they're hung.

In France, her installation reads, "As long as my anatomy determines my autonomy, I will be a feminist." In Italy: "As long as it takes balls to get to the top, I will be a feminist." In Austria: "As long as he makes the cash while I work for change, I will be a feminist."

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Last spring, 70 locals submitted suggestions for the DC phrase. A multitude of topics cropped up: closing the pay gap, providing adequate parental leave, embracing female sexuality, and, of course, protecting bodily autonomy, to name a few. Ultimately, Cibulka settled on an all-encompassing statement: “As long as generations change but our struggles stay the same, I will be a feminist.”



SOLANGE #27 by Katharina Cibulka. Photograph by Kevin Allen.

Her massive installations—which take about ten days to embroider with the tulle as the thread—are purposefully draped over construction sites, where several themes are at play. For one, Cibulka enjoys the contrast of having embroidery work—a traditionally feminine craft—in what are highly visible but often male-dominated spaces. Additionally, the symbolism of being in a space that’s still under construction felt too powerful to pass up.

“So as long as something is wrong, something has to change,” says Cibulka. “The construction site is in process. And society is under construction too, so it’s a nice canvas.”

Of course, being in such highly public spaces, reactions are sure to be mixed.

“A lot of people are really impressed and also very happy to see a feminist claim,” says Cibulka. “But then there are people who think we should take it down; they think women have already achieved everything, maybe even more than they should, and that we are equal already. And then a lot of people have a problem with the word

‘feminist.’”

But, for Cibulka, the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* and the recent female-led uprisings in Iran say otherwise.

“Sadly, [these events] show how topical our work still is,” says Cibulka. “What we want is people discussing; we want to invite everybody to join the conversation. ... When they asked me one year ago if I wanted to do this work two blocks away from the White House, I thought, ‘Oh my god, now we are really close to the heart of power.’”

The installation will be up until Feb. 26, 2023.

This story has been updated to clarify that the German word “Solange” translates to “as long as” and not “so long as.”

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