

Liesl Raff
MAXIMAL SOFT

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In *MAXIMAL SOFT*, this subtle reflection on how and why certain materials work together, Liesl Raff asks how different materials can be 'friends' with each other.

How can these odd couples, she asks, complement and improve each other? Not merely by analogy, these materials become 'friends' through material connections and arrangements, forging an ineradicable bond from an unexpected association.

Raff makes steel weep, and latex interstices, representing the most personal experiences – recognition between strangers, skin on skin, tears at the dinner table – turning industrial materials into things with emotional lives of their own.

On closer inspection, these objects bear the unique trace of human touch. Raff's fingerprints leave calloused textures and rippled surfaces, just as friendship leaves its traces on the human soul, even when old acquaintances have been separated by time and place. Raff's materials – entangled, embracing – show that people may move away or grow apart, but can never truly separate because there is always some remainder, some trace of that former union.

Our only choice is to open ourselves to a shared experience, thinking inter-material sociability as an index of human relationships. Only interacting with someone like us but different from us, in a shared space without idealisations, without forcibly reducing them to our wants, opens the possibility of true friendship.

Max L. Feldman

Liesl Raff (born 1979 in Stuttgart, lives and works in Vienna) studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. Exhibitions and projects include: *my moment is now yours*, Bob's Pogo Bar, KW Institute of Art, Berlin, DE (in collaboration with Nora Rekae); *So do I*, One Work Gallery, Vienna, AT; *How far to open up*, Forum Stadtpark, Graz, AT (2017); *A Thousand Friends, Exo Exo*, New Jörg, Vienna, AT (2016); *Peak Experiences*, Shangrila, Joshua Tree, USA (2015); *Der Schnupfen*, Bar du Bois, Vienna, AT (2014); *Reflecting Fashion*, Mumok, Vienna, AT (2012).