



Head start: Balaclava by Trokel. 'The combination of art and industry comes together well, without satire or exclusivity'

Elegant twists in a familiar yarn

Sacha Craddock
at the ICA

ROSEMARIE Trockel is showing her knitted pieces and delicate sculpture upstairs at the ICA. A simple dress has been made on a knitting machine; there are a number of scarves — one hanging flat and flag-like off a wire hanger; a painting-shaped expanse of black and dull beige stretched knitting has looped handwriting which says "I think therefore I exist" in Latin.

Her sculpture is part display case and part display, nothing is enormous, the

scale is all domestic, normal and human.

This exhibition is the opposite of shocking. The familiarity of the objects stops panic and denies drama, they seem at one with their meaning. Women have always made clothing; it has been a traditionally accepted job, whether for craft with earthy fabric or for income on machines and in sweatshops.

Here, the handmade object has been replaced by the flat evenness of mechanical knitting. Her dress of indeterminate fashion is not to be worn, although it could be, and has two woolmarks (the international logo), one for each breast. She also shows

photographs of people wearing her stuff, no props in the background. Somehow they are styleless, even less sexy than the mackintosh special offers in a Sunday magazine.

A slow spark of understanding and association comes from her work. Trockel manages to state without statement: on women and industry, the corporate label, the home and its scale.

An emptiness surrounds the work, a quietness of thought rather than a stampede of explanation. The jumper with two neck holes is cosy and unpatterned, simply dealing with schizophrenia, a double persona. Trockel's sculpture stands on

extremely elegant legs. Proportionally fragile and high, they support either glass case or black shrouded box.

The two rooms are not crammed, it is an easy stroll around an art that is contemporary and without nostalgia. Trockel's work is stylish because it is elegant and yet it does not allow easy association with the style of specific class or background. She deals with the fact that she is a woman and an artist by engaging in an activity that has resounding patterns in history; the combination of art and industry comes together well, without satire or exclusivity.

● Rosemarie Trockel at the ICA to to November 27.