

Canadian, born Czechoslovakia 1955, lives in Montreal and Barcelona

At the age of thirteen, Jana Sterbak immigrated to Canada with her family after Czechoslovakia was invaded by the Soviet Union. She earned her BFA from the Université Concordia in Montreal in 1975. Thematically, Sterbak's sculptural work focuses on the individual and is characterized by dark humor, as in her highly regarded *Vanitas: Flesh Dress for an Albino Anorectic* (1987). Constructed from sixty pounds of raw flank steak sewn into a dress, the sculpture slowly hardens into leathery material alluding to the deterioration of the body. Sterbak's work has been the subject of many exhibitions in North America and Europe, including a solo show at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago (1998); a European traveling show with venues in Spain (Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 1996), England (Serpentine Gallery, 1996) and France (Musée d'Art Modern de Saint-Étienne, 1995); and a *Projects* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (1992).

*Oasis* is Jana Sterbak's investigation into the psychological and physical limits of the self within the spiritual and technological realities of our day. Its title suggests a safe haven, and its tent-like form is an enclosure large enough for a person to occupy. Fabricated from knitted stainless steel filaments, *Oasis* is modeled after the idea of a Faraday Cage, a 19th century sealed metal structure used in scientific laboratories to block lower frequency electromagnetic waves. In today's culture, this would include blocking waves from cell phones, televisions, and radios. As a space of retreat from the technology that surrounds us, yet created from a technologically advanced metal fiber, the symbolism of *Oasis* darts between poetry and science.

Sterbak and the FW+M extensively researched conductive fibers currently in production that would satisfy the artist's aesthetic sensibility, functionally perform the capabilities of a Faraday cage, and have the tensile strength to hold their shape. Experimentations were conducted with handwoven copper, nickel-plated Kevlar, and silver-plated knit nylon before settling on knitted stainless steel, which was developed in Belgium for use in industry.

After Sterbak selected a final form for the tent from the many experimental shapes modeled at the FW+M, a small three-dimensional prototype was given to FTL Happold in New York, an engineering and design firm that specializes in tensile structures. With the aid of their form-finding computer programs for tensile structures, FTL Happold generated a blueprint for the tent's exoskeleton and a pre-stressed pattern for the knitted stainless steel skin. Based on this pattern, the FW+M then sewed the knitted steel into the tent form.







