

# Hierarchy Sweaters

*“Or should one recognize that one becomes a foreigner in another country because one is already a foreigner from within” – Julia Kristeva*

The motif of the feminine body is often associated with the sinful. Julia Kristeva’s writings investigate the body and its relationship to abjection, while often highlighting the oppression and discrimination perceived as a problematic of the female body. This analysis also extends to the subjugation of the feminine by the hierarchy of the male gaze.

Throughout history, this type of body has been considered weak and easily corrupted. Kristeva is interested in the connection between the body and mind, and their relationship to the self as a semiotic entity, or the discharge of drives. By re-introducing signification into the conversation of the feminine body, she returns to the idea that the body provides an alternative channel for communicating feelings in ways that spoken and written language cannot. For her, there are aspects of communication that simply cannot be expressed by formal language alone, and she suggests that there are other modes of effective emotional communication, such as art, poetry, music, or movement.

Within the context of male-dominated hierarchies, the feminine body has been represented, excluded, and separated in ways that are often out of the control of women. This struggle to reclaim the feminine body has endured for many ages -- and similar to the narrative arc of most Fairy Tales -- a great story is often born from the struggle between those who have power and those who do not. The **Hierarchy Sweaters** are four sweaters which portray four different forces and sources of power, while reimagining the female body as having a place of equal authority to that of the judge, priest, or noble. The garments allow different women to embody these roles, and to engage in a state of play that is often not possible in their everyday lives. Through this play, a new narrative is formed from the struggle for power. It is perhaps a modern day fairytale.

The garments in their entirety were made possible by a collective of skilled women based in Los Angeles. These artists were called Stitching Borders, a knitting group formed by Gabriela Rochin. Thanks to them, the photo’s foremost quality is the manifestation of feminine dreams in the form of garments. To document this work, I collaborated with photographers Elizabeth Beristain from Los Angeles and Lourdes Valdes from Mexico City.

It is my hope that this work can be shown internationally as both a political and conceptual statement. The collection of pieces I have prepared highlight the power of art as a story. This

story is one that invites you to inhabit an imaginary space and see from another point of view. Within this lens, one may begin to question common patterns, themes, and archetypes, which occur in real life. By embodying these narrative spaces, we step that much closer to “truth”. We acknowledge things as they truly are with our new eyes. Dichotomies soften, black and white narratives become gray, and tales of saints and sinners blur.