



Bitter  
LOVE





Studio, 2006

## Gail Grinnell's "Bitter Love"

*"The soul descends once more in bitter love/  
To accept the waking body."*

—from "Love Calls Us to the Things of This World,"  
by Richard Wilbur (1959)

In "Bitter Love," Gail Grinnell continues a decade-old process in which a multi-layered, translucent surface is fabricated from materials and images which draw on a language of memory and the body. Dress-making patterns—salvaged from boxes saved by her aging mother—are layered with silk and polyester interfacing; overlaid line drawings in white and black ink describe the intricate ruffles and rouches of a child's painstakingly constructed party dress. Grinnell references a world of intergenerational caretaking, of clothes as a container and substitute for the body: a second skin. Images of nerve and bone are interspersed among the instructional notations for seam and dart; twining thread furls into spirochete and worm—intestinal and microscopic.

Grinnell's process mimics the quotidian pattern of laundry and dressmaking, the daily tending of dependent bodies, the sensuous care of the infant and child, and the bitter love for the aged and dying body. In "Bitter Love," she has freed her pieces from the confines of the square. Cut into patterns of lace and integument, her surfaces form a skin both tough and fragile, durable and depleted. Her figures morph and swell, pulling against gravity like half-filled balloons, billowing like laundry on the line, boneless and buoyant as jellyfish.

The shaped pieces function as more than portraits. Personages, they document their own mortality as they seek to rise above it: a wedding shroud hanging like a veiled portal; a translucent sea bloom hovering as pinkly tenuous as a baby's breath. The newly born or newly dead, the sick, the old, the very young, they tug at their physical tethers, hovering between heaven and earth like captured angels.

—Elizabeth Bryant  
October, 2006



*Angel*, 2006, ink, acrylic,  
paper, polyester, 120 x 54"

## An Interpretation of Elements in the Work of Gail Grinnell

### *Line*

Floating, flying, drifting as if underwater, the lines in Gail Grinnell's work follow movements, paths and relationships.

They are driplines, trails, roots, filters—meshes of stitching, networks of pulsing veins.

A lifetime mass of silent gestures.

### *Metaphor*

Vision in the architecture of a garment: dashes, arrows, folds, darts—topography revealed in the shadows of a body.

An inventory of work: washing, mending, tearing, lifting, tucking, touching, bearing.

Identities hidden in clouds of tinted water.



