

## INTRICATE INTERPLAY

Text in catalogue to *PANDORA: women beyon borders – Antikenmuseum, Basel, 1996*

by *Claudia Spinelli*

What stands at the center of Verena Thürkauf's oeuvre is a continual probing: how do body and space interrelate. This is, of course, also to be observed in the small display case the artist has contributed to the exhibition WOMEN BEYOND BORDERS.

In a museum context display cases serve a double purpose: they not only present an object, i.e. make it stand out, they also protect it from damage or unauthorized access. Their sheets of glass mark the border between functional everyday space and a sphere entirely the work's own. Yet, thanks to the transparency of the glass, interior and exterior stay interconnected.

In Verena Thürkauf's version of a museum display case the object to be shown is absent. Instead, there can be found quite a number of references to the vanished exhibit: the bottom of the case is succinctly marked by tape, and each of the four lateral sheets of glass is inscribed - the different terms being FRONT, BACK, ANOTHER, ONE. To read them properly we should be positioned inside the display case, but of course being outside we are forced to read what is closest to us reversely, and only what is farthest away from us normally. This is felt to be quiet irritating - yet our irritation will not lessen when we try to imagine ourselves occupying the place of the vanished object, and when we discover that BACK is not inscribed opposite FRONT but, strangely, beside it. It is impossible not to see that ONE, ANOTHER, BACK, and FRONT do not refer to one single center. Whatever position - real or imaginary- we choose, we are forced to accept an interrelated system of term, body, and space - comprising the vanished object and the interior as well as the exterior space of the display case.

Quite an intricate and peculiar interplay of contradictions and ambiguities.



Photo: Serge Hasenböhler, Basel