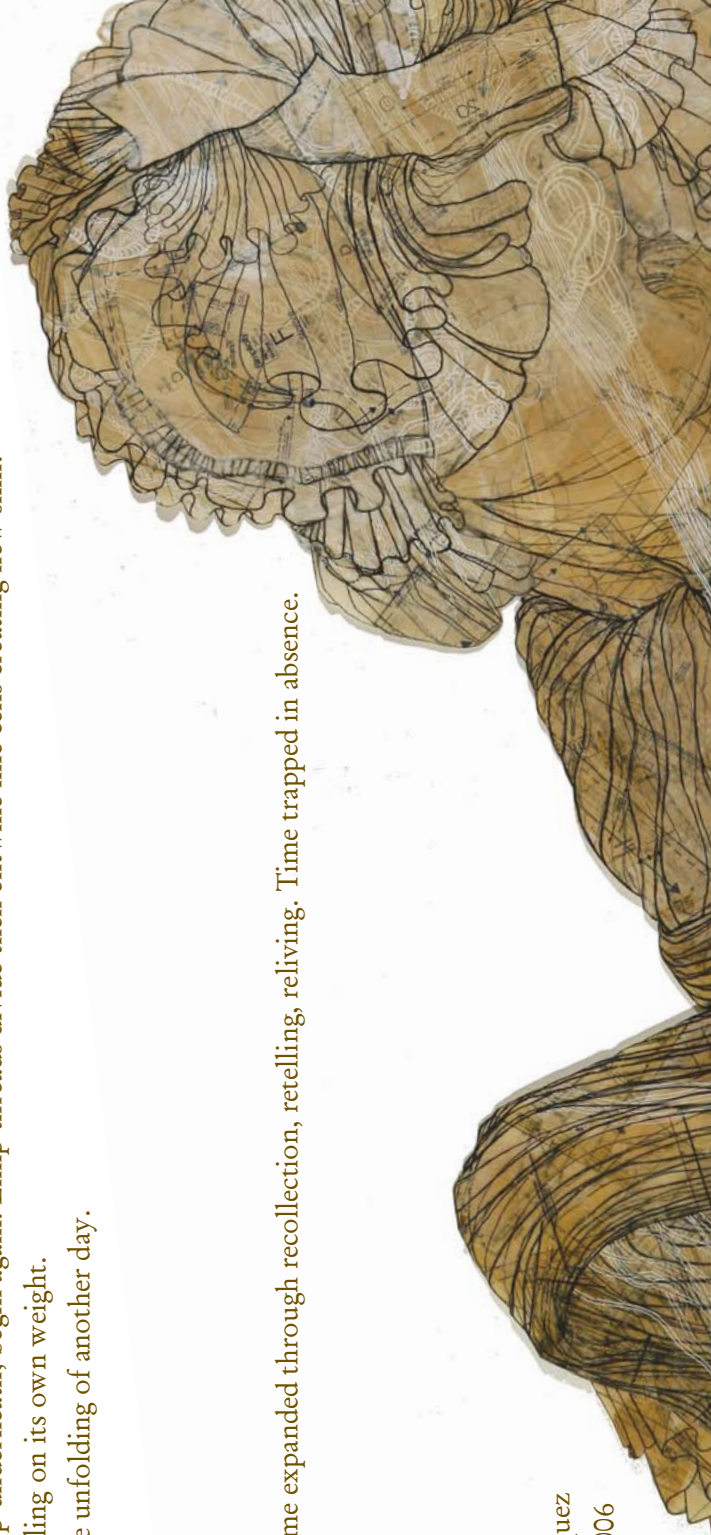
## *Texture*

Repetition: fold here, cut there, loop underneath, begin again. Limp threads divide then entwine like cells creating new skin.  
The accumulation of experience falling on its own weight.  
Texture in the ridges of flesh, in the unfolding of another day.

## *Layer*

The infinite caught in divided moments. Time expanded through recollection, retelling, reliving. Time trapped in absence.  
Individual lives affecting the whole.  
History salvaged in a remnant of tissue.

-Lucia Enriquez  
October, 2006





*Arlene*, 2006, ink, acrylic,  
paper, polyester, 108 x 40"

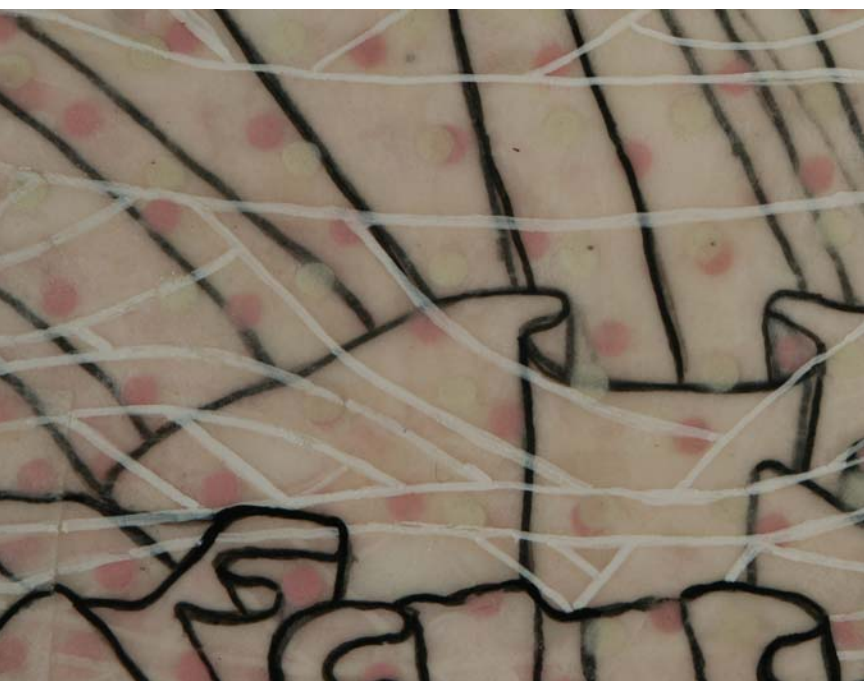




*Rosie*, 2006, ink, acrylic,  
paper, polyester, 94 x 42"

below: detail of *Rosie*







*Izabella*, 2006, ink, acrylic, silk, paper, polyester, 60 x 94"  
below: detail of *Izabella*





above: *Bitter Love*, 2006, ink, acrylic, silk, paper, polyester, 69 x 37"  
right: detail of *Bitter Love*





left: detail of *Marrow*

*Marrow*, 2006, ink, acrylic, polyester, 99 x 34"





Gail Grinnell  
selected images from  
*Bitter Love*  
2006

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